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Points of Contact: A Qualitative Fieldwork Study of Relationships between Journalists and Muslim Sources in Glasgow

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PhD
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2015
DECLARATION

This is to certify that that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Part of chapter 2 of the thesis has been accepted for publication and is in press as “British Journalists, British Muslims: Arguments for a ‘More Complex Picture’ of Their Relationship.” In Islam and the West: A Love Story? edited by Sumita Mukherjee and Sadia Zulfiqar. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming. The text of the chapter appears in the appendix, and the material is included with the publishers’ permission.

Signed
ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I explore relationships between journalists and Muslim sources in Glasgow, Scotland in a qualitative, ethnographically informed manner. My primary contribution in the research is to justify applying media production analysis to a field of research that has been dominated by content analysis. Since the popularisation of Islamophobia and especially the 9/11 attacks, journalists have taken a greater interest in Muslims in non-Muslim-majority contexts, such as Britain. Scholarship of this coverage has consistently concluded that journalists represent Muslims in a negative, essentialising manner. My research asks new questions of the topic, investigating the process of making news representations rather than the product. I identified the journalist-source relationship as the site to examine what informs news texts. I interviewed thirty participants and observed newsroom and community group environments, and I reflexively and transparently incorporated my prior experience as a journalist in Canada.

Participants discussed their normative boundaries for accepting and using the label “Muslim” in news texts. “Relevance” was a common but vague response; my results show an emphasis on religious or subjective identification for journalists to use the term, whereas sources reported their belief that its usage was more indiscriminate, applied negatively and out of proportion to other groups. In terms of their conceptions of the “other,” journalists easily conflated ethnicity and race with religion for Muslims, and sources tended to describe anonymous “journalists” rather than specific individuals and their practices. I then analysed the points of contact through which these relationships were enacted, including press releases, direct contact, and social media. This analysis includes a case study of one Muslim group’s media relations, studying internal and external dynamics as its members positioned themselves in Glasgow’s news ecosystem. Participants described their uses of the other: as sources, for comment, clarification, and contacts; as journalists, for coverage and capital. Trust and reciprocity are features that participants identified as important for an effective relationship though often absent from their interactions.

I show more reciprocally enacted relationships than content analysis reveals. Though these interactions are not always apparent in published texts, they nonetheless contribute to representations of Muslims more varied than the prevailing literature suggests. Glasgow emerges as a distinctive location in the context of Britain, deserving of further study. The mechanics of the journalist-source relationship can be used comparatively to assess whether, why, and how journalists report on particular groups.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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My return to academic study began with a Master of Arts degree from King’s College London, and I thank Dr. Marat Schterin and Dr. Charis Boutieri for a thorough and compassionate reintroduction to the language of the social sciences.

Prior to my study, I worked professionally for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In 2009, CBC cut over eight hundred jobs across the service, including mine. The experience was no less stinging for the opportunity it afforded me to study. CBC announced a further 657 job cuts in April 2014, and those workers were in my thoughts as I completed this study.

I acknowledge here and thank the participants in Glasgow, named and unnamed, who gave me time, access, and insights as I carried out my fieldwork.

And most of all, I thank my family: my wife, Katie, and my children, Isla, Leo, and wee Tait who arrived as the fieldwork was finishing. Your love, patience, and support have made this possible.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In September 2001, I entered my fourth and final year of undergraduate study at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. I was studying journalism, following a career path I had set for myself since I was ten years old. As I grew older and more aware of the differentiated industry of news media, I narrowed my focus to public broadcasting and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). As such, in the spring of 2001, I had undertaken a university-sponsored internship with Ottawa’s regional bureau of CBC Radio. Those two weeks at the end of the academic term had passed successfully—I had shown enough skill and interest that, when the executive producer asked me my plans for the summer and I replied, “Working for you, I hope,” he did not laugh. Instead, he added me to the casual rota, calling me in as a reporter or researcher when he needed somebody to cover a shift. Periodic backfill for someone ill or on assignment steadily grew to five-day work weeks as staff took their summer holidays. Meanwhile, I sold the broadcaster stories and recordings as a freelancer to top up my income and show my initiative.

I therefore entered my last year of study with confidence. I had earned my living all summer with my dream employer, and the producers were eager to retain me whilst supporting my need to finish the degree. “It’s in our interests that you complete your studies,” said the producer of the morning current affairs programme. I would remain “on-call” that year but free to decline any shifts that conflicted with my classes with no hint of prejudice. I had gathered interviews and sound over the summer for a freelanced radio documentary on jazz festivals which I sold to the regional weekly current affairs programme on music, *Bandwidth*. I was due to meet with the producer to edit and “voice” or record the piece on 14 September.
We did not meet that day, nor for another month afterward. The station’s journalistic attentions were interrupted by a media event that overtook our agenda, even though it occurred hundreds of miles away in another country. The attacks of 11 September—the hijacked planes that crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and a field in Pennsylvania—reoriented news priorities, directly in the ensuing weeks and more subtly in the years since, in ways that scholars still contest and attempt to understand. My professional career as a journalist was contoured by 9/11 and its legacies, and the impact of that event bears on my interest in this research project.

Islam and Muslims became newsworthy on 9/11. Political events such as the revolution in Iran and the protests against the publication of Salman Rushdie’s novel The Satanic Verses had already generated high-profile if temporary coverage; and scholars such as Edward Said, Talal Asad, and Jack Shaheen had identified that media attention—when it was granted—tended to fit a mould of negativity and Othering. But the attacks of 9/11 became a potent symbol of rage—an underdog counterstrike against colonialism and decadence that fixed financial as well as political power as the target of this rage and set “Muslims” incommensurably against “the West.”

I put these terms in quotation marks to emphasise their definitional partiality. Neither entity has smooth, untroubled borders. The term “Islamic terrorism” has been problematised so as to distinguish the hijackers of al-Qaeda

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from Muslims as a whole. Nevertheless, al-Qaeda members used language, imagery, and scripture of Islam to justify their anger and their terrorism, and the publication of these arguments has fused 9/11 to the imaginative renderings of Muslims: “The West” is similarly contested, as scholars inquire what qualities the nations of Europe and North America share that allow them to be grouped together. Studies of nationalism and cosmopolitanism offer competing ideas about, for example, the boundaries of Europe, the essential qualities of the nation-state, and the common aspirations and dispositions of citizenries. Despite such debate, the term “the West” remains meaningful for some and has been marshalled in explaining what happened on 9/11 and the global ruptures that have followed.

My purpose in this study is neither to reify nor to burst these conceptual paradigms. What makes them relevant for my discussion is that the media are so frequently the venue for the articulation of these paradigms or the challenge thereof. Scholar Kerem Öktem calls the media “the central site of contestation over Islam and Muslims” and he does not exaggerate. Scholars who investigate this site of contestation often do so, as we shall see, by looking at the question of representation: how Muslims are portrayed in news texts. In this thesis, I look beyond the text to the context and examine the relationships between journalists and sources who identify as Muslim so as to ascertain how these representations are formed. My focus is on the points of contact—proximate, remote, and virtual—in which these relationships are enacted. I generated data during fifteen

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months of fieldwork in Glasgow, interviewing journalists and sources and observing some of these points of contact.

By conducting this research, I link two discrete traditions—the study of news and the study of Muslims in society. Scholars of journalism have identified the relationships between sources and journalists as an important venue for the production of news, but they have not related this approach to the coverage of Muslims. Scholars conducting social research on Muslims have explored media coverage but not the co-creative aspects of Muslims as sources. The originality of this study is demonstrated in the combination of these traditions, offering insights relevant for both communities of scholars.

A further original component to this study is its Scottish setting. Sara Kidd and Lynn Jamieson, in preparing their report for the Scottish Government about the experiences of Muslims in Scotland, noted “limited research” which hindered the comprehensiveness of their literature review.\(^9\) The assertion that Scotland is different from England within the United Kingdom as it pertains to its treatment of minorities in general and Muslims in particular has been proposed by politicians, activists, and also researchers.\(^10\) The acrobatic feat of this assertion is largely performed without the safety net of evidence: there still is not enough social research on Muslim communities in Scotland. This project exposes active Muslims in Glasgow—some of them prominent, others not—through the particular lens of their relations with journalists; these participants are discussed throughout the thesis, but I introduce them and Glasgow as a research environment in chapter 4.

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This study makes a methodological contribution not just to the study of media but to fieldwork research in general by incorporating my memory and experience and analysing it as data. As the introduction already makes clear, my professional experience as a journalist is relevant to the project and therefore implicated in how it was conceived and carried out. Using tools derived from anthropology, I make that experience as transparent as possible, allowing the reader to assess it in relation to the thesis subject.\(^{11}\) I describe this method in chapter 3, and I include a sustained narrative of my experience in chapter 7.

**Definitions**

Before outlining the structure of the thesis, I define some of the key terms used in this research. The thesis title indicates both the approach and the subject, and some of the terms within it—“qualitative fieldwork study” and “Glasgow”—are explored in subsequent chapters. But “Muslim,” “journalist,” and “source” appear throughout the text, and it is best to confront them directly to set the working parameters for the study.

**“Muslim”**

One of the most important terms to define for this study is “Muslim”: this is the characteristic that distinguishes the source participants in my study, and it is the variable by which I asked journalists to consider their reporting practices. First, though, I wish to speak about “identity,” as religion is one of many possible classifications for answers to the question, “What is your identity?” Ethnicity is another, as is race, and I am not the first to observe that ethnicities such as “Asian” and “Pakistani” are frequently bound up with conceptions of “Muslim.”\(^{12}\)

\(^{11}\) Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat, eds., *The Ethnographic Self as Resource: Writing Memory and Experience into Ethnography* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

Sociologists Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper have questioned the use of “identity” both as a hard and a soft concept; in their genealogy, the latter was devised by constructionist scholars to compensate for essentialist qualities of the former. Soft concepts of identity have not superseded hard ones, however, and so the term is used in varying and often contradictory ways throughout scholarship, leaving scholars with “blunt, flat, undifferentiated vocabulary.”

Whilst Brubaker and Cooper value the goal of the constructionist reinterpretation of identity, the stipulation “that identities are constructed, fluid, and multiple” makes them analytically useless; the authors suggest that scholars are conflating how social actors use the term and its iterations such as religion and ethnicity (“categories of practice”) and how scholars themselves appraise and understand these uses (“categories of analysis”). They suggest jettisoning “identity” as a category of analysis, replacing it with three sets of terms which better accommodate the different uses to which the term is currently put: “identification,” “self-understanding,” and “commonality.” In this study, I rely primarily on “identification,” which, following Brubaker and Cooper, is processual, converting the question from the beginning of the section to, “How do you identify yourself?”

Those who identify (or are identified) as “Muslim” may still have eclectic definitions of the term. It is a contested identifier, and its characteristics are not bounded, though people may claim so, and claim so in contradictory ways. Tariq Modood notes that “diversity does not lead to an abandonment of social concepts”, not least for “Muslim.” To be Muslim is to be in relation to the concept of Islam, which we could define as a religion founded by Muhammad;

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14 Ibid., 1, 4.
15 Ibid., 14–21.
inspired by the Qur’an, which is the word of God as dictated to Muhammad; and characterised by the practice of the so-called five pillars.\textsuperscript{17} Whilst all of this may be true, it tells us little about the vagaries of expression in the lives of people who claim to be Muslim or are identified as such by others. The constructionist argument acknowledges these differences and suggests that there is no essential Islam; we must instead think of Islams or “Islam.”\textsuperscript{18} Anthropologist Talal Asad nuances this argument, suggesting that rampant constructionism dissolves Islam until, as with “identity” above, it loses its analytical value. He suggests starting with Islam as “a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Qur’an and the Hadith.”\textsuperscript{19} This tradition is based on doctrine that is not itself static but mutable in history through relationships and power; furthermore, tradition need not be homogeneous.\textsuperscript{20} Islam, then, is multiple and fluid, and we understand Muslims in relation to Islam but recognise that, due to this heterogeneity over time and space, Muslims themselves need not be homogeneous to be properly ascribed the label.

In operationalising “Muslim” for his own purposes, sociologist Nasar Meer proposes a “quasi-ethnic sociological formation” that encompasses but is not limited by religious qualities.\textsuperscript{21} I apply this definition of the word in this study—not least, as we shall see, because it accords with the way journalists in my research conceived of Muslims. Religion and religious issues feature prominently in their descriptions, but social participation features, as well: one is not only a Muslim when one is praying, fasting, or giving to charity. Councillors arrange

\textsuperscript{17}These are 1) \textit{shahadah}, or the sincere declaration that God is one and Muhammad is God’s prophet; 2) \textit{salat}, or praying five times a day in a prescribed manner; 3) \textit{zakat}, or the giving of alms for charitable purposes; 4) \textit{sawm}, or fasting during the daylight hours during the month of Ramadan; and 5) \textit{haj}, or the pilgrimage to Mecca which the tradition expects of every Muslim once in his or her life.


\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 16.

education programmes, lawyers argue cases in court, and community activists support the people in their constituency. These people are identified by journalists as Muslims, and they are also identified as Asians, Pakistanis, second-generation, locals, citizens, Labour supporters, nationalists, and much more.\textsuperscript{22}

These complex identifications sometimes emerge in what journalists publish, and sometimes remain in their background understandings.

\textit{“Journalist”}

I define “journalist” in this study as a professional role; occasionally, I use the phrase “working journalist.” Mark Deuze summarises the work of scholars who conceive of journalism as an “occupational ideology,” and he ultimately bursts “naïve . . . one-dimensional and sometimes nostalgic” qualities such as monitoring governments or enabling democracy, resting instead on a processual, contingent definition.\textsuperscript{23} I do not mean to uncritically accept the notion of professionalism, but I am privileging institutional affiliation and remuneration for the purposes of this study.\textsuperscript{24} Although there are expanding definitions of what a journalist is, encompassing citizen journalists, bloggers, and even public relations officials, journalists are still consistently viewed by their activity—reporting—and by the media through which they publish.\textsuperscript{25} Some of the sources in this study participated in such activity as blogging and posting content to

\textsuperscript{22} Peter Hopkins, drawing from his interviews with young Muslim men in Glasgow and Edinburgh, quotes “Kabir,” a participant who likens the layering of different identifications to being “a blue square.” The object is both blue and square, but the colour is not defined by the shape, nor vice versa. Peter Hopkins, “‘Blue Squares’, ‘Proper’ Muslims and Transnational Networks: Narratives of National and Religious Identities amongst Young Muslim Men Living in Scotland,” \textit{Ethnicities} \textbf{7}, no. 1 (2007): 61–81.


\textsuperscript{25} David Ryfe, in his ethnography of US journalism as the professional role of journalists is changing, gives the example of the Los Angeles Kings, a professional hockey team, which decided it was being ignored by the city’s daily newspaper and “hired its own reporter, who produces and distributes news on the team’s website, Facebook page, and Twitter feed.” Ryfe does not explore, however, how this public-relations journalism is received by journalists or audiences; David Ryfe, \textit{Can Journalism Survive? An Inside Look at American Newsrooms} (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 152.
Facebook and Twitter, but they did not identify such activity as journalism nor themselves as journalists.26

Journalists, for this study, are employees of news organisations engaged in reporting events, issues, or affairs through public outlets. By “public,” I mean published for general consumption; both public broadcasters (i.e., BBC) and private ones (i.e., STV) make their material publicly accessible. Journalists can be classed as general reporters, specialist correspondents, and editors. Editors assign stories to reporters or correspondents and edit them for publication. General reporters may be assigned stories or may pitch and report stories which they have discovered; they do not have a typical “beat” or community of stories which they cover in a dedicated way. Specialist correspondents, conversely, are dedicated to a particular beat, such as health, business, or governance; they are seldom assigned stories and are expected to pitch habitually, as they have gained some expertise in their beat. All three types of journalists contribute to the ongoing publication of news texts, and I consider journalism to be a collective accomplishment rather than an individual achievement.27

The journalism which I consider in this study is “mainstream” journalism. This term is broadly used but seldom defined, more often a foil against which other types of journalism are compared, such as “alternative” journalism.28 I do not include alternative or citizen journalists from Glasgow in this study, as the target of critique in social research on representations of Muslims in the media are mainstream organisations such as the broadsheets (the Times, the Guardian), the tabloids (the Sun, the Daily Mail, which is sometimes classed as “mid-market”), and the broadcasters (BBC, ITV).29 I do not include “ethnic” media,

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29 I discuss the critique of media representations of Muslims in chapter 2. For more on the complex distinctions of UK news organisations, see Paul Baker, Costas Gabrielatos, and Tony
which target particular ethnic, linguistic, or even religious communities as their audience; some—even participants in this study—have proposed that, in lieu of satisfactory representation in the mainstream media, Muslims turn to “their own” outlets. This is an interesting line of inquiry, but it does little to answer the questions of this research. I restrict myself to mainstream journalism, and in chapter 4, I further restrict the media with which I am concerned at a geographic level.

“Source”

“Source” is the term I and colleagues used to describe people we contacted for the material we turned into news items. Sources were the people quoted in published texts, but they were also the people we called for background information or as a conduit to other sources. Some colleagues at CBC, more antiquated in sensibility, kept a Rolodex or card file for their sources (I was among them); we also had an online database which stored the contact details for sources, as well as notes on their biographies, areas of expertise, political stances, frequency of use, and effectiveness of performance.

Journalists in Glasgow used the term “contacts” when I asked them about “sources;” in an attempt to embrace grounded methods and not allow my terminology to trump that of my participants, I combined the two into “source contacts.” During the writing of this thesis, however, the inclusion of “contacts” as a noun denoting a person was too often proximate in a confusing way with “contact” as a verb or, less commonly, as an abstract noun describing the outcome of that verb’s action (i.e., “making contact”). Thus, I have shed the compound

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31 It is also the term used in literature on media production; see chapter 2.
noun and use "source" in this study, as per my prior professional use, though I note that Glaswegian journalists who care to read this study may find they are mentally substituting the phrase.

These are the terms frequently used in this study. By describing relationships between journalists and sources, I am constructing a binary split between two defined groups. The purpose of the research is to see how "both sides" make use of the relationship. I place "both sides" in quotation marks to indicate the artificial nature of this polarisation. Though it may seem a fairly clear distinction—journalists are the ones working for news organisations, and sources are the ones they ask questions of in preparing their stories—these boundaries are porous. What, for example, of journalists who identify as Muslim and take on some of the roles of sources when working alongside their non-Muslim colleagues? And how does this separation account for people with histories, such that they once worked as journalists but now manage public relations for community groups or discovered that their skills as sources were easily transferred to roles in journalism? We meet all of these types in the chapters that follow, and I outline my distinctions and the cases that disturb these distinctions in chapter 3, in which I describe my fieldwork. Although the divide is artificial and insufficient to account for the lived experience of media relations in Glasgow, it is operationally helpful to talk here of journalists and sources as discrete parties.

Contents of this Study

Chapter 2 surveys the relevant literature from the two scholarly communities with which this study is primarily concerned. Studies of journalism break the subject down into three elements: production, content, and reception. Within production—the field of the touchstone newsroom ethnographies—research has often equated "producers" with "journalists": news sources are instrumentalised, comprising one of many "considerations" for journalists as they
construct news stories. I look to a strain of the literature that scrutinises sources as an integral part of research and treats transmission as an important part of the process of news production. This is not necessarily to put sources on an even footing with journalists but to make the relationships and the dynamics of power an object of study. The chapter also explores social research on Islam in Britain and considerations of Islamophobia before examining literature on Muslims and the media in Britain. The consistency of findings—that representations are negative, relating Muslims to conflict and portraying them as monolithic—is matched by the consistency of methods, as discussed above. I propose that the journalist-source approach will yield new insights for the field.

In chapter 3, I describe the design and execution of the study. I account for my fieldwork strategies and the constraints I encountered in the field. I provide information concerning the thirty participants in the study, as well as references to interviews and observation that were declined or withdrawn. This chapter exposes the conditions in which data were generated. In doing so, I address critiques levied at qualitative, interpretive research and discuss the problems of generalisability. One strategy for solidifying this kind of research is to be reflexive and transparent in both the fieldwork and the analysis, and I evaluate an approach devised by anthropologists Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat called “the ethnographic self as resource” and apply it to the research.

In chapter 4, I introduce Glasgow as the research context for my study. This includes a final review of relevant literature and the first discussion of my original data. I discuss Glasgow within a Scottish and British context in regards to the news media, and I examine some of the slender social research conducted on Muslims living in the city. I also incorporate data recently released from the 2011 Scottish census, giving us current and exhaustive information on the population’s demographic context. I then introduce and classify the participants in my study who identify as Muslim. These classifications are not intended to be binding in

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33 Collins and Gallinat, *The Ethnographic Self as Resource*.
any way, but they reveal the diversity of Muslims in Glasgow who engage with the news media. Participants are more- or less-official and differentiated politically and religiously, and they vary according to age, gender, and to a lesser extent ethnicity. These distinctions are helpful in challenging one of the findings of the scholarly literature—that journalists represent Muslims as monolithic. Participants themselves noted, however, that media engagement with Muslims was formerly negotiated through one or two “gatekeepers” or “community leaders;” what changed was the attack of 9/11 and internal disagreements over the best strategy for public communication in the context of the intense interest in Muslims that followed. Not only are the sources in my study diverse, they also insist that they are not representative and do not speak “for” Glasgow’s Muslims.

The four chapters that follow engage directly with my fieldwork data. **Chapters 5 and 6** examine the artificial divide between the parties to the relationship: **Chapter 5** is concerned with conceptions journalists in my study have of Muslims. This begins with a brief survey of the familiarity they declared with Muslims and Islam. I then analyse their normative conceptions of what “counts” as a Muslim story. Religion emerges as a sensible qualifier of Muslims, but it is not the only determinant. Journalists also mentioned subjective and external identifications of a source or issue as Muslim. Moving from the normative to the concrete, I list Muslim sources and stories which the journalists have covered, would cover, or know that colleagues have covered. I class sources as religious and otherwise, and the religious category is further broken down into more-or-less-official and unofficial, depending on the way the journalist uses the source. Stories are then classified, using the categories of religious, ethnic, and social. The purpose of these classifications is to show the extent to which “Muslim” is bound by or surpasses the horizon of religion.

The data in **chapter 6** look the opposite way, from source participants to journalists. Their normative responses concerning the appropriate use of “Muslim” in journalism are also recorded, but to set those responses in context, I first catalogue their expressed attitudes to the media. I find substantive and functionalist responses: the most prevalent among the former, and indeed the
most consistent across the sample, was the suggestion that media coverage of Muslims is negative; the most frequent response in the latter category was that journalists hold a double standard concerning Muslims. I then turn to the normative boundaries for “Muslim” according to sources. Here, as well, the boundaries surpassed reference to religion itself, and participants set both positive boundaries (“this is a Muslim story”) and negative ones (“this is not a Muslim story”). Sources were not always as clear as this in their responses, though, and I include a cautionary note about distinguishing responses which describe stories journalists have framed as “Muslim” from responses that endorse such usage.

I complete the chapter by summarising impressions sources offered of what journalists want from sources. These priorities, relating to the source, the content and presentation of ideas, and the technical needs of journalists, lead us to chapter 7, which examines the dynamics of the relationship itself. “Relationship” implies a mutual quality, and I outline the uses to which each party to the relationship puts the other. I identify three ways that journalists use sources: for comment, clarification, and contacts. Sources use the relationship for coverage and for capital, understood in the Bourdieusien sense of “social capital.” Of these, only the first of each is visible in the news text and therefore considered in content analysis. This production analysis therefore exposes practices which enrich our understanding of the subject.

I include in the chapter a narrative account of my experience as a journalist with CBC Ottawa, intentionally building relationships with Muslim sources in the city. The purpose is to demonstrate concretely what I understand relationship to be and to examine some of its features. I follow this with analysis of participants’ descriptions of their relationships. Two concepts feature in their responses: trust and reciprocity. The two are related, and not in a sequential way: where there is exchange, the parties are inclined to trust each other; but without trust, they were reticent to exchange. Whereas reciprocity featured in responses

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from both parties, trust was almost exclusively the domain of sources: journalists recognised the need to *be trusted*; they seldom discussed difficulties with trusting sources.

In chapter 8, I examine the practices that inform these relationships through a case study of a Muslim women’s centre in Glasgow. As my fieldwork began, the centre generated an unprecedented amount of coverage concerning its campaign on public perceptions of Muslim women. Through observation, interviews, and documentary analysis, I evaluate the effect of that coverage on the subsequent media relations the centre’s members engaged in. The chapter begins with a simple content search—not to determine the extent of coverage of the centre’s activities but to compare frequency and characteristics of news coverage before, during, and after the campaign. I then examine the responses of participants concerning this coverage. Through the points of contact described by participants, I identify feelings of aspiration and ambivalence, as members seek to reap the benefits of relationships with journalists but hesitate due to an impression that such relationships are outwith their control. This analysis is summarised in chapter 9, including reference to future directions for research that contends with the implications of this study.
CHAPTER 2
STUDIES OF THE MEDIA AND OF MUSLIMS

I begin the thesis with an examination of relevant literature from the two scholarly communities implicated in this research. I survey news media studies, which break the subject into three elements of analysis: production, content, and reception. I identify production as the element best suited to answer the questions of this thesis, and within this field, I narrow the focus to the sub-field of research on journalist-source relationships. I then reveal how studies of Muslims and the British media have ignored this approach, relying instead on content analyses to determine how Muslims are represented. This underutilisation of a valid scholarly approach demonstrates the originality of this research and justifies the question I am asking in this thesis and the methods I use to explore it, which are outlined in chapter 3.

News Media Studies

Production, Content, and Reception

News media studies typically examine one or more of three “levels of the communication process: production, content and reception.”1 Each of these levels has its advocates, and though many media studies acknowledge the rigour of a full-spectrum approach, few manage to execute such an exhaustive project. Instead, researchers use their research questions to determine which level to focus on: production studies are well-suited to answering questions of process—where do ideas come from, or how is news created? Content studies are ideal for

determining messages within the news text—what language is used, and what are the meanings embedded or encoded in the words and images? Reception studies ask how these meanings are understood and whether they change once they reach the audience. These categories have attendant methods that best support each set of questions. Production studies tend to rest on ethnographic methods such as interviews and participant observation, although scholars may also analyse organisational documents to help flesh out the priorities and processes of the institution under study.² Content studies employ textual analysis, which can be quantitative in nature, counting and charting instances of particular phrases or ideas, or qualitative, drilling instead into the meaning or meanings in the text.³ Reception studies reach out to constructed audiences by means of surveys, interviews, and focus groups.⁴

These categories need not be discrete silos. Stuart Hall’s touchstone essay, “Encoding/Decoding,” unpacks these processes as related but not identical.⁵ Content and reception are commonly linked, as even content analyses that do not include reception research imply an audience that would receive the messages producers have encoded into the text. “Producers,” we should note, are not limited to journalists: production analysis encompasses both source transmission

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and journalistic manufacture—a relationship which is relevant to this study.\textsuperscript{6} However, the collaboration of these two groups suggests it would not be fruitful to separate them—whether a journalist “cold calls” a source or an organisation issues a press release, material is exchanged which becomes the content which is then supplied to audiences.\textsuperscript{7}

The complementarity of these categories—production, content, and reception—has prompted some scholars to advocate for a more comprehensive approach to media studies.\textsuperscript{8} They specifically highlight the insufficiency of content analysis as a stand-alone means of studying media, as an explicit focus on the text is abstracted from the conditions of its creation and assumes both the intentions of the producers and the understanding of the audience.\textsuperscript{9} The comprehensive quality of what Glasgow University Media Group alumnus Greg Philo calls “a total system” approach is appealing.\textsuperscript{10} The most thorough of these total-system studies are conducted by teams, such as the Glasgow group’s scrutiny of AIDS reporting or the analysis by a team from Loughborough on

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\textsuperscript{9} Simon Cottle calls this the problem of inference; Simon Cottle, ‘Ethnography and News Production: New(s) Developments in the Field’, \textit{Sociology Compass} 1, no. 1 (2007): 5.

\textsuperscript{10} Philo, “Can Discourse Analysis Successfully Explain Content?” 194. It is worth noting that Philo’s demand for such a comprehensive methodology comes after years of insistence from the Group’s scholars that content analysis was sufficient for study. They defended their methods in summarising their original study of television reporting on labour stories: “Since the output clearly has meaning, then the production of that meaning can as clearly be studied on the screen as it can by interviewing either producers or audiences.” Glasgow University Media Group, \textit{More Bad News}, 409; Philo’s colleague in the Group, John Eldridge, reiterated this message fifteen years later, further arguing that content analysis was advantageous: “Methodologically, it is a form of unobtrusive measure. The material, in this case news bulletins, is created quite independently of the research interest. It is then analysed in ways that do not influence what is being produced.” J. E. T. Eldridge, “Introduction: That Was the World That Was,” in \textit{Glasgow Media Group Reader, Volume 1: News Content, Language and Visuals}, ed. J. E. T. Eldridge (London: Routledge, 1995), 10.
reporting on social sciences.\textsuperscript{11} Individual scholars have demonstrated both the feasibility and the value of a total-system approach, though the compressed journal-article format in which they have published their results risks dissolving the nuance of the particulars in an effort to tell what they have constructed to be the whole story.\textsuperscript{12}

I accept the advantage of connecting these three elements; but, contrary to John Thompson, who declares each element to be “essential” to the effective study of media, I believe a prudent study can be accomplished whilst exploring even one principal element.\textsuperscript{13} Studies do not occur in isolation but refer to other works, enriching, extending, or challenging existing scholarship. For their part, content analysts have defended the adequacy of their methods.\textsuperscript{14} As we see below, the field of media and Muslims has been dominated by content studies engaging questions of representation, and in such a lopsided environment, an explicit focus on production corrects the balance and enriches the propositions of textualist scholarship with insights from media producers and their sources.\textsuperscript{15} I acknowledge that the focus of this study does not account for audience reception, but this seam of analysis does not address the research question I ask. Examining relationships between sources and journalists to identify a context for news coverage falls sensibly within the rubric of production analysis.

\textsuperscript{11} Miller et al., The Circuit of Mass Communication; Deacon, Fenton, and Bryman, “From Inception to Reception”; Natalie Fenton, Alan Bryman, and David Deacon, Mediating Social Science (London: Sage, 1998); see also the Group’s effort on reporting of Israel and Palestine; Greg Philo and Mike Berry, Bad News from Israel (London: Pluto, 2004).


\textsuperscript{13} Thompson, ‘Mass Communication and Modern Culture’, 377.


Production Analysis and the Journalist-Source Relationship

The 1970s hosted a series of pioneering ethnographic studies of news organisations. Sociologists recognised the prominent role the news media played in political communication, social knowledge, and social organisation, and they spent time watching journalists at work and asking how they did their job and what informed their practices.\(^6\) Scholars paid close attention to hierarchy and decision-making as well as routinisation—the strategies by which journalists managed the unpredictability of news events and the wealth and variety of material available to be covered. Though the works were influential, they were few in number, and scholarly curiosity about news production waned. At the century’s turn, Simon Cottle noted how dramatically the news industry had changed since these canonical studies were produced, in terms of technology, economic arrangements, and the media’s relationship to society; this led him to challenge what he called “orthodoxy” and demand a “second wave” of news ethnography.\(^7\) Few studies, though, have answered his call with an ambitious organisation- or industry-wide ethnography.\(^8\) Technological change has proved one area of accelerated interest as scholars investigate how journalists and newsroom environments address the prominence of online and especially social or participatory media.\(^9\)

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\(^6\) In addition to the British studies from Note 3, classic American examples from the same period are Leon V. Sigal, \textit{Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking} (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1973); Gave Tuchman, \textit{Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality} (New York: Free Press, 1978); Mark Fishman, \textit{Manufacturing the News} (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1980); and Gans, \textit{Deciding What’s News}.


These studies, both new and old, provide an excellent analysis of the context in which journalists work: the newsroom. But some scholars suggest that this is too constricted a focus, leaving out the sources who provide the information that adds to journalists’ understanding and becomes the stuff of news. Philip Schlesinger calls this focus “media-centrism,” and he derives the concept from the observations of two sociologists. Herbert Gans identified a list of considerations for journalists when, as the title has it, “deciding what’s news,” and he found that those concerning sources were the most important. Gans failed to bring sources into the data of his ethnography, but he directed future scholarship in a footnote from his concluding chapter:

My observations on source power suggest that the study of sources deserves far more attention from news researchers than it has so far obtained. To understand the news fully, researchers must study sources as roles and as representatives of the organized or unorganized groups for whom they act and speak, and thus also as holders of power. Above all, researchers should determine what groups create or become sources, and with what agendas; what interests they pursue in seeking access to the news and in refusing it. Parallel studies should be made of groups that cannot get into the news, and why this is so.

Gans recognised the contextual dependence journalists have on society in order to do their work successfully.

To think this relationship through, Schlesinger points to the theory of fields developed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Fields are metaphorical constructs based around shared social action: participants within the field relate to each other by their shared action, in concert and in conflict; and the positions they take relative to each other help define and change the boundaries of the field. Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, who have applied Bourdieu’s concept to

21 Ibid., 360, 3n.
22 Schlesinger, ‘Rethinking the Sociology of Journalism’, 78–79.
media studies, indicated that the theory “follows from Weber and Durkheim in portraying modernity as a process of differentiation into semiautonomous and increasingly specialized spheres of action . . . Both within and among these spheres—or fields—relations of power fundamentally structure human action.”

Differentiation is key: concerning external differentiation, Bourdieu described a political field, a social science field, a journalistic field, and so on; these fields in turn are internally differentiated, so that reporters, editors, managers, and marketing officers constitute “the journalistic field.” The word “semiautonomous” is also important, as Bourdieu applied his theory to determine where a particular field (or subset within the field) ranks on a spectrum between autonomy and heteronomy. Journalism, as Gans noted, is dependent on the participation of sources and therefore heteronomous.

Media-centrism, for Schlesinger, is the failure of researchers to account for these observations and “look at source-media relations from the perspective of the sources themselves.” Two examples illustrate this: Jeremy Tunstall featured sources as one of the principal influences on British specialist correspondents; yet he did not survey, interview, or observe sources to understand how they view the relationship or make use of it. American sociologist Mark Fishman examined the beats and routines journalists developed to accomplish journalism for a daily newspaper, and he discovered a reliance on bureaucratic sources—the clerks at the courtroom, the press officer at the police station, and so on. They prepared paper files of the day’s events to establish what was normal and what was

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26 Note we speak here of ‘journalism’; an ethnographic venture might focus more on ‘journalists’ in relationship with sources. Sociologist Howard Becker proposes the idea of ‘worlds’ as a concrete alternative to Bourdieu’s fields; see Howard S. Becker, Art Worlds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); I discuss this in greater detail in chapter 7.
27 Schlesinger, ‘Rethinking the Sociology of Journalism’, 61, emphasis Schlesinger; see also Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, Negotiating Control, 24.
28 Tunstall, Journalists at Work.
exceptional. Schlesinger highlights the importance of source strategies as a dynamic missing from conventional production analysis, drawing on research from a Canadian study, led by Richard Ericson, which emphasised “reciprocity” and “the news-negotiation process” as defining features of the accomplishment of journalism. Schlesinger proposes two methodological approaches to exploring how sources act—internalist and externalist. An internalist approach confines itself to a text-based analysis, examining what kind of people and institutions are quoted and in what way. Those following an externalist approach attempt to observe and thereby analyse “the strategic and tactical action of sources in relation to the media.” This is accomplished by “interviewing and observing those organised to influence the discursive fields of a determinate universe of coverage.” An ethnographer himself, this is the approach Schlesinger favours. Though Schlesinger credits Bourdieu with providing academic ballast for this approach, Bourdieu distanced himself from a binary arrangement: “The concept

29 Fishman, Manufacturing the News.
30 Schlesinger, ‘Rethinking the Sociology of Journalism’, 62; Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, Negotiating Contro, 7, 24.
34 Schlesinger, ‘Rethinking the Sociology of Journalism’, 71.
35 Ibid., 72.
of field had the initial function of offering a route out of this forced choice, of refusing the choice between an internal reading of the text which consists in considering the text itself and for itself, and an external reading which crudely relates the text to the society in general. Between the two there is a social universe that is always forgotten, that of the producers of the works”.\textsuperscript{36} In fairness to Schlesinger, what he calls “externalist” inhabits the between-space which Bourdieu favoured. I have conducted my study in (Schlesinger’s definition of) the externalist tradition, examining both journalists and sources as mutual producers who contribute to the generation of news content—in this regard, content concerning Muslims in Glasgow.

Muslims in Society

Any discussion of the coverage of Muslims in Western nations would be incomplete without mentioning Edward Said’s conception of Orientalism—“a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience.”\textsuperscript{37} The benign language of Said’s initial definition belies the “rhetorical totalitarianism” with which he approached the subject throughout his study and in his subsequent writings.\textsuperscript{38} One of the subjects he viewed through this critical lens is the media, and both his language and his ideas are evident in the scholarship that has focused on Muslims and the British media.\textsuperscript{39} First, though, we should consider the scholarship on Islamophobia—no less influenced by Said’s concern with Muslims as “Other”—which evaluates and applies an important term in understanding how British society, including the media, considers Muslims.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 78–79; Bourdieu, ‘The Journalistic Field’, 32–33.
\textsuperscript{39} Said, Covering Islam.
Islamophobia

Social scientific discussions of Muslims in Britain often focus on the contested notion of Islamophobia. Similar—by some accounts, identical—to racism, the term gained salience after the outcry in Britain and around the world over the publication of Salman Rushdie’s novel, *The Satanic Verses* in the late 1980s.\(^4\) Scholars suggest that this event signalled a transition from defining segments of the British population racially (as Black) or ethnically (as Asian, South Asian, Pakistani, etc.) to invoking them religiously.\(^4\) With its collective identity based on religion, however, this community became vulnerable to attacks and insults from which race relations legislation could not protect its members.

Political advocates both within and outwith the Muslim communities of Britain needed a new organising concept, and “Islamophobia” took hold.

The term crystallised in the public imagination in 1997 with the publication of the Runnymede Trust’s report, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us*

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The commission defined it as “unfounded hostility to Islam” and identified its features according to eight “closed” views of Islam in contradiction to what the commission considered “open” views. Central to my concern in this project, the media were named as a significant venue for Islamophobia: closed views of the type listed in the report were “routinely reflected and perpetuated in both broadsheets and tabloids, in both the local press and the national, in both considered statements and casual throwaway remarks, and in editorials, columns, articles, readers’ letters, cartoons and headlines as well as in reports of events.”

Such an exhaustive list left no organisation free from culpability.

The concept of Islamophobia was not uniformly welcomed and has remained contested. Scholar Fred Halliday labelled the commission’s efforts a “false salvation” offered by “well-intentioned ecumenism, or partisan engagement” which nonetheless threatened critical dialogue. Journalist and columnist Polly Toynbee famously and provocatively declared, “I am an Islamophobe.” The term’s use continues to conflate racism with prejudices against Muslims, and this has proved a stumbling block to operationalising the term. Even the report’s authors acknowledged that the word is “not ideal,” and Robin Richardson, one of the Trust’s directors during the report’s preparation, wrote more than a decade after its publication that “[t]he word is now widely used in the UK media, though occasionally it still appears in inverted commas, to imply the meaning is not clear, or—in the author’s view—not as clear as others claim.”

44 The commission’s chair, Gordon Conway, noted in the report’s foreword that the term was already in current use as the commission convened: ‘Hardly a day now goes by without references to Islamophobia in the media.’ Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All (London: Runnymede Trust, 1997), iii.
44 Ibid., 4.
46 Meer and Modood, ‘Refutations of Racism’, 345, 344.
Richardson updated the definition to inform a volume he helped edit; Chris Allen proposed a definition that, because of its length and density, is as hard to operationalise as the original, despite its conceptual clarity. The Runnymede Trust has not so much defined the term, then, as started a conversation, and it is not my purpose in this thesis to sift through the scholarly or public debate and select a winning definition. What is important for this discussion is that Islamophobia was proposed and popularised to solve a social problem; that its definition is contested; that it is problematically entangled in discussions of race and ethnicity; and that the media comprise a key venue through which Islamophobia is said to be transmitted and perpetuated.

**Media and Islamophobia in Britain**

The implication of the media in this matter has prompted a particular stream of cross-disciplinary scholarship that fuses the concerns of British media studies with the subject of Islamophobia and its public discourse. Here, we see the direct influence of Edward Said’s project. In *Covering Islam*, Said said journalists constructed the Islam they wrote about, and that a “real” Islam was a chimera. In his analysis, the Islam of the Western reporter was couched in the language of a problem; and this language resurfaces in the writings of Said’s academic legatees when considering British media. For Elizabeth Poole, the media become “an instrument of public ideology [which] demonizes Islam,” and “Muslims have a higher news value when they are a source of problems for the dominant majority.” Poole’s contemporary, John Richardson, set his own study to show

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50 Said, *Covering Islam*, 44–45; for more regarding definitions of “Muslim,” see chapter 1.

51 Elizabeth Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 17, 252; see also Elizabeth Poole, “Framing Islam: An Analysis of Newspaper
“how the reporting of elite (majority white) broadsheet journalists is implicated in the production and reproduction of (racist) attitudes, beliefs, sentiments and practices and the potential effects of this reporting on the lives of Muslims.”

Both scholars conducted their research in the mid- to late-1990s, contemporary with and informed by the Runnymede Trust’s discussion of Islamophobia, and it is in this context that Poole and Richardson separately examined what British newspapers were saying about Muslims. Both scholars conducted content analyses, building samples from the full ideological spectrum of the British press. Richardson restricted his focus to broadsheet or quality newspapers, whilst Poole looked at a narrower sample but drew from broadsheets and tabloids. They screened their selected publications for stories which refer to Islam, Muslims, or some other element associated with the religion or its adherents; they then categorised these stories and looked for common topics, such as terrorism or education; the most prevalent themes became the subject of a more intensive discourse analysis to determine how the newspapers covered them—the language used, the angles employed, the assumptions present in the articles.

The results were not surprising. Both scholars found that Muslims were seldom discussed in the news, and when they were, the tone was frequently negative. The issues in which Muslims’ religion was noted or discussed seemed to suggest an exceptional quality to Muslims—of dress, of education, and of sympathy to the state—as well as a perceived lack of fit with mainstream British values. Islam itself was often mentioned in comparison to other religions (typically Christianity) rather than in its own right. Terms such as “terrorist” and “fundamentalist” featured prominently, although they would reach a higher degree of salience after 9/11. Overall, these scholars found a negative representation of Muslims in British reporting. Poole noted that it is “inadequate”


Poole, Reporting Islam; Richardson, (Mis)Representing Islam. Poole also employed elements of reception study, as seen in chapter 4 of her monograph.
to “blame” the newsworkers, acknowledging the more remote structural factors that contributed to reporting predominantly on problems.\textsuperscript{54}

These were the first sustained examinations of the subject in a British context, and their timeliness in relation to 9/11—Poole’s monograph was going to press as the attacks occurred—provided both a high degree of interest in the topic and an opportunity to build the frame through which future research of Muslims and the media would be considered.\textsuperscript{55} Kerry Moore and colleagues updated the results several years on, after Britain had experienced its own eruptions of terrorism committed by people with religious and explicitly Islamic motivations. In large part, their findings supported those of Poole and Richardson and emphasised a shift in preoccupation from stories about security and terrorism, which hit a perhaps obvious peak in 2002, to stories about whether Muslims “fit in” with British culture and its values.\textsuperscript{56} The authors tried to avoid analysing their data through value judgements such as “positive” and “negative”.\textsuperscript{57} They allowed that media language in their sample was not typically inaccurate: stories that used the words “terrorist” were usually about terrorism; likewise words such as “fundamentalist” or “Islamist” often related to groups or individuals articulating a particular and corresponding strain of Islam within the public sphere.\textsuperscript{58} The authors instead blamed story selection for such abrasive depictions, implicitly suggesting that a broader range of stories would associate Muslims with a broader range of terms.

Recent surveys tend to continue on the same trajectory. Julian Petley and Robin Richardson collected a volume, \textit{Pointing the Finger}, which is often though

\textsuperscript{54} Poole, ‘Framing Islam’, 176.


\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 14–15.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 17.
not exclusively textual in nature. As the title suggests, the essays follow the theme of media discourse turning Muslims into scapegoats for social problems. Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin present a wide-ranging survey of how media frame Muslims. Following the chain links from Poole of 2002 back to Said of 1978, Morey and Yaqin suggest that their book “is about the origin, circulation, and utility of an epithet and the way the term has come to signify a political problem to be solved.” Meanwhile, Poole herself has returned to the subject, reprising with Kim Knott and Teemu Taira a 1982 study from Leeds University. The project examines the representation of religion in general, but the authors easily demonstrate increased attention to Islam as compared with 30 years ago, and once again, that attention is largely negative. Finally, linguist Paul Baker and his colleagues have taken a “Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies” approach to this topic. Though similar in form to the studies mentioned above, their sample set is massive and comprehensive, and the patterns and context of words such as “Muslim” are technologically sorted and explored with rigorous linguistic scrutiny. Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses “found that Muslims were frequently constructed in terms of homogeneity and connected to conflict.” Thus the trend is maintained: all of these works share an orientation which lines journalists in binary opposition to Muslims.

These studies are uneven in their methodologies. Morey and Yaqin’s survey is more impressionistic than systematic: the authors struggle under the diversity of their material to hold to their thesis that journalists, television and

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60 Morey and Yaqin, Framing Muslims, 2.
63 Gabriel Faimau took the model in a more focused direction, analysing coverage expressly within British Christian print media. The reportage is familiarly negative but the preoccupation is with foreign news—specifically instances of persecution of Christians in Muslim-majority countries; Gabriel Faimau, “British Christian Print Media and the Framing of Islam and Muslims through the Lens of Christian Persecution,” Journal of Intercultural Studies 34, no. 4 (2013): 340-55.
film producers, and even toy manufacturers are harmfully misrepresenting Muslims. Without a clear focus and a transparent, the reader is at the mercy of the authors to draw a coherent picture of how Muslims have been framed since 9/11. Taira et al. and Baker et al. improve on this point. However, Taira et al.’s methodology is too restrictive to make definitive conclusions about contemporary coverage of Muslims. The authors are bound to replicate the original survey’s methods, providing a small, unrepresentative slice of the British media. They say that they do not wish to generalise from their “limited sample”; they must then temper such conclusions as the following: “Despite increasing public awareness of the discrimination experienced by Muslims in Britain and the dissemination of a growing body of research on this, there seems if anything to have been a reduction, post 7/7 [the July 2005 attacks on London’s transit system], in the variety of discourses circulating in Britain about Islam.” Baker et al. have a stronger footing on which to rest their claims, given their comprehensive sample and their tight focus on representations of Muslims. The corpus-driven approach helps counteract “the criticism that researchers within CDA [Critical Discourse Analysis] supposedly ‘cherry-pick’ small amounts of data that support preconceived ideologies.” Unlike Morey and Yaqin, for example, Baker et al. are well-insulated from such critiques. They have picked up the questions initiated by Poole and by Richardson and addressed them with what may be the methodological acme of content analysis.

Troubling the Textualist Orthodoxy

Just as Cottle has identified orthodoxies in media production studies, we can consider the assertion of negative images of Muslims as a prevailing orthodoxy in the body of literature. In qualifying their research, Baker et al.

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64 Reprising the 1982 Leeds study, they collected data from two national newspapers—the Times and the Sun, both owned by Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp—and local paper the Yorkshire Evening Post; they also collected items from a week’s worth of broadcasting on BBC1, BBC2, and ITV1; Taira, Poole, and Knott, ‘Religion in the British Media Today’, 31.
65 Ibid., 40, 38.
acknowledge that they did not approach their material value-free. The early work of Poole and Richardson and the ideological underpinnings of Said have set a frame through which subsequent studies must pass, and even Baker et al.'s technological juggernaut relies on the interpretive human mind to set categories and determine significance.

This orthodox line gives ballast to other studies: within social research on Muslims in Britain, participants critique the media for their negative representations. Nefrose Kabir used these perceptions to guide her research, both in Britain and in her doctoral research in Australia, first interviewing young Muslims individually or in groups and identifying their concerns with media representation, then finding news articles that illustrated these concerns. Rusi Jaspal and Marco Cinarella meanwhile hypothesised a negative effect on "the primary readership of British newspapers, that is, the White British majority." According to the authors, these representations transform into "hegemonic social representation", entrenching in the collective mind of this ethnic and racial majority the belief that Muslims are a threat. This argument rests on theories of

67 Ibid., 274.
71 Ibid., 301.
social psychology, which I will not account for here. What these examples offer this study is a demonstration of the uses to which a field of scholarship so unified in theory, methodology, and conclusions can be put: studies can assert that British media representations of Muslims are generally negative because the path of the content analyses discussed above has led firmly in that direction.

Cemil Aydin and Juliane Hammer have called for a new research agenda for the field of media and Muslims. Whilst acknowledging the importance and the influence of Said’s project, they exhort scholars “to go beyond this sharp and artificial distinction and to construct a more complex picture of the ways in which Muslims and media are connected and mutually influenced.” They appeal for “new scholarly insights as well as more interdisciplinary approaches.” Some studies have begun to challenge the textualist orthodoxy, both by using and by expanding on the methods of content analysis. Although these examples remain scattered and alternative to the mainstream, they offer fruitful avenues to explore the questions of Muslims and the media.

**New Scholarly Insights**

One deficiency of many content studies that have defined the field is that they wash over “antithetical” examples. In their search for the general trend, they do not sufficiently account for problematic examples. Poole and Taira et al. depict this counter-narrative in terms of positive and negative coverage, classing positive stories as marginal to an overwhelming core of negative representations. Baker et al. are better positioned to acknowledge both streams,

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73 Ibid., 2.
74 Said, Covering Islam, 159.
75 Poole, Reporting Islam, 58; Taira, Poole, and Knott, ‘Religion in the British Media Today’, 38. Other scholars have demonstrably attempted to evade the binary ‘positive/negative’ assignment of media representations; see e.g., Moore, Mason, and Lewis, Images of Islam in the UK, 8; Dina Ibrahim, ‘The Framing of Islam On Network News Following the September 11th Attacks’, International Communication Gazette 72, no. 1 (2010): 113–114.
given the comprehensive quality of their corpus. However, Erik Bleich and his colleagues trace the discourse of British newspaper headlines from 2001 to 2012, troubling the textualist orthodoxy by finding “more years where portrayals [of Muslims] were net positive.” Kerem Öktem asserts that the view of an essentialising media is “unteachable” when one considers the diversity of European media, of which the British media “appear to be the most differentiated and best informed, at least in their quality outlets.” Whilst many scholars fix on the general trend, some turn their attention to the idiosyncratic reporting that appears only on the margins of the orthodox scholarship, investigating whether it is a register of change and thereby supplying the new insights Aydin and Hammer demand.

One way to accomplish this is to count and account for instances of participation—Muslims as sources, commentators, and journalists. Richardson provided a quantitative sketch of the sources present in his late-1990s broadsheet sample, finding that “establishment and bureaucratic [non-Muslim] sources” dominated news about Islam and Muslims. Tariq Modood noticed a contrast, however, between the media representations of British Muslims surrounding the Rushdie Affair and the attacks of 9/11. In the first instance, Muslims were absent as public commentators and columnists. By the second instance, there were a few—perhaps, Modood suggested, because Muslims were regarded as problematic and therefore journalistically interesting. The development of British Muslims’ presence in the media allowed practitioners of the religion to demonstrate agency in the public articulation of Islam.

In the subsequent decade, the phenomenon has developed further still. Modood, with colleagues Nasar Meer and Claire Dwyer, surveyed reporting on

76 Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes*, 66.
the comments about women and veils from then-cabinet minister Jack Straw in 2006; they noted “an observable pattern of Muslim perspectives . . . [which] marks a positive contrast with the more limited range of argumentation (publicly reported at least) . . . at the time of the Rushdie affair.”81 This widened range of Muslim sources included voices which were “angry, ambiguous, and approving of Straw’s comments. What is crucial to note is that this amounts to more than simply including Muslim voices of fundamentalist-anger.”82 This expansion from views typical of the Saidian dichotomy was present even in coverage from the tabloid Sun, one of the few news organisations included in the Leeds group’s longitudinal study. It is difficult to square Meer et al.’s data with Taira et al.’s suggestion that the variety of discourses in British media has shrunk. At the least, this discrepancy shows the mercurial nature of text-based content studies: a broad study collapses into a general trend nuance that emerges more strongly when analysts focus on a particular event.

Another way to register change is to note evidence of journalists’ reflexivity in the news texts. Just over a fortnight after 9/11, the Guardian’s readers’ editor, Ian Mayes, acknowledged that “the paper does not always radiate great understanding of Islam” and that “the Guardian is re-examining the language it uses in its coverage of the international crisis to try to avoid terms which may appear to imply that the paper equates terrorism with Islam.”83 Poole was able to monitor reports of the event over a brief window and analyse them using the same model she had used for her study, including as her preface a first draft of how Islam was reported after 9/11.84 Notably, the “threat within” and

82 Ibid., 218, emphasis Meer et al. Dina Ibrahim, examining US media, also observes an expansion of attitudes in media discourse, though this is bluntly defined as global-threatening and local-supportive; Ibrahim, “The Framing of Islam on Network News”.
84 Poole, Reporting Islam, 1–16; she returned to the subject with an opportunity to analyse the data in less pressured conditions for her 2006 edited volume, though she shed the tabloids from her sample and the qualitative analysis from her methodology; Elizabeth Poole, “The Effects of September 11 and the War in Iraq on British Newspaper Coverage,” in Muslims and the News Media, ed. Elizabeth Poole and John E. Richardson (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 89–102.
freedom of speech storylines which she observed in her main study continued to dominate coverage and analysis, but a third trend she identified was “a seemingly genuine effort to support Muslims, with more space devoted to Muslim voices.” Although the Times continued to conflate Islam and Islamism, Poole noted a lexical shift from “terrorist” to “Islamist.” Efforts such as this may have fostered the greater lexical clarity that Moore et al. observed in the years following 9/11: whether story selection remained mired in the convention of Islam as a problem, the way journalists wrote about it had improved.

This more attentive consideration of journalistic language and approach is evident in news texts from Scotland’s Herald during its reporting of a missing girl from the Isle of Lewis. Anthea Irwin analysed the coverage through headlines and photo captions, from the initial suggestion that “Island Girl” Molly Campbell had been abducted by her father to subsequent suggestions that Misbah Rana fled Scotland to join the part of her divided family now living in Pakistan. For Irwin, the choice to employ the name that either her mother used (Molly) or her father used (Misbah) indicated reflexive coverage from journalists who had to reassess “how they had ‘read’ the situation.” The headlines from the first week of coverage showed this progression: from Tuesday’s “abducted”, used without attribution; to Thursday’s “did not abduct” in quotation marks, now attributed; to Friday’s “abducted”, with quotation marks now throwing doubt on the term; and finally Saturday’s headline, “It was my choice. I like it here and want to stay with my father”, quoting Misbah. Of this direct quotation, Irwin astutely asked, “does it empower Misbah and give her the voice she has not had thus far? Or does it allow papers to avoid deciding on the wording for headlines that, at least for some of them, are in blatant contradiction to what they had been reporting just a

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85 Poole, Reporting Islam, 7, 11.
86 Ibid., 9, 4.
few days earlier?" Irwin’s question is answerable, but not through a strict textualist approach to the material. Although she uncovered examples that disturb the orthodoxy of an essentialising journalistic discourse, she raised as many questions as she answered. Of interest for this study, what is the context in which journalists consider Muslim sources in their stories? To do this, we turn to the second half of Aydin and Hammer’s call, adopting new approaches to the question.

More Interdisciplinary Approaches

I relate Aydin and Hammer’s desire for new approaches to Philo’s appeal for the “total system” approach to media studies generally, as discussed above. We have seen reception analysis as an element of some of this scholarship. But the primary unit of analysis remains the text. Few are the studies that approach the question though production analysis. Those that do contribute helpful insights to our understanding of the issue.

Finnish journalist Annikka Mutanen interviewed fellow newsworkers in a comparative study of religion reporting in her native country and in Britain. She undertook the study following the Danish cartoon crisis, but in the examples of news stories she used to prompt conversations about journalists’ attitudes and practices, she restricted the material to stories about Christianity; nonetheless, “[t]his decision did not prevent journalists from repeatedly referring to Islam,” which suggests the need for a separate research agenda on what is meant or understood subtextually by the phrase “religion in the news.” Her British respondents reflected a belief that Islam is lambasted more frequently and cruelly

89 Irwin, ‘Race and Ethnicity in the Media’, 209.
than Christianity is and that many of their colleagues (these journalists were, in the main, specialists on religious issues for their organisations) showed a lack of curiosity about religion which is an impediment to effective reporting. Meer and Modood interviewed newsworkers, choosing senior national journalists rather than religion specialists, and they asked participants to reflect on Islamophobia and racism. These journalists generally rejected the comparison, distinguishing religion as a choice from ethnicity as an inherited trait.

One discovery from Meer and Modood’s data is an appreciation of the impact Muslims who work as journalists have on their work environment. A journalist from “a leading centre-left national newspaper” highlighted his publication’s “appointment of a young Muslim woman as its religious affairs correspondent.” The participant saw the fruits of this appointment in her coverage of the hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca, which he called “terrific”: in his words, “she was able to report pilgrim voices, and these were young British people, they were from the North of England, from London . . . [and they were describing] what the hajj meant to them, what their Muslim identification meant, i.e. voices you don’t normally get in a national newspaper.” This journalist recognised the exceptional nature of the inclusion of unexceptional voices and suggested that their inclusion gave the newspaper a competitive advantage.

Journalists Hugh Muir and Laura Smith examined the role of Muslim journalists in mainstream London newsrooms, interviewing six such individuals about their role in the workplace. Their view of their position was less optimistic than the journalist who spoke with Meer and Modood, although they still reflected on the advantages their background offered them: “On the one hand, they experienced as positive the possibility of bringing in stories that would otherwise be absent from the news pages—a useful strategy for a young reporter trying to make their mark. On the other, they often felt a sense of being used and

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91 Mutanen, To Do, or Not To Do Goo, 38, 44.
92 Meer and Modood, ‘Refutations of Racism’.
93 Ibid., 350.
94 Ibid.
pushed into the cul-de-sac of writing about minority issues.”

Though the one Muslim journalist in my study denied such tension in her own career (see chapter 4), I believe it is a necessary topic for further scholarly investigation.

Scholars who have combined interviews and content studies on specific topics show how promising these methods can be. Turkish media scholar Alaaddin Paksoy studied the discourse of British news media in their coverage of Turkey’s course of accession to the European Union. He asked how the term and the idea of “Muslim” were introduced into coverage and the effect their inclusion produces. From his content analysis, he concluded that the term was frequently employed to highlight difference between Turkey and the EU, even when the tone of the article was “Turkophilic”, or in favour of Turkey’s accession. He then interviewed journalists who produced these texts, asking them why they used the term and what they understood it to mean. His respondents appealed to the general salience of the term in a post-9/11 context, to its relevance to the story, and to professional practices or media logic (Paksoy used the phrase “journalistic tricks”, which may misdirect the reader, as the assumptions and processes described were banal rather than underhanded). Such data enriches our understanding of the relationship between Muslims and the media, especially considering that these journalists, unlike Mutanen’s respondents, are not typically responsible for reporting on religion.

Sources, as we have discussed above, have a considerable share in the manufacture of news; and Muir and Smith, along with media scholar Julian Petley, approached this community from an interesting if idiosyncratic direction. They analysed four news texts published in UK newspapers from four to nine months after the 7/7 attacks in London, all of which demonstrated for the authors a reaction to the “ideological shorthand” phrase “political correctness gone mad”, or the idea that government officials institute ridiculous or

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97 Ibid., 241.
unnecessary policies to appease particular minority communities.\textsuperscript{98} Their examples include a local council reported to call December celebrations a “Winter Light festival” rather than Christmas and a bank reported to remove an advertisement with the image of a piggy bank so as to avoid offending Muslims. The articles were based on incorrect or misunderstood stories, and, taken together, they suggested to the authors a desire to label Muslims as prone to making outrageous or exceptional demands. Muir et al. revisited these stories to show not merely that they were factually wrong but how the journalists got it wrong. To do so, they turned to the institutions implicated in these stories and employed their own journalistic skills, asking questions and checking facts.

There is a smirkingly pedagogical spirit to the chapter: the authors were trading not so much in academic analysis as in a journalistic rewriting exercise, to show that, by doing a proper and thorough job of news gathering, these sensational stories could have been avoided.\textsuperscript{99} What gives it value analytically is the potential it reveals to consider not just the content but the context of news. The answers sources gave Muir et al. are not the analytical explanation for irresponsible journalism; rather, they become data that prompt different questions—what is this news story about, how did it come about, how did the sources characterise the events in question? There are sources who were absent from their fieldwork—Muslim group members and community leaders who participate in building this set of public representations of Islam. Finally, the journalists themselves could have been interviewed to discuss where the story ideas came from, what discussions transpired with editors—at the moments of both assignment and editing. We have yet to see a study that engages with these questions, and this is the task to which I have set myself in this research project.


Conclusion

This survey of the relevant literature concerning media and Muslims shows the gains scholars have made in identifying and characterising a social problem. An examination of how media scholars have treated their subject, through the levels of production, content, and reception, gives us a range of tools to apply to the question. There is value in studying these levels in a complementary way, even if our primary focus is only on one; and when there is an imbalance, scholars miss critical insights and can overdetermine the topic at hand.

Ideology is a central question for many scholars of media and society. Islamophobia has proved the governing ideology through which Muslims are defended or rejected in British society. As minorities in Britain began articulating their public identification in religious terms, the term gained salience as a way of defining exclusions and power imbalances which were unique to Muslims. However, it also led to challenges: is “phobia” the right word to describe what is taking place? And what, returning to Said, do we mean by “Islam?” Although legislation is crafted in parliament, and although community relations take place in neighbourhoods across the land, the media are “the central site of contestation” of these questions. It is fitting, then, that a particular strain of scholarship developed to study the relationship between Muslims and the media. Early researchers such as Poole and Richardson set the baselines for this field, assessing what the media were saying about Muslims and interpreting what that discourse (or, favouring Öktem, those discourses) meant. Scholars recognise that these studies were something of a “first draft” for the field and acknowledge that world events such as 9/11 and 7/7—as well as a decade and a half of contact, conversation, and contestation—have occurred since this research began; thus, they continue to analyse media content for its messages about Muslims.

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100 Hall et al., Policing the Crisis; Thompson, “Mass Communication and Modern Culture”; Philo, “Can Discourse Analysis Successfully Explain Content?”
The findings of these analyses have been largely consistent: the media report Islam in a negative way, misrepresenting its practitioners. My concern is that this field calcifies into orthodoxy, whereby this negative representation becomes a stock narrative, taken for granted. This orthodox conclusion is derived through textualist means, and the field is imbalanced by inadequate attention to journalistic practices, source strategies, and the conditions of production. Research that approaches news texts with open and critical faculties can yet disturb the established narrative, but I believe it is important to step outside of this tradition.

One result we might find from such inquiry, in a more quantitative study, is that negative coverage of Muslims is not radically different from negative coverage of politicians, of bankers, of climate scientists, or of climate change deniers. That is, we could put coverage of Muslims in the context of news values and the narrative of conflict or breakdown. I will not undertake such a graphing exercise in this study, though I agree with sociologist Linda Woodhead that normalising Muslims relative to other communities and sets of literature is a necessary and salutary direction for research to take.\textsuperscript{103} What I endeavour to show in the following chapters is how journalists themselves account for their coverage, how they conceive of Muslims in their midst, and how they build relationships that help them cover this story. My research situates this coverage within their broader practices and preoccupations, making at least a start on Woodhead’s appeal for normalising what has been perceived academically as an exceptional community. I also observe and interview Muslims who are in active relationships with journalists, helping articulate Islam and Muslims in media discourses. It is in the relationships between the two that news content is created, and a clearer understanding of this relationship will inform subsequent studies of that content and how it is received.

CHAPTER 3
QUALITATIVE FIELDWORK, PROBLEM-ORIENTED RESEARCH, AND THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SELF AS RESOURCE

In this chapter, I describe the means by which I generated data on relationships between journalists and Muslim sources in Glasgow. I outline both the design of the project and its execution, which deviated from that design. The narrative includes an account of the constraints on my fieldwork and the consequent limitations on the study. I situate the research in the tradition of qualitative fieldwork and problem-oriented research, navigating the fraught terrain of ethnographic study. I consider the problem of nomenclature and the epistemological problem of generalisability which beset such studies, and I critique reflexive methods which this tradition of scholarship demands, identifying “the ethnographic self as resource” as an appropriate tool for the project. By describing these considerations, I indicate what has informed my generation of data and my analysis of them in the data chapters that follow.

Field research—design and execution

Adopting Philip Schlesinger’s externalist approach to studying media and sources, as described in chapter 2, I prepared a research project based on interviews and observation. These were tools with which I was comfortable from my previous work as a journalist. I proposed interviewing forty to fifty participants, evenly split between sources and journalists. These would be focused, semi-structured interviews, complemented by observation of participants as they prepared media strategies, engaged in interviews, or prepared material for publication. My grandest hopes involved a year of observation: I would spend six months in different newsrooms and out in the field with
journalists; and another six months observing three distinct Muslim groups which had some level of contact with mainstream media in Glasgow, even if that level was a desire for contact that was frustrated either by the group members' abilities or by journalists' refusal to engage with them. In selecting my sample, I began with news organisations, believing that, of the two discrete communities, journalists would likely be the least willing to entertain prolonged research.¹

Learning the lessons from Schlesinger's uneven results in his attempt to study both the public BBC and private ITV, I began my requests with BBC Scotland.² I hoped that a positive response from that organisation would encourage private broadcasters and press organisations to take part; BBC journalists did not share my optimism when I mentioned this tactic.

On the Muslim source side of the constructed divide, I had to choose from a broad array of groups and individuals. Herbert Gans offers the normative suggestion that a "complete study of the news should ... include an investigation of both the individuals who become sources and the 99 percent of the population that does not."³ Whilst theoretically correct, this requirement is impractical, and flouting it highlights the arbitrariness of source selection, which is no less fraught in journalism itself.⁴ The researcher must make selections and disclose the reasons for those selections.

I hoped for a diverse sample of groups, following norms that had characterised my judgement and that of my colleagues regarding "good journalism." Knowing that Glasgow's Muslim population is demographically dominated by ethnic Pakistanis (see chapter 4), I hoped for one group of an ethnically mixed composition or claiming a different ethnicity, such as Libyan Arab or Indonesian. I intended for one group to be focused on women, so as to address gender concerns which dominate much of media coverage and which

¹ My typical line when explaining this rationale was, "Journalists like asking questions. They aren't so good at answering them." This suspicion was supported by the relative lack of access I gained to news organisations, though this happened for a variety of complex reasons detailed in this chapter and is not explained by my simple aphorism.
² See Schlesinger, 'Between Sociology and Journalism'.
⁴ Ibid., 78.
underscore a perceived imbalance of who speaks to journalists when Muslims speak. And I intended to observe the work of an organisation that presents itself as notionally representative of the religious community’s concerns. My reason for such diversity was to explore a range of possible strategies and interests within the city of Glasgow. One intention of mine was to shadow journalists as they conducted interviews, watching points of contact between journalists and sources in real time.

Challenges due to access prevented me from following through this design on both sides of my ideal sample of participants. As I mentioned in the introduction, the separation of participants into two neat categories of “journalists” and “sources” does not reflect the porous boundaries of the categories or the lived histories of participants. These situations disturb easy lines, but I shall deal with each constructed type in turn, beginning with working journalists.

Journalists

My initial entreaties with BBC Scotland went well, reminding me that, despite the difficulties Georgina Born faced with London management whilst conducting her ethnography of BBC, she received “an extraordinary amount of cooperation from people at all levels” of the Scottish branch, making her feel “completely welcome” and offering “astonishingly open access.” We arranged a three-day observation study for the end of August 2012, and one of the managers put me in touch with a former staff journalist—a Muslim—who had taken advantage of a recent round of job cuts to enter postgraduate study at the

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6 Born, Uncertain Visior, 17.
University of Glasgow; she returned to working with BBC Scotland as a freelance and then contract journalist over the course of my fieldwork.

The brief pilot study was fruitful: it introduced me to Glasgow as a working city, and I was able to compare my own experiences and memories working for a public broadcaster in a large urban market with the concerns and practices of workers doing similar jobs in a completely different environment. I met and spoke with journalists at all levels of production: entry-level researchers, specialist correspondents, senior broadcasters who co-ordinated assignment and editing, and managers who oversaw the operation and set directions and policies in the newsroom. I observed editorial meetings, of which there were several throughout each day, including the weekly “commissioning meeting” on Friday, which provides a venue for journalists to pitch new ideas for the week ahead rather than more immediate day-of or next-day stories. I was invited to pitch stories, and during my time there, I proposed two ideas, one of which I researched and made a phone call on, at the encouragement of the programme editor; the idea ultimately did not become a broadcast story, but I felt I was showing good faith. I had limited success observing the process of editing and shaping stories: my requests to watch scripts being vetted, which I recalled from my time with CBC, were met with incomprehension, as I was told this process did not happen much in the newsroom. I find this hard to believe, and I imagine that a longer, more regular engagement in the newsroom would have revealed what I experienced at CBC as a central process in terms of the collaborative creation of news content. I did not get to shadow reporters as they went “out” for a story, although we made plans to observe such work when I returned in the autumn, after writing up the results of my pilot study. Finally, I accompanied several workers for drinks after Friday evening’s programming was complete.

As cordial as the pilot experience was, the timing was delicate. The day before I arrived at Pacific Quay—the smart and stylish headquarters for BBC Scotland, built in 2007—the corporation announced thirty-five job cuts across the service. I only learned of this from reading the newspaper on the train that first morning. The mood in the newsroom was tense—the jokes were bitter, with
references to who would be out of the pool first and arm-wrestling matches to determine who stays; a senior editor admitted to me that it was refreshing to talk about journalistic practices, as most of his conversations over the last several days had been with employees discussing possible redundancies. One event I observed on my first day was a cross-departmental meeting of employees with their union representatives, discussing the announcement of the cuts, the reasons management gave for making the cuts as they did (“front-loaded,” or heavily weighted in the first year rather than spread to the end of the period by which they need to meet their savings target), and possible employee responses. I had empathy with them: I had experienced both labour disputes and job cuts during my time with CBC, and I told my story to journalists many times. Nonetheless, I was the target of several jokes involving the term “management spy,” and during interviews, I sensed preoccupation from journalists more focused on their career futures than my sometimes vague questions about sourcing practices. Despite these constraints, I concluded the pilot with promising material and an invitation—even an expectation that I would be back.

However, as I attempted to negotiate my return to the newsroom, the corporation faced several problems, specific to the Scottish branch and germane to the corporation as a whole. Following the announced job cuts, relations between management and employees degraded through the autumn and winter. Some unionised employees began a work-to-rule campaign and approved a strike mandate for the spring, though this strike was called off the day before it was due to happen. Meanwhile, the Education and Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament requested that representatives of the unions and BBC Scotland management brief them on the impact of the cuts for Scottish broadcasting, particularly as Scotland prepared for the Commonwealth Games, the seven-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, and the independence referendum—all due in 2014 and, so the politicians argued, demanding increased

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media attention rather than reduced staff levels. Union leaders joined the committee on 30 October 2012; BBC Scotland management sent a letter and a report. This did not please the parliamentary committee members, and they returned to the issue on 22 January 2013, this time with managers from the broadcaster present—reportedly at the insistence of the chair of BBC Trust, Lord Patten. We can read in the official report a spirit of defensiveness from BBC Scotland managers and a depiction of acrimony not only internal to the workplace but between the corporation and external institutions such as the Scottish Parliament.

The pressures on BBC, however, did not just come from events and individuals at Pacific Quay. On 3 October 2012, ITN—one of the UK’s private broadcasters, and a network competing with BBC—aired a documentary describing allegations of sexual abuse from BBC presenter Jimmy Savile, who had died the previous year. The documentary alleged not only repeated abuses over decades from Savile and other workers employed by BBC and other organisations but also repeated failures on the part of supervisors, managers, and external authorities to halt this activity and prosecute it. Among the most acutely troublesome statements in the documentary were revelations that BBC producers were preparing a report for investigative programme Newsnight which offered similar details about Savile but that the report was cancelled prior to broadcast; this report would have aired around the same time as a Christmas-themed tribute to Savile. These revelations caused disruption in several institutions, but arguably the greatest impact was on the BBC. The broadcaster prepared a documentary for the programme Panorama examining its own failures, including the decision to

cancel the *Newsnight* report. In the following weeks, *Newsnight* incorrectly named Conservative politician Lord McAlpine as a child abuser, and the recently appointed director-general, George Entwistle, resigned. News reports depicted the broadcaster at a moment of crisis.\(^2\)

Though these events did not implicate BBC Scotland, the branch’s director, Ken MacQuarrie, led one of the corporation’s internal investigations—this one into the libel against Lord McAlpine. As well, the services are linked by reputation and by technology, including an intranet that allows BBC employees across the globe to share documents. I can understand why the corporation would not wish to grant access to outside observers in these conditions. In e-mails with a senior journalist at Pacific Quay, I was encouraged on more than one occasion to check back in a few months, once matters had calmed down. Almost a year after my initial pilot, the *Daily Record* reported on the results of a Freedom of Information request which revealed two BBC Scotland employees are among the 81 workers investigated for claims of sexual abuse since the Savile scandal became public.\(^3\) There was no resumption of official research with the institution, despite my requests, although I managed to conduct some interviews with individual BBC journalists.

Scotland’s media landscape is, of course, wider than the BBC. I consider Glasgow as a comprehensive “news ecosystem”—a field with multiple related actors working, competing, and collaborating in the production of news.\(^4\) Chris Anderson uses the term to describe his study of metropolitan journalism in Philadelphia, including two daily newspapers and online news outlets; though it resembles “media ecology” as defined by Neil Postman, it is neither as theoretical

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nor as ethical in its concern. For Anderson, Philadelphia’s news ecosystem is a geographical and relational field, and constructing his research site at this level allows him to lift his study from a fixation with one institution and see how coverage in the city works. My intention was to contextualise the rich ethnographic data collection from BBC with interviews with and brief observations of journalists in other news organisations. Given the difficulties related above, an ecosystemic approach has proved essential to carrying out this research.

I had a prior acquaintance with the deputy editor of the national broadsheet the Herald, and I contacted him about arranging time to visit. Following advice from methodological literature, I started with a small request and hoped to establish credentials to the point of requesting more. I asked for a week in the newsroom; I was granted two days in December, which shrunk to one day before my observation began. My contact told me this was due to time constraints and his concern that, the longer I was present in the newsroom, the more journalists would feel beholden to speak with me rather than getting on with reporting and writing the news. My one day of observation partly entailed shadowing a correspondent who writes for the Herald and the daily Glasgow-focused tabloid, the Evening Times. I also sat in on an editorial meeting, spoke with other journalists, and generally observed newsroom activity from within. Contact with some of the journalists led to another half-day of observation the

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57 I clarify my use of the term “national” in a Scottish context in chapter 4.


59 These newspapers, as well as the Sunday Herald and their online expressions, are produced by the same company, Herald & Times Group. The journalists work in the same newsroom and have blurred boundaries between the various publications.
following spring with an *Evening Times* reporter as she worked out of the office, meeting, interviewing, and gathering story ideas. Unrelated to my contact with Herald & Times Group journalists, I spent a half-day of observation at an event called The Gathering—a voluntary-sector trade show at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC), across the River Clyde from BBC Scotland’s headquarters. This event included a discussion about relations between tabloid journalists and voluntary sector organisations, and although it was not explicitly about Muslims or religious communities, its correspondence to my project was clear, and has provided useful data which appear in chapter 7.

The remainder of my primary data on Glasgow journalists comes from interviews.\(^20\) I conducted twelve formal semi-structured interviews with journalists. By “formal,” I mean that we sat and spoke with the understanding that I would summarise and include their responses in the project. They signed a consent form, indicating familiarity with my project, an understanding of my responsibilities to them as participants, and whether they wished to be recorded and identified.\(^21\) By “semi-structured,” I mean that I had several questions I wished to ask but allowed the conversation to follow its own course, asking spontaneous questions to follow up particular answers they gave. All but one of these interviews took place in person, and they ranged in duration from twenty minutes to two hours.\(^22\) For several participants, I also conducted “pre-interviews,” in which we would meet informally for coffee or talk on the phone discuss some of the issues and understand what kinds of questions I would ask and what kinds of answers they would give.

Four interviews took place at the journalists’ workplace, one at home, and the rest at cafés, save one by phone. Four journalists asked me to keep them and their organisation anonymous, and I will identify them here as Correspondent Broadcast, Correspondent Print, Editor Print One, and Editor Print Two. The others consented to be identified; this negotiation included some tension with

\(^20\) See Appendix A for a table of information on interview participants.  
\(^21\) See Appendix B for a copy of the data sheet and consent form.  
\(^22\) I interviewed Annie Brown, correspondent, *Daily Record* by phone 26 September 2013, though we met in person subsequently.
two journalists from BBC Scotland, who made their identification the subject of discussion and awkward jokes, stating it was contingent on whether what they said seemed liable to get them “sacked.” Ultimately, the journalists I interviewed wanted to know what would be most helpful for me, and from their own professional practices—encouraging sources to speak on the record—they understood the value of full disclosure. As those who follow daily news will know, though, the use of unnamed sources is a regular journalistic practice, too, and this informed journalists who chose to remain anonymous.

Four journalists declined consent for recording the interview (one only because it was conducted by telephone and therefore impractical to record). For five interviews, I took no notes during the interview and then wrote down summaries afterwards—from twenty minutes to four hours after the interview, depending on the circumstances. When I recorded interviews, I also took notes, and I transcribed the recordings fully. I summarised these transcripts and sent them, or the typed summaries of notes after unrecorded conversations, to participants to ensure that my record of our conversation matched with theirs. This was occasionally an opportunity to ask further questions or clarify details, and in some instances, it also helped draw lines between material that was for-attribution or off-the-record. None of the participants was given the chance to review the analysis in this thesis prior to its submission. I transcribed recorded interviews verbatim; however, for the purpose of clarity, when I quote participants directly, I clean up some false starts, “uhms,” and other verbal tics. I apply judgement to balance this purpose with the need to let readers encounter the precise ways in which participants articulated themselves, as this can illustrate subtextual variance which helps our interpretation.

In addition to the twelve interviews described above, I had three formal semi-structured interviews with sources who exhibited several features of journalists. All three were recorded—two in person at the participant’s workplace and one via Skype—and each lasted approximately an hour. One of these participants is a former journalist now working for a Glasgow charity; he offered training and support to one of the Muslim community groups I have included in
this study. Our questions were primarily focused on his practical support of this group, but I asked him several questions about his practice as a journalist, and his responses are as relevant as those of journalists currently employed by a news organisation. The other two are Glaswegian Muslims who operate or have operated as sources for journalists but who are now employed in some capacity as journalists. One leads the media and public relations office for Al Jazeera Network in Doha, Qatar; the other writes a weekly column in the Scottish edition of the UK tabloid the Sun. I contacted them because of their work as sources for journalists, but their current professional work gives them insights into news production that can aid our understanding of journalistic practice. I take a functional approach to these categories: were I to draw a strict line between participants as “journalists” or “sources,” I would count these three in the latter category. But where applicable, I add their insights to discussions of journalistic practice. We will see similar slipperiness between boundaries when we consider sources below.

Erik Bleich and Robert Pekkanen recommend accounting for interviews sought but not obtained—the interview equivalent of a response rate for studies using surveys.23 I applaud the effort to bring such transparency to interview research, though I believe that numbers and percentages are of limited value in qualitative research. The actual response rate is difficult to calculate, because the number of possible interviews is hypothetical, derived from counterfactuals. For example, my number of formal interviews would have included more journalists from BBC Scotland if the corporation’s circumstances had been different during my fieldwork. For this study, I consider a description of attempted and accomplished interviews sufficient to give the character of how exhaustively the news ecosystem of Glasgow is represented. I include insights drawn from my brief observations at BBC Scotland and the Herald & Times Group as well as the panel discussion at The Gathering. I had a complete lack of response from Scottish Television (STV), the private Scottish television broadcaster headquartered in

Glasgow; and I had no response from managers or editors at Scottish tabloid the 
*Daily Record*, although I interviewed one correspondent and have the comments 
of another reporter who was part of The Gathering’s panel discussion. One direct 
request for an interview received no response, and I conducted two interviews 
with journalists who later withdrew their consent to participate.

**Sources**

The other side of my artificial divide—sources—contains a breadth of 
classification. In media scholarship, news sources are commonly sorted into 
official and unofficial sources. Paul Manning defines official sources as 
“associated with the apparatus of government and the state”; everyone else is 
unofficial.24 This is, I believe, too blunt a delineation, missing the authorisation 
that comes from being a representative body or holding capital, especially 
financial capital. Thus the chief executive officer of an international bank sits 
uncomfortably within the theorised rubric of “unofficial sources.” I suggest that 
Manning’s state associations are better classed as “bureaucratic,” a term which 
features repeatedly in Fishman’s study of news routines.25

Authority is a helpful feature for an enlarged definition of official sources: 
scholars write of the allure for journalists of sources who can make things 
happen.26 Bureaucratic sources are included in this description but not 
coterminous with it. Power can come not just from the ability to make laws, enact 
laws, or influence people and events through access to capital; it is also derived 
from one’s representativeness, which helps us understand unofficial sources as 
nonetheless valuable for journalists.27 Howard Becker identifies knowledge as a 
determinant of authority, and his “hierarchy of credibility” can be translated to

25 Fishman, *Manufacturing the News*.
26 Gans, *Deciding What’s News*, 130; Allan Bell sorts this as a threshold of activity: unofficial 
sources need typically to be doing something, whereas official authoritative sources can do things 
by saying them: ‘Talk is news only if the right person is talking.’ Bell, *The Language of News 
the practical role Fishman calls “somebody entitled to know what they say”, more formally labelled “socially authorised and socially sanctioned knowers.”

Authority does not determine access: Schlesinger suggests that “sources be conceived as occupying fields in which competition for access to the media takes place, but in which the material and symbolic advantages are unequally distributed.” He marks the distribution of power among official and unofficial sources; David Deacon has noted further that in the sphere of voluntary organisations, to which he accords unofficial or non-official status, we can still find a range from “small community-based groups operating on a financial shoestring to large, highly professionalized, international organizations controlling millions of pounds.” Robert Hackett proposed a “hierarchy of access” which demonstrates this unequal distribution of power in a fine-grained ranking, demonstrating not only the greater access and influence of bureaucratic sources but the various uses to which the source types are put. Binary oppositions, then, are of limited use in analysing the distribution of power among journalists’ sources. I apply a spectrum of more- or less-official, which encompasses all of the source participants in this study.

My goal of observing three groups as they conducted media outreach or developed media strategy did not take the shape I intended. I identified one group which became active in the Glasgow media as my fieldwork began. Its members were open to participating, and I conducted several interviews and observed them at work. Fieldwork with them presented some challenges, primarily as their work concerned Muslim women and I am a non-Muslim man. I was asked not to come to particular events and needed to negotiate permission for other events.

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29 Schlesinger, ‘Rethinking the Sociology of Journalism’, 77, emphasis Schlesinger.
identified another group with a project which I thought would generate mainstream media interest.\footnote{I mentioned the project to two journalists during my research, and they agreed that it was the kind of project they would want to hear about and would include in their coverage.} The group leadership was receptive, but progress was stalled by long absences of its members, and I was referred twice by e-mail to other people who were deemed the best person to speak with. Ultimately, they offered no concrete invitation to observe their work, and they are not included in this research. Other inquiries with groups—either directly or through recommendations of colleagues—generated no response.

What emerged instead is a snowballed list of interview subjects who are engaged with journalists in some or another capacity, held alongside the observation of one group, AMINA-Muslim Women’s Resource Centre (hereafter referred to as “Amina”). This group becomes the case study I consider in chapter 8, though responses from Amina participants appear throughout the thesis. I spent six days observing Amina, both at work training in its office and at events in the community. I interviewed four staff, including the director and the coordinator of the campaign I Speak for Myself (hereafter referred to as “I Speak”), which generated media publicity starting in August 2012. I spoke with one of their board members, who is also a city councillor in Glasgow. I interviewed four volunteers, one of whom received funding from Vodafone Foundation to conduct a video training programme for Amina volunteers from March to May 2013. And I interviewed a former BBC Scotland journalist who now works in public relations in the voluntary sector and conducted media training for the group.

All but two permitted me to identify them in this study—one staff member (Amina Staff) and one volunteer (Amina Volunteer)—and all but one permitted me to record the interviews. These interviews lasted from twenty minutes to an hour (with one exception), and seven were conducted at Amina’s office in the Govanhill neighbourhood of Glasgow. Two more were conducted at the participants’ workplace—Glasgow city chambers and Oxfam’s Scottish office. The exception to this is the head of the I Speak campaign: I interviewed her in my office in Edinburgh, and the interview lasted for more than two hours, following
earlier pre-interviews at Amina’s office. I initiated contact with her, and she arranged the interviews with other staff and volunteers and put me in touch with their media consultant. I met the board member separately at an event and contacted her primarily because of her role as a city councillor, although I was aware of her connection to Amina.

The other interviews were conducted in a variety of settings. My contact with sources often came by recommendation: I would ask journalists whom they spoke with from the Muslim communities of Glasgow and then contact those individuals. Altogether, I conducted formal semi-structured interviews with eight sources from outwith Amina. They crossed the spectrum of more- or less-official, including bureaucratic sources: two Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSP), a lawyer, two directors of the Muslim Council of Scotland (MCS), an activist from the voluntary sector, a former activist now working in media communications, and a retired politician and “community leader.” \[33\] Five of the eight interviews took place in person. One interview took place over Skype and was recorded. The final two spoke with me by phone; these interviews were not recorded. One of them chose to remain anonymous and will be referred to in this thesis as Director Activist. For the in-person interviews, I met four sources in their workplaces and one at his home. Three of these participants consented to have the interviews recorded. The two participants from MCS were interviewed together. Each interview lasted between thirty-five minutes and an hour. In addition to these interviews, I had requests declined from a Member of Parliament and a former Member of Parliament, two Glasgow councillors, and the head of a mosque board.

Participants classed as sources betrayed the porousness of categories just as journalists did. One journalist from among my participants is a Muslim, and some of the roles she played in the newsroom context resembled those of sources. Where it is relevant, I consider her responses among those of participants explicitly classed as such. There are also sources who inhabit multiple roles, such

\[33\] I will expand on the phrase “community leader” in chapter 4; the term is both descriptively encompassing and, as used by some participants, ironic and critical.
as the city councillor who is also a board member for Amina. I will disambiguate these roles when it is pertinent, but it is also important not to cleave to slavishly to categories. Philosopher Martin Heidegger, in contrasting what he calls physical and humanistic sciences, says the latter “must necessarily be inexact just in order to remain rigorous. . . . The inexactitude of the historical humanistic sciences is not a deficiency, but is only the fulfilment of a demand essential to this type of research.”34 Participants come with histories for which we must account, even if their biographies violate our neat typologies; I disclose the trajectory of sources in history when it is relevant to the discussion.

Considerations—How I Treat the Generation of Data

The bulk of the data included in this study was generated through interviews. I trained as a journalist and worked for many years at a job of which interviewing others is an essential component. I am comfortable with forming questions, asking questions, and distinguishing between open and directed questions to glean different kinds of information. I do not suggest, though, that a journalistic approach to interviewing is identical to the ethnographic: the model that, for example, James Spradley describes requires a long engagement with subjects, multiple interviews with each subject, and a slow and analytically supported progress from open material to specific observations.35 This form of interview supports a grounded exploration of culture and is consonant with what anthropologist Harry Wolcott considers an essential element of ethnography: the commitment to cultural interpretation.36 Wolcott notes that “problem-oriented research” with a tightly focused question may not produce what he considers “ethnography.”37 This does not diminish the research, but it does demand a different nomenclature; early in his career, Wolcott, recognising the disciplinary

37 Ibid., 65.
stakes in adopting the term, vacillated on how to label his own research.\(^{38}\) My insistence on observing interactions with Muslim sources orients this research project to a specific problem rather than cultural interpretation, and I am therefore satisfied to define the study as qualitative fieldwork drawn from problem-oriented research.

Accompanying a more focused line of questions, problem-oriented or externalist research is more selective in recruiting participants. I adopted “purposive sampling” to include participants relevant to the topic: journalists working for mainstream news organisations in Glasgow who have covered Muslim stories, sources who identify as Muslim or are involved in coverage of Muslims in Glasgow.\(^ {39}\) For focused research such as mine, random sampling is inappropriate and may have resulted in no useful data whatsoever on questions of journalists’ engagement with Muslim sources. Much like media ethnographer Gaye Tuchman, who used “snowballing” tactics for her study on women reporters in New York, I sought relevant people and then asked for recommendations.\(^ {40}\) In recruiting journalist participants, I contacted senior figures in news organisations, outlined the project’s goals, and asked for names of relevant reporters. I also contacted “obvious” sources—people who were visible in the news—and asked them which journalists they had relationships with. This study, then, is not a generalised picture of the knowledge, interest, or working relationship of journalists in Glasgow but a detailed investigation of certain journalists who have contact with a specific subset of the community they report on; as Robert Stake puts it, “the demands for typicality and representativeness yield to needs for assurance that the target case is properly described.”\(^ {41}\)

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 46.


A related marker of success with interview-based research is that of saturation, or the idea that the full range of data or themes has been plumbed in the course of interviews.\textsuperscript{42} There are, however, instances when this may not be appropriate, and when it is not achieved, Bleich and Pekkanen recommend noting this for the sake of transparency.\textsuperscript{43} In considering responses from journalist participants, I heard consistent answers to practical questions such as how journalists wish to be contacted, what a “good story” pitch is, and when it matters that a source or a story is Muslim. However, private broadcasters are not represented in my sample, and tabloid journalists are underrepresented, and I believe their inclusion would have enriched and widened the representation of this relationship between journalists and Muslim sources in Glasgow. Sources were near unanimous in describing media coverage of Muslims as negative, and, whether related to media coverage or not, they agreed that Scotland was generally safer and more inclusive of Muslims than England.

The size and incompleteness of my sample raises legitimate questions about the generalisability of the study: in what way does the analysis that follows apply to situations outside of Glasgow or indeed to groups, individuals, and organisations in Glasgow that fall outwith this sample? This is not a new question to social research, and the answers are as old now as the question.\textsuperscript{44} I follow anthropologists Margaret LeCompte and Judith Goetz, who understand generalisability in qualitative research as aiming for “comparability and translatability of findings rather than for outright transference to groups not investigated.”\textsuperscript{45} Sociologists Geoff Payne and Malcolm Williams question the ease


\textsuperscript{43} Michelle O’Reilly and Nicola Parker, “Unsatisfactory Saturation”: A Critical Exploration of the Notion of Saturated Sample Sizes in Qualitative Research, Qualitative Research 13, no. 2 (2013): 190–97; Bleich and Pekkanen, ‘How to Report Interview Data’, 97.


\textsuperscript{45} Margaret D. LeCompte and Judith Preissle Goetz, ‘Problems of Reliability and Validity in Ethnographic Research’, Review of Educational Research 52, no. 1 (1982): 34; Clifford Geertz also
with which many social researchers claim their findings from close scrutiny of one situation are applicable elsewhere.\textsuperscript{46} In that spirit, I propose "moderatum generalisations" from this research—modest in scope and open to change.\textsuperscript{47} The burden is on me to describe as "thickly" as possible both Glasgow as a setting and the individuals in question as I encounter them, and these observations are woven through the subsequent chapters; the burden then falls to the reader and to subsequent researchers to compare and translate these findings to similar (or contrasting) settings and relationships.\textsuperscript{48}

I include one final note concerning numbers. The study is qualitative in nature, and the data were generated through semi-structured interviews. Frequency is therefore a limited indication of importance, as participants were not prompted to describe a consistent set of subjects or practices they follow nor to use consistent terms. That only one journalist out of the twelve mentioned a specific criterion does not necessarily diminish its importance relative to one which five mentioned. My judgement for including responses is based on the context of our conversation, my experience with journalistic practice, and accounts from the relevant literature. Nonetheless, throughout the data chapters that follow, I tally common responses from participants. This is a way of organising and interpreting the data, and it can be useful for drawing modest generalisations about the respective journalistic and source communities encompassed by this study.

**Summary**

I conducted thirty interviews between August 2012 and March 2014. The balance between journalists (twelve) and sources (eighteen) weighs in favour of the latter, but this is mitigated by some of my observation study, including

\textsuperscript{46} Geoff Payne and Malcolm Williams, 'Generalization in Qualitative Research', *Sociology* 39, no. 2 (2005): 295-314.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 297.
\textsuperscript{48} Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3-30.
informal conversations with journalists at work, as well as reflexive reflections on
my own work as a journalist, which I discuss below. I observed Amina at work in
media relations, and I attended or participated in events focused on the subject of
religion, Islam, and the media in Scotland; I completed fourteen days of
observation. I spent time in two newsrooms, which I analyse through the filter of
my previous eight years of experience in similar environments. I was able to
observe one face-to-face point of contact: a journalist for the Evening Times
interviewing a Muslim source.

Whilst the execution of this fieldwork did not match the design, I believe
it presents a credible portrait of this active and dynamic relationship between
journalists and Muslim sources in Glasgow. My data are richer than the published
content of news media provides, giving narratives of encounter and depictions of
successes and frustrations, and I can compare these accounts with the findings of
scholarly literature on Muslims and the media. It is qualitative fieldwork
examining a specific problem, implicating specific actors: “those organised to
influence the discursive fields of a determinate universe of coverage.”
My
judgement influenced my choice of topic, of question, and of participants, and I
endeavour to be transparent about this judgement throughout the study. In the
following section, I discuss methods drawn from anthropology which support
this effort.

**Reflexivity and the Ethnographic Self as Resource**

Reflexivity has long been a hallmark of anthropological work, although
strong critiques of the ethnographic enterprise such as the volume Writing
Culture have been required to shake practitioners into appraising their
relationship to their participants, their discipline, and the field. This should not
discourage scholars from engaging in field research but encourage them to

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49 Schlesinger, ‘Rethinking the Sociology of Journalism’, 72.
50 James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of
evaluate the part they play in generating data.\textsuperscript{51} Thick description helps this task: I consider each interview as an encounter, and data from this encounter are generated not merely from the content of the responses but the tone of voice, the setting, the participant’s history, my questions, and the relationship I have struck with each participant. Throughout my analysis, I endeavour to expose assumptions I carried into the fieldwork and power relations at work as it was carried out. These are not as straightforward as suggested by the narrative of the powerful researcher appropriating the frames for the interview by asking questions. For example, whilst negotiating and renegotiating access, the participant holds power, so we need to see this as a fluid dynamic. Participants who choose to take part and answer questions—much like sources who choose to talk with journalists—may be positioning themselves in their field in an agency-rich manner.

Nonetheless, the question of researcher effect vexes some scholars. Chris Paterson and Anna Zoellner have noted an increase in “former” journalists conducting production analysis.\textsuperscript{52} They identify both benefits and challenges that prior professional experience can bring to a study of news media. In an industry shaped by time pressures and characterised by specialised routines and vocabularies, familiarity with this environment might make the researcher look like a safer bet to grant access to; prior knowledge can also deepen the effectiveness of the researcher’s observations and analysis.\textsuperscript{53} Journalist-turned-media scholar Barbie Zelizer even makes it a praiseworthy theoretical corrective, noting that “nothing that I read as a graduate student [about journalism and journalistic practice] reflected the working world I had just left.”\textsuperscript{54} Critiques of journalism by journalists might then claim some extra authenticity and, thus,

\textsuperscript{51} On a conscientious return to the field, see John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi, eds., Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); on the distinction between ‘generating’ and ‘collecting’ data, see Jennifer Mason, Qualitative Researching (London: Sage, 1996), 36.


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 103; see also Cottle, ‘New(s) Times’, 24.

validity. But Paterson and Zoellner worry about proximity blindness: might journalists be too close to the subject to view it critically, and might the interventions of a close observer—experienced or otherwise—lead to the display of an artificial rather than a natural environment?55

I felt personally convicted by their observations, for I am precisely such a researcher. As the introduction makes clear, I have worked in journalism for eight years, studied it for four, and aspired to the career since childhood. My experience, though, has a greater bearing on my research project than a simple question of roles and identification: in the last year or two of my time with CBC, I was charged to build relationships with sources among Ottawa’s Muslim populations.56 I needed more than a reflexive account of my filters and assumptions for this study—I needed a tool to help me include this experience as data.

My interest was not in autobiography or autoethnography, nor in the feminist method of “memory work”: these approaches place the scholar’s memory and experience at the centre of the research, whereas my project remains focused on Glasgow, Scotland—a place I have never worked.57 Neither is my problem satisfactorily addressed through the ideas of “native anthropology” or “at-home anthropology.”58 These approaches trouble the “insider-outsider” or “emic-etic” dialectic in social research, and they sufficiently characterise my relationship to the field, but they do not implicate the personal dimension of my journalistic activity as part of the data and analysis. They account for experience but not

56 I describe this work in chapter 7.
experiences. Anthropologists Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat have developed a method that not only allows for such data but makes it a research imperative.

Collins and Gallinat challenge as artificial the erasure of the researcher from ethnographic accounts, noting that “the anthropologist as a competent member of society will always and already draw on their stock of experiences in making sense of the world”.\(^5^9\) Given that the researcher’s experience is already implicated, they propose making this work visible. They are not recommending autobiography, whereby the researcher’s story becomes the dominant or the only narrative of the project; rather, experiences of the researcher join those of participants in constituting the data of research, with the researcher “aware of the responsibility she has . . . to hold up her own as well as others’ accounts for critical inspection.”\(^6^0\) The authors outline some of the hazards, including using the self as “a ploy,” incautious implication of family and friends, and a retreat into narcissism.\(^6^1\) But if the researcher can account for these dangers, Collins and Gallinat say “anthropologists should include personal experiences as data in their analysis. Not to do so seems to us at best an opportunity lost and at worst a moral transgression.”\(^6^2\)

Both Collins and Gallinat demonstrate the application of this idea in chapters in their volume. Collins’s contribution speaks primarily of signalling empathy, and in this way, his account is similar to Paterson and Zoellner’s description of the advantages of prior professional experience in research.\(^6^3\) He describes how stories and common points of reference help to draw data out of informants; but the visible inclusion of his own stories also introduces data, and in this, Gallinat reveals more fully the potential of this approach. Gallinat researches a phenomenon called Ostalgie, or a nostalgia among former East Germans for their socialist past. Gallinat grew up in the German Democratic


\(^{60}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 15–16.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 17, emphasis mine.

Republic, and during postgraduate studies in England, she returned to the former East to conduct fieldwork in 2001. She inquired after a trend she had read of called *Ostalgie* parties, in which people would dress in and celebrate the retro kitsch of socialism.\(^{64}\) Although her 2001 informants did not describe such events, she recalled encounters with *Ostalgie* parties from her own youth.\(^{65}\) She then wrote a narrative of those encounters, including details of her ambivalence, her relationship to her peers, and also her “own family’s history with the GDR state, which was a critical and difficult one.”\(^{66}\)

In analysing this material, Gallinat forestalls criticisms of selective memory, arguing that, “[j]ust as for me, it can be argued for each one of them [her participants] that they presented their memories in a way that suited their personal agenda in relation to this interview with me”; further, “[m]y own power of recollection seems no more fraught here than that of my informants.”\(^{67}\) Gallinat gives her method an ethical edge that recalls the conviction of authors in *Writing Culture*: although she as researcher has “the final say” on the inclusion and interpretation of stories, “[t]he detailed representation of my own experiences . . . renders these subjective aspects more explicit and allows the reader to critically engage with them.”\(^{68}\) This task is indeed helped by her practice: knowledge of her family’s stance against the socialist state gave me tools to interrogate her interpretations.

The research subject is not “Gallinat’s experiences of *Ostalgie*” but rather “the experiences of young Germans, of whom Gallinat is one, of *Ostalgie*.”

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\(^{66}\) Ibid., 31.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 39–40.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 40; one of the volume’s contributors includes another ethical dimension: ‘the invisibility of the researcher only limits our understanding and upholds researchers’ power over their participants.’ Lynette Šikić-Mičanović, ‘Foregrounding the Self in Fieldwork among Rural Women in Croatia’, in *The Ethnographic Self as Resource: Writing Memory and Experience into Ethnography*, ed. Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 58.
include the researcher among the subjects without making the researcher the sole or even prime focus. Critics might doubt whether it is possible to analyse our own stories in anything like the dispassionate way demanded of academic scholarship.\(^69\) My answer, as Collins and Gallinat have written, is that our experience already infiltrates our project, from conception to design to execution through to analysis. Charlotte Aull Davies proposes that “we cannot research something with which we have no contact, from which we are completely isolated. . . . And depending on the extent and nature of these connections, questions arise as to whether the results of research are artefacts of the researcher’s presence and inevitable influence on the research process.”\(^70\) The best way to answer these questions is to appraise this experience honestly and openly within the writing and allow other scholars to do the same. If Paterson and Zoellner are correct that media production analysis is and will be increasingly carried out by researchers with prior experience in newsrooms, this approach will expand the tools they have to carry out their work and ethically reveal the extent of their embeddedness in the field in ways that will enrich the work’s reception in the wider community.

Two contrasting examples from media research illuminate this. Allan Bell, a practicing journalist and practicing linguist, used his experiences and the texts he and his news colleagues had written as data in his academic work.\(^71\) Bell was careful to note, though, the uneven application of this approach: “the constant demands of working in a daily news service left me so far removed from my research interests that I did not even retain examples of news copy which I recognized at the time as having research importance.”\(^72\) What he did retain, though, he used to powerful effect, especially in his analysis of the editing process. His book includes scans of physical copies of news texts with his editing


\(^71\) Bell, *The Language of News Media*, xiv.

\(^72\) Ibid., 31.
marks on them to compare with the submitted and the published versions. Further, Bell was reflexive, helping us understand the limitations of the editing process. Colleen Cotter inhabited the same roles as Bell but sequentially, moving from practical journalism to a scholarly analysis of journalistic language. Cotter, too, drew on her own experiences, though only “to a limited extent,” briefly summarising her background and sprinkling references throughout the text to what she did or observed during her journalistic career. She declared that her objective was to study news talk “from the vantage point of the practitioner,” which can quite easily include herself, especially as her fieldwork took place in newsrooms of American daily newspapers. Yet Cotter’s experience is present only by suggestion—she framed herself as a practitioner to authorise her analysis of the practice and accounts of other journalists. Her ethnographic insights are sound and credible, but I would categorise Cotter’s book as one of Collins and Gallinat’s lost opportunities.

Conclusion

What I have outlined is my qualitative fieldwork study of relationships between journalists and Muslim sources in Glasgow. Though the division between these categories is artificial, it nonetheless provides a starting point for analysing the production of news concerning Muslims. Data from participants describe creative ways in which this boundary is negotiated and sometimes transgressed, providing representations of fluid, dynamic, and evolving relationships. These data are primarily drawn from interviews, though they are complemented by direct observation, documentary analysis, and the findings of relevant literature. By interviewing Muslims who speak with journalists, I seek to

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73 Ibid., 81–82; Daniel Perrin and colleagues have revisited Bell’s progressive analysis of the construction and editing of news texts with sophisticated use of electronic monitoring software; see Daniel Perrin, “Progression Analysis (PA): Investigating Writing Strategies at the Workplace,” Pragmatics of Writing 35, no. 6 (2003): 907–21.
75 Ibid., 1.
understand the kind of stories, insights, and experiences they have decided are worth publicising in this mediated way; and by interviewing journalists who have reported on Muslims, I target the people who translate or do not translate those stories into media texts for the public.

This study is informed by the responsible inclusion of my own experience—not just as the researcher, reflexively accounting for my present role as observer and analyst, but as a former journalist, reflecting on several years of experience in the industry, during which I worked alongside Muslim journalists and cultivated relationships with Muslim sources. Responsibility and transparency, as examples from Gallinat and Bell suggest, are key to making this approach work. Lying is a risk, as is too light a touch on the scrutiny of my own stories. Moreover, if I negatively contrast insights from my participants with my own experiences in some effort to prove them wrong, I am not engaging openly with the stories of others. Done well, however, this model adds useful and relevant data to the project and gives readers a heightened disclosure with which they can evaluate my analysis.
CHAPTER 4
GLASGOW AS RESEARCH CONTEXT

One of the contributions this study makes to research is to enlarge understanding of a neglected component of the communities of Muslims in Britain and their social circumstances: Muslims in Scotland. My research examines this population in a specific context—their relations to the media. This chapter begins that examination by assessing Glasgow as the context for this research, in terms of both the city's news ecosystem and its Muslim communities. I assess the relevant literature in both fields, scrutinising claims for Scottish uniqueness in the British context. I then introduce my sample of Muslim participants, differentiating them by several factors. In doing so, I mark a shift from what, for some of my participants, was a previous paradigm for media relations—a narrowly controlled "gatekeeper" model—to a plurality of voices claiming only partial representativity for the diverse communities of Muslims living in Glasgow.

This task presupposes that Scotland is a unique and identifiable entity, distinct within the United Kingdom and worthy of dedicated study. Scotland has been politically united with England and other parts of the United Kingdom for centuries—by monarch since the Union of the Crowns and the reign of James VI and I in 1603 and by government since the union of parliaments in 1707. From thence on, Westminster has been the parliament for all of the United Kingdom. Scotland has nonetheless been recognised as a unique territory within the union. Distinctive policies on education and law have been protected for Scotland, and the Church of Scotland, a Presbyterian denomination, is recognised as the national church.¹ Moreover, many people, Scottish and otherwise, insist on a

separate identity for Scotland, suggesting a set of cultural qualities which are representative of Scottish people and not shared by others. However true or broadly applicable these cultural qualities are, they have comprised a heuristic tool for declaring Scotland distinctive. Historically and administratively, Scotland has been marked out as different within the union, and this has been formalised and continued since the devolution of certain political powers to a newly created Scottish Parliament in 1999.3

I use the term “state” to refer to the United Kingdom as a legal political entity and “nation” to talk of Scotland as a distinct legal territory within that country. This deviates from Hugh Seton-Watson’s distinction of state as “a legal and political organisation” and nation as “a community of people”: Scotland is and has been more formally recognised than such a definition suggests.4 In its shorthand form, “state” would seem applicable; and David McCrone recognised this in changing the subtitle of his book, Understanding Scotlan, in its second edition, dropping “stateless” from The Sociology of a Stateless Nation. Since devolution, Scotland is “a legal and political organisation,” but as McCrone observes, “it is not formally independent”.5 He retains “nation,” however, to reflect the distinctive qualities of this Scottish jurisdiction within the sovereign state of the United Kingdom, and this is the manner in which I use the term. This

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4 Wales and Northern Ireland have also received devolved administrations under Tony Blair’s Labour government, recognising distinctive features of these nations and, curiously, leaving England as the only part of the union ruled from Westminster alone. This has complicated discussions about whether “British” as an identifier is merely a substitute for “English” and properly encompasses Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Irish people. See Krishan Kumar, The Making of English National Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Susan Condor, “Devolution and National Identity: The Rules of English (Dis)Engagement,” Nations and Nationalism 16, no. 3 (2010): 525–43.


6 McCrone, Understanding Scotlan, 1.
is also a deviation from more conceptual uses of “nation” by Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, but Scotland, at the time of this writing, is an open question, with the potential to inhabit one of several definitions of nationhood.\(^6\)

**Scottish and Glaswegian Media**

The nomenclature of the media is no less complex than that of statehood and nationhood, and in fact it is complicated by some of the same factors. In the United Kingdom, the “national media” are newspapers and broadcasters based in London but notionally reporting news of relevance and interest for the entire population of the country, in contrast with the “local media,” which cover news from cities and regions.\(^7\) But how do we describe such media for a region that we identify as a nation? This problem is further complicated by the internal structure of media within Scotland, with newspapers the *Herald*, the *Scotsman*, the *Daily Record*, and the *Sunday Post* and broadcasters STV and BBC Scotland positioning themselves as national media for the region, with local newspapers and radio stations serving various Scottish regions. In recent decades, UK-national newspapers have produced Scottish editions, employing local journalists to produce articles with a more attentive Scottish focus, responding to Scottish politics, society, and sport in an effort to compete with the Scottish-national media.

For this study, I adopt similar nomenclature regarding media as I do for the political entities: news media produced in Scotland, the parent organisations of which position themselves as serving more than the local region are called “national” media, whereas UK newspapers, including Scottish editions such as the *Scottish Sun* or the *Scottish Daily Mail*, are referred to as “UK” media.\(^8\) Scholars consider content the key differentiating factor between these media, although

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marketing and claims to national status are also relevant. I focus in this study on national or Glasgow media. UK media may employ Scottish journalists who write about Scottish affairs for a Scottish audience. Nevertheless, the organisations’ orientation is not to Scotland nor (pertinent to this study) Glasgow.

Michael Rosie and colleagues note a “balkanisation” of news in these different media, so that national media report less about Westminster politics since devolution, whereas UK media increasingly ignore Scottish affairs. Although some UK media have “put a kilt on their Scottish editions,” Richard Kiely and colleagues have found a connection between Scottish residents’ national identification and the newspapers they choose to read. Participants in their study who chose UK media for regular consumption sometimes derided Scottish affairs as less important and the newspapers that cover them as parochial. Some of my participants made similar comments, and I note a link between their orientation to local (Glasgow) affairs and interest in local (Glasgow or Scottish) media and their inclusion of favourable comments about the media in chapter 6. My interest for this study is the local dynamic, and so I have chosen not to include UK media, “kilted” editions or otherwise, in my sample. BBC Scotland may seem on the surface a kilted edition of the UK broadcaster, but it is classed internally as a separate service in the “nations and regions” rubric. It has access to UK-created content and journalists, but it employs and manages

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12 Kiely, McCrone, and Bechhofer, ‘Reading between the Lines’, 489.

Scottish journalists and produces original news, current affairs, and other programming.

Glasgow is a sensible choice for this study because of the density of news media. Harry Reid, a former journalist and editor with both national daily newspapers, describes Glasgow as perhaps “the second city of the empire but . . . for many, the first city of journalism.” Reid says the city has retained its status as “Scotland’s media capital” despite the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. Besides the Edinburgh-based broadsheet the Scotsman and regional publisher D.C. Thomson, which produces the national tabloid the Sunday Post from Dundee, the national media headquarters are located in Glasgow. This includes the Herald (broadsheet), the Daily Record (tabloid), and broadcasters STV and BBC Scotland. The Scottish headquarters of the UK media are also in Glasgow, which again challenges my decision to delimit them from this study. But the Scottish news they carry may come as readily from the Hebridean island of Lewis as from Clydebank, as well as Edinburgh and the Scottish Parliament.

The organisations that publish the Herald and the Daily Record also produce local newspapers—respectively, the Evening Times, a daily tabloid with a concerted Glasgow focus, and Glasgow Now, a weekly tabloid circulated for free. The existence of these local papers does not mean that their national counterparts ignore the city: during our interview, journalist David Leask said a “good” Glasgow story, for example about traffic problems, might be front-page material for the Evening Times. It still has a place in the Herald, depending on what else is happening in Scotland, the UK, and the world, but it might make page 16 and be covered in brief. This interplay between local-Glasgow and national-Scotland buttresses my inclusion of national media such as the Herald and BBC Scotland: they declare all of Scotland their remit, and so, like the UK media, Glasgow functions primarily as their headquarters; however, the dense population and economic activity of Glasgow make the city hard to ignore, and

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15 Ibid., xiv; for more on the effect of devolution on Scotland’s political journalism, see Schlesinger, Dinan, and Miller, Open Scotland?.
many of the journalists I met for this study lived as well as worked in the city. Their surroundings become the inspiration for the stories they pitch, and the people they meet and build relationships with are Glaswegian.

One journalist at BBC Scotland, alleging a London-centric concern from the corporation which irked him as a Scot, acknowledged during my observation that to people in the Highlands, most of what the Scottish service produces is similarly focused on the Central Belt between Edinburgh and Glasgow, “and they’re probably right.” Journalist Maurice Smith noted in his 1994 survey of Scottish media that although the Scotsman and the Herald have marketed themselves as national newspapers, the Scotsman sells most of its newspapers in and around Edinburgh, where it is based, whilst the (formerly Glasgow) Herald’s highest circulation is the Clyde region in the south-west.16 Both ostensibly national newspapers, then, retain many qualities of a regional newspaper. The Scottish media based in Glasgow, whether national or regional in scope, are sensibly included in a study concerning itself with media activity in the city.

My final observation on media concerns their coverage of religion, which serves as a bridge to the ensuing discussion on Glasgow Muslims. Coverage of religion in Scottish media has not received any sustained survey—Blain and Hutchison’s volume on the media in Scotland contains no chapter dedicated to the subject, though it does include one on race and ethnicity, which includes analysis of stories relevant to discussions of Islamophobia and Muslim communities.17 The media are liable to receive passing reference in discussions of religion in Scotland, specifically regarding the question of sectarianism. In a manner similar to scholarly discussions of Islamophobia, Muslims, and the media, researchers posit or challenge the existence of sectarian divisions in Scotland between Catholics and Protestants and make reference to the media as an uncritical vehicle for perpetuating either sectarian sentiments or the mistaken

16 Smith, Paper Lions, 157; see also Connell, “The Scottishness of the Scottish Press.”
17 Irwin, ‘Race and Ethnicity in the Media’.
belief that such sentiments pertain in Scotland. As an example of the former, Irene Reid writes of finding “blatant racial stereotypes as well as the more subtle and insidious racist and sectarian narratives. The analysis exposes the culpability of the press in reproducing and sustaining these through mechanisms that reciprocally uphold the underlying ideologies and sentiments that remain deeply embedded, often unchallenged and denied, even defended, in contemporary Scottish society.” On the other hand, Steve Bruce and colleagues state that the media are part of an institutional complex which has “contributed to the creation of a moral panic” surrounding the persistence and gravity of sectarianism, made worse, in their estimation, because “[m]ost people are not in a position to check what they see and hear in the media.”

This discussion is relevant for my research context, because Glasgow and the west of Scotland have been the site of the Irish migration, and the two football clubs around which contemporary sectarianism coalesces are both Glasgow teams—Rangers and Celtic, known jointly as the Old Firm. Scotland’s 2011 census shows that, whilst the number of people identifying with Church of Scotland (the Kirk) is more than double those identifying as Roman Catholic in the nation as a whole, in Glasgow, the Catholics have the numerical advantage by nearly twenty-five thousand. Whether it is a legitimate concern or a moral panic, sectarianism is at the least a socially significant story for Glasgow. It is also a story that has endured for media interest over time: historian Stewart Brown

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21 Bruce et al., Sectarianism in Scotland, 144.
noted the positive intervention of the national press in the late 1920s when a Church of Scotland committee proposed active anti-Catholic and anti-Irish campaigning. This was from a time when the activity of the Kirk’s general assembly was copiously covered in the national media, which Harry Reid says pertained even in 1971, with the Scotsman giving a front-page lead to a scoop report; three decades later, Reid observes, the Sunday Herald gave comparatively mild coverage to a leaked Kirk report. Reid and Bruce et al. both contrast the weak interest in the Kirk with effective media relations from the Catholic Church, due to a clear authority structure and a willingness to speak to journalists in strong, controversial terms; I return to this point in chapter 5.

Where in all of this does the coverage of Islam and Muslims fit? As mentioned, Anthea Irwin’s chapter is the only inquiry I have found into coverage of Scots who identify as Muslim, and even in this case, it is through the proxy of coverage of race and ethnicity. No content analyses exist which draw from specifically Scottish examples. Amir Saeed and colleagues use the question of media representation as the frame for their analysis on the identification of Glasgow teens, but whilst we receive many citations of news articles in this section, we have no methodology to understand how they selected or interpreted these articles. Rahielah Ali and Peter Hopkins bring the media more purposefully into their research: in analysing the motivation Muslim women in Scotland gave them for their community activism, Ali and Hopkins suggest negative representations in the media are a compelling factor. I return to this study in more detail in chapter 8, a case study of one of the organisations through

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25 Ibid., 75–78; Bruce et al., Sectarianism in Scotland, 87–93.


which Ali and Hopkins recruited participants. What I note here is the impression
the reader of their chapter gets that this relationship is not a comfortable one. In
the chapters that follow, I examine how the parties to that relationship depict it
at both an ideal and a practical level. In the remainder of this chapter, I turn my
attention to the Muslims who are currently underrepresented, not only in studies
on Scottish media but in the context of social research on Muslims in Britain.

Scottish and Glaswegian Muslims

Glasgow is dense with Scotland’s media, and it is dense with the nation’s
Muslims. According to the 2011 census, Muslims make up over five per cent of the
city’s population.28 Only one and a half per cent of Scotland’s residents identified
as Muslim, and relative to that population, Glasgow is the clear centre, with forty-
two per cent living in the city. Many of the surrounding council areas also have
high populations: when factoring in Muslims from the councils which border the
City of Glasgow, such as North Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire, the region
accounts for fifty-seven per cent of all Muslims in Scotland. Muslims first
clustered in the central district of the Gorbals, south of the River Clyde. The
central mosque, built in 1983, stands there, but geographer Sadiq Mir says much
of the Muslim population moved out during the “so-called ‘Glasgow Clearances’”
of the 1970s.29 He maps the trends of intensification and dispersal as the
population grew, primarily spreading south to Pollokshields and Govanhill, with
another pocket moving north to Woodlands. Geographer Peter Hopkins notes
that in the 1991 census, Pollokshields East electoral ward was 60 per cent “white”
and 33 per cent “Pakistani” (using the ethnic descriptors which the census
provides), whereas in 2001, white residents accounted for only 50 per cent of the
population, with the Pakistani share rising to 40 per cent.30 Glasgow’s electoral

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wards were redefined in 2007, so the latest figures break down over different territories. Pakistanis now account for a quarter of the multi-member ward Pollokshields and only fifteen per cent of Southside Central, a surprising dissolution of their former density.\textsuperscript{31}

Mir describes this district as "the 'beating heart' of the Glasgow-Pakistani community," and his choice of labels helps us to be mindful of how easy it is to conflate literature on Muslims in Glasgow with Pakistanis in Glasgow.\textsuperscript{32} Although Pakistanis comprise two-thirds of Glasgow’s Muslims (total Asian: seventy-five per cent), the census suggests Muslims are among the most ethnically diverse populations, sorted by religion, in the city; Sara Kidd and Lynn Jamieson encourage researchers to recognise this diversity and expand on research limited to Asian Muslim communities.\textsuperscript{33}

When a research team undertook a comparative study of “neighbourhood nationalism” in Scottish and English contexts, the scholars chose “Pollokshields” [sic] in Glasgow to compare with Easton in Bristol.\textsuperscript{34} Interviewing a consistent profile of residents in terms of length of residency but balancing their sample between white and Asian residents, they inquired about feelings of belonging, concluding that, in “multi-ethnic neighbourhoods,” the associations of “whiteness” with Englishness or Scottishness were losing force. Responses from their Pollokshields study revealed that brown skin or a Muslim-sounding name might mark someone as not Scottish, yet a Scottish accent went a great distance to making that same individual part of the neighbourhood in the eyes (or ears) of

\textsuperscript{31} National Records of Scotland, Scotland’s Census 2011 Release 2a (standard).
\textsuperscript{32} Sadiq Mir, “The Other within the Same”: Some Aspects of Scottish-Pakistani Identity in Suburban Glasgow, in Geographies of Muslim Identities: Diaspora, Gender and Belonging, ed. Cara Aitchison, Peter Hopkins, and Mei-po Kwan (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 70.
neighbours; moreover, the scholars suggested that “the very idea of Scottishness is being reconfigured in terms of values which are opposed to extremism.”

This projection is more optimistic than the conclusions of other scholars: For Hopkins, “[r]acism is not just now and then, it is an everyday experience for many of Scotland’s black and minority ethnic population.” Asifa Hussain and William Miller used survey data to delineate the nature of Scottish xenophobias—to the English and/or to Muslims. In a nation allegedly free of racism, Hussain and Miller’s data suggest that “[t]wo-thirds of the Pakistanis and two fifths of the English report being subjected to ‘intentional insults’, though most claim their abusers are ‘not really typical Scots’.” Their book reveals a complex portrait of stated tolerance mixed with lived experiences of racism and Islamophobia. The idea that Scotland is not racist or less racist than England surfaces in my fieldwork, and yet participants identify instances of exclusion and antagonism, just as Hopkins and Hussain and Miller found. Robert Miles and Anne Dunlop account for this by proposing that what is absent in Scotland is not “racism per se” but “a racialization of the political process.” They attribute this to nationalism as a preoccupying ideology for Scottish self-identification and the legacy of sectarian sentiments. Locating this racialisation in the political process makes it a structural or elite-level activity, but Hussain and Miller note that “even at street-level,” the most nationalistic Scots are, by their calculation, less Islamophobic than the English.

Islamophobia, as I note in chapter 2, is a contested term both within and outwith research communities. Hussain and Miller devised questions for their survey focused on attitudes of distrust. Hopkins aligned it with discourses of “racism and discrimination”; and Cecilia Clegg and Rosie, researching faith activity in Glasgow, reported it as a response from their focus group participants,

37 Hussain and Miller, Multicultural Nationalism, 119.
38 Miles and Dunlop, “The Racialization of Politics in Britain,” emphasis Miles and Dunlop; though for a counterpoint, see Alison M. Bowes, Jacqui McCluskey, and Duncan F. Sim, “Racism and Harassment of Asians in Glasgow,” Ethnic and Racial Studies 13, no. 1 (1990): 71.
39 Hussain and Miller, Multicultural Nationalism, 65.
40 Ibid., 53–57.
related to demonisation of Islam.\textsuperscript{41} Clegg and Rosie’s report was commissioned by the Scottish Executive; however, Hopkins noted that a previous report from the executive “paid minimal attention to Islamophobia,” even though its focus was on “tackling religious hatred”.\textsuperscript{42} By the time Kidd and Jamieson conducted their research in 2011, on behalf of the Scottish Government, they explicitly avoided using the term unless participants brought it up themselves; although Islamophobia was a preoccupation in developing the research project, they found “a strong reaction to the term” during fieldwork.\textsuperscript{43} The term has seen a rise and fall in terms of its use, but the point of this study is not to analyse its trajectory.

The themes of racism, Islamophobia, and social cohesion are more background than foreground for a handful of other studies on Muslims in Glasgow. Mir, after highlighting the outward migration of Glasgow Pakistanis to Pollokshields, takes his observation to even further remove: the surrounding suburbs of Glasgow. I note immediately, in light of the definition I work with in this study, that Mir is consistent in his use of the ethnic identifier “Pakistani,” though he takes nothing for granted regarding any ethnic identification, including “Scottish;” nonetheless, he writes that “[b]eing a Muslim is an important point of structuration within the lives of suburban Pakistanis”.\textsuperscript{44} Through interviews, Mir determined that his participants display a “middle-class Scottish suburbanite identity” which is as affluent and aspirational as that of their white neighbours.\textsuperscript{45} This compares with the findings of the Pollokshields/Easton studies mentioned above: in the south-central district, which is more numerically mixed than the suburban regions, participants asserted greater differences between the Pakistani and “white” residents but also indicated that these


\textsuperscript{43} Kidd and Jamieson, \textit{Experiences of Muslims Living in Scotland}, 56.

\textsuperscript{44} Mir, ‘From Villages 477 and 482 to Suburbia’, 128–129.

\textsuperscript{45} Mir, “‘The Other within the Same’”, 67, emphasis Mir.
distinctions did not categorically interfere with any resident claiming Scottish
identification.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, Asifa Siraj engaged Glasgow’s ethnic diversity: in her study on
attitudes to homosexuality, she interviewed sixty-eight Muslims in Glasgow, of
which thirty-eight identified as Pakistani; in her study on marriage and
patriarchal roles, she interviewed twenty-five couples, hence fifty participants, of
whom fewer than half claimed Pakistani heritage.⁴⁷ I am not troubled that her
sample does not match the census demographics—it is no more problematic than
studies which attempt to generalise findings concerning the Pakistani population
to all Muslims. Ethnicity, however, had little bearing on the results of her studies,
as did education, although this, too, deviated significantly from census data.⁴⁸

Siraj noted a difference between “practising” and “non-practising”
Muslims, and this distinction was salient in her study on sexuality: condemnation
of homosexuality was universal in the “practising” category, and seven “non-
practising” participants were “for” homosexuality, with two more classified as
“neutral”.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, she does not outline what distinguishes these
categories—how she determines the qualities that compose a “practising”
Muslim. Lurking in her paper is a suggestion that “non-practising” Muslims “born
and bred in Scotland” were more likely to take a positive attitude towards
homosexuality, and it is also unfortunate that she does not explicitly produce the
numbers from her data and make this claim, as it would be of immense value for
social research exploring the degree to which Scottish birth and the character of
religiosity affect these social attitudes.⁵⁰ Both Mir and Siraj engage with the

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⁴⁶ Virdee, Kyriakides, and Modood, “Codes of Cultural Belonging;” Kyriakides, Virdee, and
Modood, “Racism, Muslims and the National Imagination.”
⁴⁷ Asifa Siraj, “The Construction of the Homosexual “Other” by British Muslim Heterosexuals”,
Contemporary Islam 3, no. 1 (2009): 47; Asifa Siraj, “Because I’m the Man! I’m the Head”: British
⁴⁸ Siraj, “Because I’m the Man! I’m the Head,” 200; for data contemporary to Siraj’s study, see
(Edinburgh: Scottish Executive, 2005), Chart 4.4, accessed 8 March 2013,
⁵⁰ Ibid., 51, 54.
diversity of Muslims in Glasgow, an effort as salutary for scholars as it is for journalists.

**From Gatekeeper to Plurality: Identifying Sources among Glasgow’s Muslims**

With that in mind, I conclude this chapter with an examination of the source participants in my sample. The history and development of Glasgow’s Muslim population is typical of the UK. Muslim men came in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century as labourers, settled in port regions, and tended not to stay long. The pressures on employment in Britain after the Second World War and on lifestyle in south Asia after the partition of India meant more men migrated and stayed, eventually bringing family with them. Demographic research notes that after the 1970s, many Muslims came to Glasgow from England, suggesting a belief in better opportunities in Scotland; this trend is reflected in my data.

However attractive Glasgow may have become, barriers of language, culture, and class impaired communication between the earlier generations of Muslims and institutions such as the state, the police, and the media. One man seems entwined with the social negotiation between these groups: Bashir Maan. Maan came to Glasgow in 1953 to study chemistry. He was already educated and spoke English, and he noticed that fellow migrants from Pakistan were neglected by institutions and unable to articulate their needs. He began translating letters for them and speaking to officials on their behalf, and soon he had dropped his study and committed himself to acting as an interlocutor. This service was formalised in 1968 when he was named Justice of the Peace. He was later elected to Glasgow city council, and both of these achievements were firsts for Muslims in the UK.

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52 Mir, 'From Villages 477 and 482 to Suburbia', 96–97.
This social ubiquity made Maan an easy choice for journalists attempting to contact local Muslims or clarify details. Maan used the term “middle man” in our interview to describe his role; for this study, I use the term “gatekeeper.” The word was first applied in media studies to characterise the desk editor of a news organisation, who received reams of information through wire reports, releases, and public tips and decided from amongst the collection what would be “news.”

Controlling the flow of information is intrinsic to the role of gatekeeper, but this usage applied to the management of access to the newsroom rather than the source organization. However, the role works in the opposite direction, and the term “gatekeeper” can be applied to those who act as a buffer between curious journalists and active agents. My contrast of the term “gatekeeper” to describe a prior form of engagement with “source” or “voice” to describe the current forms of engagement might occlude the fact that I am describing the same process of controlling information. What emerges below could easily be called “a plurality of gatekeepers.” It is the proliferation of people filling this role that is significant for my argument, and I use the contrasting terms in an historical sense for clarity.

Maan was instrumental in the coverage of Glasgow’s Muslims, providing comment, clarification, and contacts for journalists. He showed me scrapbooks he keeps of all the articles he was quoted in or helped arrange, and early examples range from a positive if Orientalist feature (“The Quiet Strangers Work and Pray”) to a report about a dispute between a tenant and her Asian landlord—prototype for the “dodgy landlord” story that, according to one of my journalist participants, still characterizes much of the tabloid coverage of Muslims in Glasgow. Depictions of Muslims in mid-twentieth-century Glasgow’s media were largely managed by and filtered through the priorities of Maan, which can be effective

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but also limiting. Several participants who have positioned themselves more recently as sources noted the dominance of Maan and, later, Mohammad Sarwar in media relations.\textsuperscript{56} five referenced either or both names to describe the narrow access between Muslims and the media, and a sixth—Director Activist—alluded to them, not naming them but describing “prominent people, politicians, the big men” whose stories are told in local media. Participants also used the terms “spokesmen” and “community leader,” both in a sarcastic fashion.

This dominance of one or two figures no longer pertains, although some participants suggested the trend has merely continued with a new generation. Director Activist’s “prominent people” also applies to current political leaders, and Salah Beltagui, board member for the Muslim Council of Scotland (MCS), called journalists “lazy: when they get someone, they just go back to him. Bashir Maan was their man for a long time. When Osama Saeed stood for election, he was their man.” I interpret this as a rhetorical comment expressing frustration, for in our interview he mentioned several occasions on which he has been contacted for comment on a story.

Samina Ansari of Amina made a subtler point, speaking of politician Humza Yousaf and lawyer Aamer Anwar in the same way that other participants spoke of Maan and Sarwar—as holding too exclusively “the limelight” of media attention. Ansari raised this in the context of introducing journalists to other Muslims who could participate in coverage as sources, and I discuss the idea of sources as conduits in chapter 7; I note in passing that both Yousaf and Anwar described to me instances in which they have introduced journalists in their networks to other voices from Glasgow’s Muslim communities. They are, to some extent at least, acting in precisely the way Ansari demands of them.

\textsuperscript{56} Sarwar was the Labour candidate for Pollokshields East in 1987’s Glasgow council elections; he ran again and was elected in 1992. In 1997, he was elected to UK Parliament as Britain’s first Muslim MP, representing Glasgow’s Govan ward for Labour. Sarwar served three terms in Westminster, and has since returned to Pakistan, where he was made Governor of Punjab in 2013. His son Anas Sarwar succeeded him both in the candidacy and in the role of MP, elected in 2010.
Why Voices Emerged

The event that triggered this emerging plurality of voices among Glasgow’s Muslims is 9/11. The attacks in the United States amplified public and media interest in Muslims. As mentioned in chapter 2, some scholars suggest the publicity of Muslims as Muslims (and as a problem) traces earlier in Britain, to the outcry after the publication of Rushdie’s novel; two of my participants discussed the significance of the Rushdie Affair for their public engagement with issues related to Muslims, but most dismissed this and pointed instead to 9/11. Several participants told me of a meeting about a fortnight after 9/11—some located it at Glasgow Central Mosque, others the old headquarters of Radio Ramadhan. Those present were worried about how Muslims would fare publicly after the attacks and how they ought to respond. Saeed, at the time a student and head of a Muslim youth group, said,

the predominant feeling, particularly amongst elders, was that . . . it was basically the end of things for Muslims in the UK, and the best hope that we had was to keep quiet, to just sit in the corner, hope that no one noticed us, and we could possibly ride it out. . . . Whereas I think that [the attitude of] others who were . . . born and brought up in . . . [this] country was that this had to be a moment where we seek to explain ourselves, we seek to build bridges between ourselves and other communities, and more than ever we need to speak.

Saeed, Anwar, and Yousaf all said the quietist response of the elders was insufficient for them, and this corroborated what journalists told me in interviews: that journalists sought comments from Muslims living in Glasgow about the attacks and that there was a downward shift in the age of those willing to participate—the so-called second generation. Beltagui said that, because of their youth and their British nativity, these Muslims understood the current requirements of the media better than their elders (a group in which Beltagui included himself).

The degree to which this proliferation of sources emerged on its own or was called into being by the needs of journalists is debatable. Sociologist Karl Erik Rosengren proposed the “interdependence” model to address the sociological
question of whether culture influences social structure or vice versa, or more specifically, whether mass media are agents of change or reinforcers of the status quo; rather than take an either/or approach, he suggested the two can be interdependent. This characterises my assessment of journalist-source dynamics. One editor I spoke with told me his newsroom expands its range of sources on a particular issue when it begins to recur in coverage; his example was equal marriage, which was at the time being debated in the Scottish Parliament, requiring him and his colleagues to find sources to speak for, against, and about the issue. Fresh voices keep the audience (and the journalists) from getting bored with the “same old” coverage. This challenges the assertion that “lazy” journalists go back to the same sources, but sustained observation of journalists could compare what I was told in an interview with daily practice. Arifa Farooq, a journalist with BBC Scotland who identifies as Muslim, recalled sitting with senior producers after 9/11, drafting lists of contacts to include in programming. Farooq had been hired the previous year out of a corporate scheme designed to train and recruit journalists from minority populations. Farooq noted the serendipity of her position: “as ironic as it is, it [9/11] actually launched me.” The new voices available to the media at this time, then, were not only sources but, at least in one case, a journalist.

What Voices Have Emerged

There are several ways in which the new plurality of Muslim sources in Glasgow is constituted. I differentiate them by institutional affiliation, political orientation, religious disposition as well as age, gender, and ethnicity. This is not meant to be exhaustive of the ways these sources identify themselves; again, the purpose of this study is not to cast a firm typology on the field but to demonstrate

58 In my professional experience as a journalist with the public broadcaster in Canada, editors and journalists alike put a premium on finding new sources and weaning ourselves from “the usual suspects,” but this was mitigated by pressures of deadlines: the closer we got to airtime with no new source booked, the likelier we were to call people we had already used for comment.
a range beyond the limited characterization that has prevailed in the scholarly representation of the journalistic imagination.

In terms of institutional affiliation, my participants range from more- to less-official, as discussed in chapter 3. Those closest to the state, with institutional or bureaucratic roles, are strongly official, and Glaswegians are represented by Muslim politicians at three levels of government: city council, Scottish Parliament (Holyrood), and UK parliament (Westminster). Those among this group in my sample are councillor Fariha Thomas, former councillor Bashir Maan, and MSPs Hanzala Malik and Humza Yousaf. Still on the more-official side of the spectrum, lawyers have a close relationship to state actors and the ability to influence legal change through courtroom challenges, and Aamer Anwar is a participant in this study.

Glasgow contains groups offering religious or cultural support—less-official but nonetheless conferred with authority by dint of the constituency they represent. Among these are mosques and bodies such as the Muslim Council of Scotland or the Islamic Finance Council. Two board members of MCS are in my sample: Beltagui and Mazhar Khan, who also works with community radio station Radio Ramadhan and the consulting firm Islam Information Scotland. Osama Saeed, when he lived in Glasgow, fitted here on the spectrum of affiliation, though he ran as a parliamentary candidate in 2010. I especially regret the lack of participation in this study from mosque leaders. Muslims are also active in the voluntary sector, either with explicitly Muslim functions or more general community support. The staff and volunteers from Amina fit the first category, and Director Activist works with a charity in the second category. Less official or unofficial groups concerned with niche issues or neighbourhood concerns can similarly work through and with the media, though none are reflected in my sample.

Glaswegian Muslims also range across various political positions. Scholars suggest the Labour Party has historically been the natural home for Muslims,
Asians, and minorities generally throughout the UK. No study specifically examines electoral politics among Glaswegian Muslims, but comments from my participants indicate the city was no different, and indeed the two named gatekeepers of the pre-9/11 period were elected representatives of the Labour Party. This link, however, has been ruptured, as it has for the broad UK population. At Holyrood, Malik represents Labour and Yousaf represents the Scottish National Party (SNP); the SNP form the current Scottish Government, and Yousaf is a member of cabinet. Muslims affiliated with both Labour and SNP sit on Glasgow council. More research mapping the political affiliations—past and present—of Scottish Muslims would be welcome, but as a simple illustration, Edinburgh’s Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World organised a public panel in April 2012 composed of Muslims who had stood as candidates in the 2011 Scottish parliamentary election representing the four “main” parties: SNP, Labour, Liberal Democrat, and Conservative. This illustrates the range of voices available to journalists seeking comments from Muslims in a more official capacity.

Outwith the structures of party politics, political orientation among my participants is differentiated in terms of issues and approach. Five participants mentioned an activist student past, and two of those said they had been members of the Socialist Workers Party. Activist interests also animated cross-party and non-party resistance to the war in Iraq: this resistance was not exclusively organized along religious or specifically Muslim lines, but Muslims composed a

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significant strain of the movement’s membership. This fusion of religious identification with political concerns diverges from what some of my participants characterized as a quietist approach among the elder generations of Muslims in Glasgow. Saeed criticized the tendency for community representatives to appear on television after 9/11 or any subsequent global terror attack saying that Islam means peace: “It was actually an absurd thing to say. . . . [Y]ou couldn’t just go on and say, here’s what the Qur’an says, here’s what the Prophet Muhammad says, and then divorce yourself from the political actions of . . . Al-Qaeda or other groups using violence, like Hamas or Hezbollah”. Saeed said it was important to speak of both politics and theology when talking with the media; he was criticised for doing so at the time, but a dozen years later, “I think everyone accepts that . . . you had to do both.”

Anwar, who worked with Saeed in community activism following 9/11, agreed and said the criticism came both from the wider Glaswegian and British public and from within the Muslim population. He said mosques and youth groups do not provide a venue for politicised discussion, and he divided this on generational and gendered lines, suggesting elders discourage such discussion and young males are frustrated in their desire to talk about political issues as Muslims in a Muslim context. Maan, however, of the elder generation, was public about his decision not to renew his membership in the Labour Party in 2004, after the war in Iraq began.

The entwining of the political and religious elements of Islam leads to another category of differentiation—that of religious disposition. I discuss religious “conservatism” and “progressivism,” though these terms are contested and imprecise. Islam can accommodate many perspectives due to its devolved authority structure: God is sovereign, and the Qur’an is God’s word, but the application and interpretation of its dictates in daily life is contingent and internally contested. Beltagui said he knows people practice their religion at “different levels”; yet, in his faith, “some issues are yes/no.” In his role with MCS,

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he has made submissions to parliamentary committee and to the media opposing equal marriage legislation. Anwar, meanwhile, said he was challenged about his position on equal marriage at a public event, and he “was uncompromising. I said, ‘Listen . . . I understand the opposition from the community, but I’m not going to sit here and pussyfoot around it.’ I said, ‘I one hundred per cent believe in it [support it], and I’m not backing down on it. And I’ll openly say that, and I’ll challenge the other people on the platform to say it.’ Who didn’t.” Anwar characterized himself to me as an outlier, but he was not the only one to take this stance among participants who are active in media relations and describe themselves as Muslims.

Muslims in Glasgow are also religiously differentiated along sectarian lines, but not among my participants. This may indicate numerical and social predominance of Sunnis in the city, connected to the ethnic predominance of South Asians. None of my sources discussed Islamic sectarianism as a relevant factor in Glasgow relations, and two journalists mentioned it whilst articulating their awareness of the city’s various mosques and how they had to learn that “the” mosque does not represent all Muslims.

Three other markers distinguish the Muslim participants in my sample: age, gender and ethnicity. The distinctions in age have already surfaced in the discussion of 9/11 and a generational split that emerged among publicly engaged Muslims in Glasgow. Like any of the qualities listed in this section, age is not de facto indicative of a participant’s approach to media relations, though the responses already quoted suggest it may help with prioritising, establishing, and nurturing contact.

Yousaf noted, in his description of that post-9/11 meeting, that all of those engaged Muslims were men, and the gender balance of Muslim spokespeople has poorly reflected the population’s demographic dispersal. This corroborates themes of patriarchalism in social research that examines, for example, the publicity of the Muslim woman’s body.63 The two gatekeepers described above are

men, and Saeed described the typical Muslim with access to the media “as a spokesperson, or almost always spokes<men>”, emphasising “men” to indicate the gender imbalance. This is not a problem unique to Muslim communities: two journalists in my sample told me of their difficulties in ensuring what they considered adequate gender representation regardless of the community they approached. Though I would not argue that parity in media engagement among Muslim men and women has been achieved, I will say the absolutism of the characterisation of male dominance belongs in the past tense: of the fifteen identified Muslim participants whom I sort as sources, nine are women. One is a councillor, one is a community activist, and the others work with a women’s resource centre, ranging from volunteers to staff, including the director. Another Muslim woman works as a journalist for BBC Scotland.

Whereas gender is a theme that arose during my interviews, ethnicity was less of a concern. Only two participants—Ansari and Smina Akhtar, both staff with Amina—discussed the ethnic diversity of Muslim women in Glasgow, with Akhtar saying this was poorly represented in her organisation’s staff and volunteer roll and Ansari noting that, despite the diversity of Scotland’s Muslims, the stereotype people (and not only journalists) invoke is the Pakistani. Among the participants in this study who identified as Muslim, three of the sixteen indicated ethnicity other than Pakistani: one from Sudan, one from Egypt, and one ethnically English convert.

Small though this sample may be, the distinctions outlined above indicate that journalists have a range of people to turn to when they seek comment for their stories. The source pool—and, by extension, the representation of Glasgow—is more diverse than two first-generation Pakistani men, religiously conservative, politically quietist, and elected to public office under the banner of the Labour Party.

How Voices Emerge

The plurality of sources troubles the monolithic representation of Glasgow’s Muslims. Journalists attempting to fit such divergent views into a narrative of uniformity have a difficult task. But that task is made easier when Muslims claim to speak for “the community,” invoking the monolith which they might simultaneously decry. In this regard, I encountered confused responses from my participants. On the one hand, they were insistent that they did not speak “for” Muslims, though Farooq said that, as a journalist in a mainstream news organisation, she felt she represented Muslims and Pakistanis in that environment. Given that religion informs my working definition of “Muslim,” it is credible to insist that religious authority is decentralised to all believers, although concepts of the khalifa (the caliph, or earthly ruler deputised by God) and ulama (authorised scholars) trouble this simplified statement. On the other hand, participants used the singular term “the community” to talk of fellow Muslims in Glasgow. When sources use such language, it licenses journalists to include it in their representations. There is, then, a gap between content and expression.

Declarations from my participants of their unrepresentative status were typically direct. When asked to describe his status, Anwar said, “I don’t know if I could go down the line of being ‘the Muslim voice’ on these issues, because to a certain extent that’s what used to piss me off twenty-odd years ago, when community leaders were standing up and claim[ing] on behalf of the Muslims that they represented the whole community.” With age and a change in his social position in Glasgow from student activist to lawyer, he grudgingly suggested he might classify as a community leader himself, but how he positioned himself was different from the form of the previous generation: Anwar said he is mindful of

being “one of a number of Muslim voices” that can speak about issues. Saeed said the most effective sources relating to the media did not act like “a gatekeeper” and did not guard their access protectively. Beltagui and Khan mentioned being accused of being “self-appointed leaders” but rejected the label; Khan said MCS was organised in such a way that it could offer informed comments to journalists, but the council’s members did not claim to represent the community exclusively. Nonetheless, the name “Muslim Council of Scotland” suggests the adoption of a representative role, and it would be informative to learn through observation how council members represent themselves to journalists when contacted for help with a story.

Some participants made more implicit claims to partial representativity. Thomas, in her capacity as a board member for Amina, participated in a radio broadcast on the subject of women choosing to wear the niqab or veil covering the face, “just to put across the point of view that, for a lot of women, it’s actually quite an empowering thing to cover their face. . . . Because that’s the view that a lot of women have.” Her use of the phrase “a lot of women” indicates its partial quality: she is not claiming that all Muslim women feel this way or hold this position, nor that it is properly Islamic to do so. Thomas does not wear the niqab, though she does wear the hijab or headscarf. The diversity of Muslim women is implicitly manifest in her language and her dress.

The subtlety of language can indicate the opposite, however, just as easily. Every source participant in my study and seven of twelve journalist participants used the term “the community” in reference to Muslims in Glasgow, with three fifths of that number using the stronger, more direct phrase “the Muslim community.” This indicated a singularity to Muslims that belied what were often explicit statements about their heterogeneity. I raised this point with Farooq, the journalist, about twenty minutes into our interview, asking her “what the word ‘community’ means and how you would characterize the Glasgow community of Muslims, and if ‘communities’ is a better way of describing it, then

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65 For a discourse analysis of the phrase’s use in British journalism, see Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes*, 124–129.
run with that.” Farooq agreed that the plural term was more accurate and described why in ways consistent with previous answers. But her awareness of the variance between her language and her content had made her reflexive within the interview, because two minutes later, she said the following: “So, because Muslims operate on the back foot, the commun— now, I’m going to say ‘the community,’ right? It feels it’s under siege; it’s always under the spotlight. It’s public enemy number one.” She laughed at herself for falling into a trap, yet, recognising her stumble, she continued with the singular pronoun “it.” This strain between language and intention resurfaced over the remainder of our interview.

Similarly, Saeed criticized the journalistic invocation of a monolithic Muslim community, but he contrasted the qualities that made him appealing for journalists with those of the elder gatekeepers, saying, “I would talk the way I see it, the way the community thought—or large parts of the community thought, at any rate.” He caught how his own language contradicted the substance of his argument, and he qualified his unifying statement with the vague and unsupported phrase “large parts of the community”. It may be making too much of linguistic slips to focus on these singular nouns when the content of their conversations with me clearly indicated a belief in the plurality of Muslim positions and perspectives. However, the critique that some of my source participants level at journalists—that “they” say “we” are all the same—is undercut by the way they sometimes speak about their coreligionists.

One manifestation of this claim to partial representativeness is that sources willingly acted as conduits, leading journalists to other Muslims in Glasgow who could contribute to the production of news. I discuss this in more detail in chapter 7 as one of the points of contact in the relationship between these groups. Here, I note that, for my participants, acknowledging that there were better or other people for journalists to speak to was a declaration that they were not sole representatives of Glasgow’s Muslims.
Conclusion

This chapter has established Glasgow as the context for my research into the relationship between journalists and sources from Muslim communities. The national media in Scotland can be distinguished from UK media, both in their content and in their positioning relative to Scotland’s own characterisation as a distinct space within Britain. In so far as they cover religion, the representation of Islam and Muslims in the national media has not excited the interest of scholars, who have largely restricted themselves to the question of Catholic-Protestant sectarianism. Scholars have not done an appreciably better job of researching Scottish Muslims generally, as Kidd and Jamieson have noted. Muslims make up a smaller proportion of Scotland’s population than for the whole of Britain, and some scholars have suggested that either they are more amenable to identifying as Scottish or “the Scottish identity” is flexible enough to accommodate their religious and often ethnic distinction from the mainstream. Nonetheless, researchers do not wish to merely accept the idea that racism or Islamophobia is absent in Scotland, and their data indicate a tension between statements that Scotland is a welcoming place and individual manifestations of exclusion or even violence. This tension is also present in my data.

To make sense of the responses of sources in the study that follows, I have introduced and differentiated the Muslim participants in this chapter. One benefit of this is to contribute to correcting the deficit of research on Muslims in Scotland. My sample is small and not crafted so as to be statistically representative. It is thematically indicative, though not exhaustive, of Muslims who are active in media relations. The social map above helps us understand some of the interests they represent in their relations with the media, but it, along with the data that follow in subsequent chapters, also tells us something of their

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social life in the city and in their imagined parts of Scottish society. I discussed a provisional picture of a prior model of engagement, in which relations with journalists were dominated by two gatekeepers. Because this study relies on memory, we cannot consider this representation absolute; participants described it in a reasonably consistent manner, though. Important for this study, they contrasted it with the current field of relations, which is characterised by a plurality of voices. The event that initiated this change in relations was 9/11, and as we see in the next chapter, this event was also significant for journalists’ conceptions of Muslims, shading the relevance of Islam to a news story.
CHAPTER 5
JOURNALISTS’ CONCEPTIONS OF MUSLIMS

The first party to the relationship that I wish to consider is journalists. The questions I address in this chapter concern journalists’ knowledge and understanding of Muslims. I do not attempt the disingenuous task of cataloguing what these individual journalists “know” about Muslims. A brief summary of how they demonstrated their familiarity with the subject and how they described finding out what they do not know positions these participants and prepares us for the more significant question of what, for the journalists in this study, makes a Muslim. What counts as a Muslim source or a Muslim story, and when would they use the word? I explore this first in a normative sense, synthesising their responses about when it is appropriate to use the term. I then analyse their concrete examples of Muslim sources and Muslim stories, deriving from these examples a sense of how journalists in this study account for their coverage.

The data here are drawn from twelve interviews with journalists and, where appropriate, three sources who inhabit or have inhabited journalistic roles. To distinguish, I describe the narrower set as “journalist participants” and the broader set as “journalistic participants.” I also generated data during observations of two Glasgow newsrooms.

The examples in the sections that follow are responses to my questions about coverage. It is not the case that every source listed below has in fact been contacted by journalists nor every story reported. Some of these are stories the journalists covered; others are stories their colleagues have covered; others still are invented examples to illustrate their answers. I therefore distinguish between “actual” and “hypothetical-ideal” stories. Moreover, these data are not generated from a strict, itemised list. Interviews were not structured to elicit first normative and then concrete examples. From the notes and transcripts of my semi-structured interviews, I have identified sources and stories, looked for common
themes among them, and classified them for analytical purposes. Stories and sources can be used “twice,” both to indicate the journalists’ boundaries for describing something as Muslim and to illustrate when they have reported or would report on Muslim issues.

**Normative Conceptions—What Makes a Muslim**

The journalists in my study understood coverage of Muslims to be an exceptional and sensitive topic. When I described my research project and asked them to take part, none of them questioned why I was studying this issue. All of them had, in one way or another, reported on Muslims during their careers. None of them had a specialist correspondent title concerning “Muslims” or “religion,” though one correspondent had built an unassigned role for himself as a specialist in Catholic affairs. Regardless of their role with their organisation—as editor, specialist correspondent, or general reporter—they indicated no expertise in Islam.¹ Even Arifa Farooq, the sole journalist in my study who identified as a Muslim, indicated limits to her knowledge, for example on distinctions between Sunni and Shi’a and specifics of the Shi’a tradition. A common category “mistake” among my participants was to answer in terms of ethnicity or race when asked questions about religion. As I explore in the analysis below, assumptions of Asians as Pakistanis and Pakistanis as Muslims informed these “mistakes;” although census data suggest there is good reason to make these assumptions, journalistic notions of professionalism demand that journalists verify information and report it accurately.²

Whilst acknowledging their lack of expertise, several of my participants demonstrated knowledge about the religion and its adherents. David Leask spoke


of Islam’s decentralised nature, and Correspondent Print acknowledged that “ordinary” Muslims may not recognise as leaders the same people journalists identify as leaders. Correspondent Broadcast discussed a granular appreciation of terms such as “Wahhabism” and “Islamism,” at the same time suggesting that the more specific the language journalists use, the less familiar audience members will be with those terms. Editor Print One said that issues of veiling women are “very divisive” and that a simple binary split between advocates and detractors may not adequately represent the thoughts of Muslims on the matter. Eleanor Bradford showed adept use of the term “fatwa,” understanding it to be a religious ruling rather than a “death sentence” or ‘religious execution decree’ and, further, that issuing fatwas is a continuing practice—they are decreed today and are debated and accepted or rejected by Muslims.3

In the context of the limits of their knowledge, I asked some of the journalist participants how they learned or verified their information.4 For example, when given a detail, as Correspondent Print was, about Islamic requirements concerning burial, how does he find out what he does not know or ascertain that what he has been told is accurate? Only one journalist said he consulted press guides, though another said she had received one on Islam but did not use it.5 Three journalists described reading news articles on the subject; Editor Print One mentioned “good quality reports of academic research as opposed to reading the academic research itself”, such as “a piece in the Times or the Telegraph, or a good quality piece that ran in the Herald.” Correspondent Broadcast emphasised the need to read archived articles using online databases,

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4 For more on verification, see Shapiro et al., ‘Verification as a Strategic Ritual’.
but he also said that these could be inaccurate and that relying on them for information could lead to repeating the inaccuracy.

The final method of learning or verification that participants mentioned was talking to people: one mentioned “experts” and another “leaders;” two others said that a journalist’s job is to ask people questions, so regardless of the expertise or status of a person, the journalist can learn through open and inquiring interviews. Farooq insisted that journalists “go down and foster relations with certain groups” so as to understand the issues and the “schisms” among Muslims, and Catriona Stewart said she was comfortable saying to a source, “Look, this is not my area of expertise. I don’t know very much about this—explain it to me.” Three journalists suggested to me that coverage of Muslims in general has improved in terms of sophistication and accuracy since 9/11.

This imputed improvement in understanding does not necessarily emerge in published journalistic copy. Other journalistic values may conflict with its application, such as physical limitations of space and time or contingent limitations such as a professional insistence on clarity and plain language. Although Correspondent Broadcast described the use of “the term ‘Muslim’ on its own” as “such a vague generalisation, you might as well not bother”, he problematised the impulse to employ more precise language: describing terrorist activity, he would avoid “Wahhabism” because he perceived it as too technical but “would probably say that it’s an extreme strain of” Islam; he was critical of the term “‘Islamist,’ which sounds a bit like ‘Islamish’ . . . I’m not sure it tells people much.” The balance here is between responsible language use and the pressures of time: “Obviously, if you’re writing forty seconds for a news bulletin, it may be tough, but . . . it’s still worth a try, certainly.” Scholar Alaaddin Paksoy, in his research on media representations of Islam, Turkey, and Europe, quoted a BBC journalist who explained the use of the word “Muslim” as “journalistic shorthand. He says, ’if you have only 500 words, I have got to remind people that Turkey is

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6 E.g., Baker et al. chart the change in the British press from “hardliner” through a series of synonyms to “extremist,” determining that “[t]he words may have changed but the meaning and the frequency with which the meaning was used hardly altered.” Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, Discourse Analysis and Media Attitude, 262.
mainly Muslim.” This runs counter to Correspondent Broadcast’s desire to limit the term: the fact that “Muslim” is dense with different associations allows it to do a lot of heavy lifting in a short space of time. It is, as Allan Bell puts it, a “contentful” word.

Considerations of accuracy and language lead to the question of what a Muslim is, for these journalists. Editor Print One described a lack of clarity on the matter: “[S]ometimes I feel the expectation is that you should discuss Islam and the Muslim community as an ethnicity. And other times as a faith group.” Her preference was to define it on religious grounds so as to limit the circumstances when the term would be applied, because she disliked “assuming that somebody’s whole identity is wrapped up in their faith, when I think of faith as being a choice.” Three correspondents told me that the faith identification of sources was irrelevant to their beats, which concerned subjects such as health. Correspondent Broadcast said he may have talked with many Muslims during his reporting, but he does not know because he did not ask—it was not relevant to the story he was reporting.

*When the word “Muslim” is appropriate*

The suggestion that faith identification is irrelevant for reporters covering beats such as health raises the normative question: when should journalists identify sources or stories as Muslim? One concern which several of my source participants told me (as well as many people during informal conversations in which I discussed my research topic) was that journalists identify stories and especially people as Muslim in a negative and exceptional way. I describe the argument of the “double standard” in detail in chapter 6. But their impressions accord with Elizabeth Poole’s contention that journalists employ an egregious use

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7 Paksoy, ‘Representation of Turkey’s EU Bid in the British Media’, 242.
8 Bell, *The Language of News Media*, 81.
9 She described herself as “someone who doesn’t have a faith” and whose family “happily” left its Christian background, and she admitted to being reluctant to inquire too deeply into someone’s subjective definition of their faith.
of “Muslim” in their content. I have found no studies that either challenge or support this statement concerning crime; Baker et al. suggest that, even allowing that journalism is generally fixated on conflict, the association of the word “Muslim” with conflict is exceptional in the British press, and Paksoy found that the association of Turkey with “Muslim” in stories unrelated to “religion or culture” was “[o]ne of the most striking points” in his research. A comparative content analysis concerning religious identification in stories of crime or terrorism would be welcome, but the question of the appropriateness of using the label “Muslim” is pertinent to this study even without these data. Rather than take these allegations from lay observers as a description of a fact, I consider them as indicative of the perception these Muslim sources shared that they were being vilified in the media.

As I identified this trend, I began to put the question to my journalist participants, asking whether they acknowledged such critique and what they thought of it. Three said it did not happen in their newspaper or broadcaster (or they hoped not), but two of those admitted it of other organisations. Correspondent Broadcast argued that it happens in the press because “print media are allowed to be unfair and . . . biased.” For him, this was as much a reflection of the readership as the production staff, because “people buy the newspapers they agree with” and “if you tend to be on the racist side, there are certain papers that will appeal to you much more”. Correspondent Print, who works for a broadsheet newspaper, volunteered that the tabloid press conducted such practice, as well as “the papers with agendas”. Annie Brown, working for Scottish tabloid the Daily Record, acknowledged that her paper used such

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10 Poole, Reporting Islam, 252.
11 Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes, 258; Paksoy, ‘Representation of Turkey’s EU Bid in the British Media’, 241.
exceptional profiling from time to time but said “we’re not massive culprits.” Brown said it depended on the paper and that the Daily Mail uses the term in that way “all the time.” Brown wrote for the Daily Mail for two years before taking her post at the Daily Record, so she speaks with both direct experience and perhaps the shaded view of a former employee.

Editor Print One gave an antithetical response to the question. She denied that her organisation, a broadsheet newspaper, made exceptional use of the word Muslim, and she doubted whether it was true of other organisations, either. Rather, she suggested that such stories as my source participants and others related were “true of a stereotype . . . that exists . . . out there in the community, and it’s repeated by things that people say.” For her, the egregious use of “Muslim” in news stories of social deviance was a myth which turned journalists into the “folk devil” which, according to the orthodox scholarship, journalists characterise Muslims as.4

I then asked in what conditions it would be appropriate to label a source, story, or issue as “Muslim.” Because this question surfaced after interviews had begun, I did not ask it of all my participants, although in some cases, I was able to determine from their responses something of the allowable boundaries for the use of the term without the benefit of a direct question. Nine of the twelve journalists spoke to the subject. Four of them gave a variation of the phrase, “when it’s relevant.” This answer came rather quickly and easily, and it was noticeably consistent among staff at the Herald. This is the sort of answer, though, that only prompts another question: “When is it relevant?” Brown was the only one to acknowledge, immediately after her answer, that it is hard to know when that is. I therefore interpret what “relevant” means by the answers and especially the examples they gave.

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13 John MacInnes cheekily attributes a more docile tabloid culture in Scotland to either its native sense of justice and equality or ‘Presbyterian prudery’; MacInnes, ‘The Press in Scotland’, 140; see also Hetherington, News in the Region, 196.
Five journalists indicated that reference to **religion** was a boundary for the inclusion of the term Muslim. As mentioned above, Editor Print One felt most comfortable restricting “Muslim” to a religious designation; however, many of her examples strayed from a strictly religious focus, including a repeated focus on racism. None of the other four restricted the term so categorically. In response to the direct question, two offered examples of a religious nature, concerning either religious laws (the examples were funerary requirements and the supposed proscription of donating organs) or religious holidays—in this case, Ramadan. Though not asked directly, Leask mentioned Eid celebrations as a good opportunity to include specifically Muslim coverage in the news. Farooq recalled four stories from her work with BBC’s Factual department that contained a Muslim element: “forced marriages, people marrying outwith their faith, people and their beliefs, and the story of a Pakistani Muslim girl allegedly kidnapped by her father.” Two of these stories place religion in the foreground, whilst “forced marriages” is characterised by a complex relationship of religious, ethnic, cultural, and family expectations; the final story in her list seems to be about crime and, later, politics, but the girl in question and members of her family highlighted religious differences as the reason for her departure. Apart from these specific examples, Farooq reflected that the value she offered the BBC was to provide a more diverse workforce and access to communities and stories her colleagues would not or could not reach, and those communities and stories were typically religious in nature.

Journalists also cited **subjective identification of sources** as a way of legitimising the Muslim label. Two discussed this in relation to terrorism: Editor Print One, perhaps showing some awareness of the orthodox line of academic literature, acknowledged that “[i]t may be true that the word ‘Muslim’ is used more often in stories when there is a degree of conflict or trouble.” These occasions, she said, were violent events caused by “Islamic fundamentalists,” and this element had to be a part of the coverage. “[T]hat doesn’t mean that every time one mentions Islam, one talks about Islamic fundamentalists. But those stories . . . are going to be covered, and therefore . . . that’s going to skew the
statistical representation of that faith in the press.” Correspondent Broadcast also referred to the subjective identification of the attackers of 9/11 and 7/7, who “were devoutly devoted to a particular strain of . . . Islam.” He was quick to note that such a strain is small and unrepresentative, but he said journalists should not omit the subjective identification of these terrorists with their religion. Without clear indications from the subjects, though, he said he would prefer to keep references to religion out of coverage. He gave a parallel example from “the Troubles in Northern Ireland” in which “<we> [he emphasised ‘we’ to distinguish his broadcaster from other news organisations] didn’t say ‘Catholic terrorists’ because you just didn’t know." There were one or two Protestant Republicans as well."

Sources other than the subject could also identify someone or something as Muslim for journalists in my study, a justification I call external identification of sources. Alison MacDonald recalled debate in her newsroom over whether to identify a murder victim in Edinburgh as Muslim. She said her organisation decided to adopt the language of the police, who released information as they carried out their investigation. When they identified the victim and his family as Muslim, so did her organisation. This outsourcing of language was not consistent, though: police asked for help from the public in finding “four to six black men,” but her organisation reported the number without the racial identifier. MacDonald said she and her colleagues debated the usefulness of profiling and in what circumstances it would be appropriate; for her, this demonstrated awareness of the potential harm caused by using such identifiers.

Correspondent Print saw relevance in the use of “Muslim” if people were “looking for housing for Muslims to worship in, or they’re being persecuted for being Muslims . . . [or] they’re asylum seekers in Dungavel [a detention centre in Scotland] and they’re being denied access to halal food, then it’s relevant to their faith.” The inclusion of persecution suggests that others have identified an individual or group as Muslim and have made that fact newsworthy by their

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15 I use chevron brackets (<>) to indicate verbal emphasis during interviews.
activity. Correspondent Print did not label such activity as “Islamophobia”—in fact, none of the journalists I spoke with used the term, except Leask. Here, he was characterising relations between Muslims in East Renfrewshire who are trying to build a mosque or community centre and other residential groups that oppose its establishment. Leask described the sustained opposition to this project as Islamophobic, but none of the protagonists he has spoken to would say so publicly, and so he would not venture to use the term himself. I presume that the label Islamophobia need not come from Muslims for journalists to apply it: if a local politician described the East Renfrewshire situation as such, or if a charitable organisation used the term to describe an instance of persecution, I expect that the journalists I spoke with would include it in their report.

One final way in which these journalist participants expressed the appropriateness of the use of Muslim was by negative example—by detailing when a story was not a Muslim story. Farooq was most forceful on this point, describing coverage of the case of child grooming in Rochdale. As men with Pakistani heritage (one was Afghani) were implicated in the case, “it became a Pakistani problem. It became a <Muslim> problem. Now, I had huge problems with how that story was reported. Because this is not a Pakistani problem, this is a criminal activity. And we [BBC specifically and journalists broadly] should have kept it— it should have been reported as such.” Farooq was not working with BBC Scotland at the time, having taken a redundancy package. The essentialism she perceived in the coverage upset her, “because really, how it was reported was, ‘All Pakistani men are like this.’ . . . [E]ven the BBC reports. I was sitting there, my chin hitting off the floor, going, ‘You’re actually implicating people like my brother and my— my dad, and people like that.’ This is horrific. How can you reduce one community to a bunch of paedophiles?” Farooq said that if news organisations insisted on making the ethnicity and religion of these suspects relevant to the story, she would have preferred more investigation into challenges

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of domestic abuse that Asian women face, suggesting that what gave the story
news value for British journalists was the fact that the female victims were white.

Journalists who did not identify as Muslim also contributed negative
boundaries for the term's use. Correspondent Broadcast said the religion of
Olympic medallist Mo Farrah is no more germane to the story of his
achievements than the racial identification of fellow Olympian Jessica Ennis.
Editor Print One said she is keen to commission work from people of different
ethnic or religious backgrounds without highlighting those differences, so as to
demonstrate that "they are part of Scotland's community... and they're not
always going to just be talking about those kinds of issues." She referred to an
opinion piece from Azeem Ibrahim, whom she had just described a moment
earlier as a "Muslim commentator," which dealt with social mobility: "I don't even
know if the word 'Muslim' came into it." She also commissioned two pieces from
a young female Muslim writer: one concerned her attitude to the burqa, and she
was sought specifically for that piece; but the other piece concerned women in
broadcasting being judged on their appearance, and "[i]t was not related
whatsoever to ethnicity or Muslim issues." MacDonald's example of the
Edinburgh murder victim also showed newsroom staff being careful not to turn,
in Farooq's words, "criminal activity" into a "Muslim problem."

I should note here that none of the journalistic participants in my study
gave the impression that they would condone gratuitous or exploitative use of the
label "Muslim." They were neither surprised at nor dismissive of my questions,
and as they talked of the work of journalism, they evoked norms of
professionalism which, however punctured by academic scrutiny, endure as the
means by which journalists self-identify. Further, though not everyone used the
phrase, I have no doubt that all of them would agree that "Muslim" should be
used as an identifier only when it is relevant to the story, however they might
define "relevance." From my sample, journalists have defined it in reference to
religion, subjective identification of sources, external identification of

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77 See Tuchman, 'Professionalism as an Agent of Legitimation'; Zelizer, Taking Journalism
 Seriously; Deuze, 'What Is Journalism?'; Ryfe, Can Journalism Survive?. 
sources, and negative examples that at least establish boundaries for what is not an appropriate context for the use of the term “Muslim.”

A key feature of this discussion is its normative quality: although some of the journalists used actual examples to support their position, they were nonetheless discussing an ideal arrangement. When we shifted our conversations from discussions about coverage to discussions of coverage, the field of the permissible widened. As I asked journalists about their practices or those of their colleagues—sources they had spoken with and stories they had reported—they mentioned examples which would not fit the criteria mentioned above. I do not consider this as necessarily inconsistent: the sample is small, and even within it, most journalists did not explicitly state that a story had to be religious in nature in order to be identified as Muslim. Rather, it is an expression of the improvised and contingent quality of decision-making in news.

Scholarly attempts to codify news values typically come up short: they can offer a list of features that explain why published stories are considered newsworthy, but they struggle to lay out a formula by which journalists will consistently and predictably accept or reject, promote or play down a given story.18 Four journalistic participants made some reference to news values: Correspondent Broadcast told me news was “based on the three ‘c’s: contrast, conflict, and controversy.” Correspondent Print also mentioned controversy, though he said it was not an essential quality; news could be positive, but it had to be “new.” Brown talked of a distinction between “hard news” and “features,” saying the latter still had value.19 Former journalist David Eyre was the only one to use the term—and that in a negative context, denying that the concept was operative: “News values are a hard thing to pin down. . . . And when you try and pin them [the journalist] down as to why that’s a story or why it’s not a story, they’ll come up with justifications for it, but those justifications are pretty much

secondary. There’s a gut feeling that somebody has when they look at something and . . . think it’s relevant or not. And justifications for the relevance come later.”

In contrast, nine journalistic participants used the phrase “good story,” which describes the same thing but in a looser way. Magnus Llewellyn said he would not accept stories from Muslim or other minority communities merely because of their identifiable qualities—they had to be good stories first (see also MacDonald’s comments below). Correspondent Broadcast talked of the “Hey Mum” test, which I first encountered in my journalism studies at university: a good story is one that you would tell your mother outside of work hours, so it should be accessible and digestible. Some of the examples which journalists described as “good stories” had the edge of contrast or controversy, such as Farooq’s story of a “gay mosque” in Paris and Stewart’s example of “Councillor Kalashnikov” (see below). Generally, journalistic participants used the language of “good stories” to imply news values without having to commit themselves to a list. The lack of definition may also have been owing to my self-presentation as a former journalist, so that they assumed I shared their understanding of what constituted a “good story.”

Their reticence to commit to a definitive list accords with Gans’s newsroom ethnography. As an alternative to news values, he proposed the concept of “considerations” that influence decision-making. Gans rejected the idea of “decision-making criteria” because it was too formal and not an accurate description of what he observed in newsrooms.20 We can think of the normative boundaries expressed above as considerations journalists account for when approaching a story about Muslims or preparing it for publication rather than a binding set of rules. In the remainder of the chapter, we see these considerations operationalised as they describe the Muslim sources they speak with and the stories from the Muslim community that they report on.

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Concrete Examples—Muslim Sources

To ascertain which Muslim sources my participants engaged with, I use data from my fifteen journalistic participants. I restrict the inclusion of data from the three “extra” participants to instances in which they spoke “as journalists”—either from their past or from relevant instances in the present. The journalistic participants named nine specific individuals, eight specific organisations, and eleven general categories as Muslim sources in Glasgow. This list includes actual and hypothetical-ideal sources. From this list, four individuals and the representatives from three organisations are participants in this study, and two sources gave interviews but ultimately declined to participate; this indicates that my data set reflects the news ecosystem in Glasgow but does not exhaust it. I sort these sources as “religious” and “not religious,” and I break “religious” down as “more- or less-official” and “unofficial.” These classifications regard the function to which the source is put in news coverage.

Religious or Otherwise

The first thing to note about this collection is how few of them occupy an official religious position. Editor Print One mentioned Azeem Ibrahim as a source she would commission for opinion articles; in his online profile, Ibrahim positions himself as a policy consultant, but the editor described him as a “Muslim commentator”, and recall that she was keen to restrict Muslim identification to a religious reference. Two institutions were mentioned as conduits to finding appropriate sources: Radio Ramadhan and the Muslim Council of Scotland (MCS). Radio Ramadhan has a month-long temporary license to broadcast during the Muslim holy month, and the majority of the programming during that month is of a religious nature. MCS is a representative body with interest in and membership from across the nation. Finally, five journalists referred to “the mosque” and “the imam” as a general category, with
two of them also discussing specific communities: the Glasgow Central Mosque
and a group attempting to establish a mosque in East Renfrewshire.

Three of the five suggested “the mosque” was insufficient and “the
imam” not interested or not able to meet journalists’ needs. Bradford said the
mosque was not the best place to find “real people.” Leask and Farooq caricatured
journalists “going to the mosque” or “ringing up the imam” for comment. Leask’s
caricature extended so that the typical imam was too old (“eighty”), unversed in
English, and not inclined to give any comment to the press anyway. Farooq
portrayed this source category as a kind of low-hanging fruit, suggesting that her
colleagues (broadly, not specifically at BBC) associate Islam with religion,
determine the mosque as “where Muslims go to pray,” and think no further
about where and how to access Glasgow’s Muslims. Bradford and Leask implied
that the mosque in general, or, for Leask, the Glasgow Central Mosque in
particular, was out of touch with real Muslims, real attitudes, or real events. The
East Renfrewshire mosque group was classed as a good story, though a difficult
one to tell: Leask used ideal types to describe it, referring again to the “poor
eighty-year-old guy” whose “English is poor” and will not speak on the record.
The second type he invoked is “the younger set—guys in their forties, fifties,
sixties, born in the UK;” these sources were deemed good for information but
ultimately not useful because of their reluctance to be quoted publicly.
Correspondent Print also referred to the East Renfrewshire mosque group,
saying the internal power dynamics made it hard for him as a religious and
cultural outsider to access the individuals and therefore the story.

All of the sources listed above can be classed as more- or less-official; other
sources which journalists mentioned fit poorly on that spectrum, for reasons I
articulate below in my discussion on “real people.” I class these sources as
“unofficial religious” because they lack the authority markers that officialise
them, though they are sought as sources because of the religious dimension of
their story. All but one are general categories rather than named individuals or
groups. For example, Brown has written several profiles of Muslim converts for
the Daily Record, and these sources are quoted concerning their religious feelings
or motivations. They are not, however, religious authorities, and the fact of their conversion, however interesting for Brown, is not in itself newsworthy enough to merit the story. One was featured because she was moving with her family to Baghdad in 2004; another received coverage because he had published a memoir. A qualified exception is her profile of Gillian Amin, an "ordinary" Scot whose conversion was used as a local example to follow news that Lauren Booth, sister-in-law of former prime minister Tony Blair, had converted. Other general categories which I classify as unofficial religious are women who wear the burqa, Muslim women who do or do not wear the veil, and an intriguing category which I explore more fully below, people breaking their Ramadan fast at McDonald’s. The specific example is Faiza Amjed, a young Muslim woman who wrote an opinion piece on her decision not to wear the burqa.

The remainder of the sources journalist participants named, whilst identified as Muslim or having something to do with Muslim issues in Glasgow, did not have religion at the fore of their identification. Individuals were used as sources because of the work that they did, such as Aamer Anwar, a lawyer who defends prominent human-rights cases, and Robina Qureshi, who is director of the charity Positive Action in Housing. Groups such as the Govanhill Baths Trust were named for the service they offer in neighbourhoods with a large Muslim population, whereas Awaz FM (which, unlike Radio Ramadhan, has no specifically religious mandate) was perceived as connected to Asian communities, which journalists easily conflate with Muslim communities, as discussed above. General categories included councillors who are Muslim or represent wards with lots of Muslims and residents and shop owners on Allison Street, both of which contain both Muslims and non-Muslims. The journalists who mentioned these categories were referring to sources they would turn for information, and presumably they would use other profiling techniques in order to get actual Muslim voices to comment in their stories: we did not discuss this in the

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interview, but I can imagine the journalist relying on skin colour, names, or more
directly if less efficiently, asking the person if he or she is a Muslim.

MacDonald mentioned as ideal types shop owners “Mrs. Gupta” and
“Mrs. Smith.” We were discussing a hypothetical business story, and whether in
that instance it would be worthwhile or even beneficial to seek a more diverse
cast of sources for stories that had nothing to do with the person’s religion. Leask
made an identical move, contrasting “Mrs. Gandhi” with “Mrs. Beattie;” in this
instance, though, he was speaking critically of “fake stories” that draw religious or
ethnic minorities into news coverage whereas a similar story about a white
Christian or a person without religious identification would not count as news.
Despite the difference in the participants’ attitudes to these ideal types, I consider
them expressions of the same category and distinct from the category residents
and shop owners on Allison Street.

Of the twenty-seven Muslim sources mentioned by my journalistic
participants, we see that the majority are not positioned religiously. Only eleven
of the identified sources have a religious element—six in a more- or less-official
and five in an unofficial capacity. As operationalised by journalists, Muslims in
Glasgow are not limited to religious positions, though their religious
identification had a strong bearing on whether they were considered a “Muslim
source” in the first place and therefore worthy of raising in our interviews. Their
identification as Muslim sources was not necessarily sufficient to classify a story
about them as a “Muslim story.” I explore this below, but first, I wish to explore
two dimensions of this list of sources: the valorisation of “real people” and the
reliance on authority.

/Public Journalism and “Real People”/

Of the eleven general categories journalistic participants mentioned, I
classed eight as variations on the theme “real people.” I could have included an
ninth: Leask described the younger generation, who get how media work to
highlight a generational shift. However, he named Osama Saeed as a specific
example of this category, and Saeed occupied increasingly official roles over the term of his engagement with Glasgow media, including spokesperson for the Muslim Association of Britain in Scotland, chief executive of the Scottish-Islamic Foundation, and SNP candidate for UK Parliament. Humza Yousaf, the minister in Scottish Parliament for external affairs and international development, also fits this category, as might Anwar. I therefore distinguish this category from the second or third generation, a “real people” designation which identifies groups of Muslims who are the children or grandchildren of immigrants. Not all of them are familiar with media needs and priorities, and this lack of familiarity may in fact make them more attractive to journalists seeking sources for certain kinds of stories.

The interest in real people is a strand of civic or public journalism.\textsuperscript{22} The movement “celebrates the absence of clear and precise definitions,” but in its various expressions, it attempts to bring institutional journalism closer to the interests of, and in many cases the voices of, the people.\textsuperscript{23} Joyce Nip ventured a list of its qualities and preoccupations, including accessible presentation of news and deliberate listening to the audience; important for this study is the practice “giving ordinary people a voice,” which includes a reference to “real people,” set off in quotation marks, as I do here.\textsuperscript{24} Nip conducted an ethnography of a daily newspaper in Savannah, Georgia, to discover whether the practices of public journalism were still present in a committed newsroom several years after the movement was first articulated. Some of these practices had been routinised, but others—especially “mechanisms of active listening to the community”—were not.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} For a summary and critique, see Theodore Lewis Glasser, ed., \textit{The Idea of Public Journalism} (New York: Guilford Press, 1999).
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 5.
The CBC newsroom I worked in adopted a public journalism campaign, conducting demographic analysis of the city of Ottawa, comparing this analysis with the categories of voices present in our coverage, and actively cultivating source relationships with categories that were absent from that coverage. I describe this in more detail, including my role within it, in chapter 7, but here I acknowledge that some of public journalism’s priorities were adopted by our managers. Even prior to this experiment, producers in my newsroom insisted on the use of “real people” as a valuable way to tell stories. My understanding of the term is shaped not just by the literature but by my practical use of it.

Journalists using the term “real people” are distinguishing a type of source from those with an agenda or a bureaucratic role. Andrew Garbett and colleagues, in evaluating how BBC journalists in London recruited sources from the community, quote one journalist who wanted “a real people file” in contrast to “the expert file”: these sources made news “more engaging,” but their non-institutional character made them difficult to identify and recruit. In chapter 3, I discussed sources as more- or less-official, and we cannot simply place real people at the extreme pole of “less official;” in many cases, they are not on the spectrum at all. They are conceived of as ordinary people to whom things happen or who do things that express in the particular stories in the wider community; journalists in this study used the term “case studies” to describe this function to me. The more organised a group becomes, the less inclined journalists are to consider its members real people: they are seen to have an agenda and to conduct research to suit that agenda, to the extent that journalists fear the intrusion of “spin.” In an ideal sense, real people do not spin stories. They are honest, and they merely relate a narrative from their experience. The quality of honesty allows real people

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26 Garbett et al., ‘Finding “Real People”’, 5.
27 Garbett et al. noted that even “citizen journalists” such as bloggers did not fit their participants’ definition of “real people,” though they were imagined as a potential conduit to such people; ibid., 5–6.
to function, for journalists, as a kind of Everyman to whom the putative audience
connects as it cannot a politician, a committee chair, or an academic expert.

I note that Richard Ericson and colleagues challenge this valorisation in
their study of (more-official and bureaucratic) news sources, suggesting it was
“hard to imagine a mainstream newscast or newspaper that cites only” unofficial,
unauthoritative sources; they contrast examples such as “the man on the street”
and “the hospital porter” with “the executive in his office” and “the hospital
administrator”. In a manner suggestive of the concept of authorised knowers,
they declare that “it is . . . easy to see why they must cite” the official, bureaucratic
sources.39 These contrasts show the strength of capital—cultural and social,
alongside economic—in the negotiation of authority.39 I do not contend,
however, that journalists “only” cite “real people”: the choice of which source to
use is determined by the story the journalist is covering. A story about hospital
budgets ought not to rely on the hospital porter, but a story about the hospital as
an employer might well feature the porter, if he contests poor treatment after a
workplace injury.

Real people, then, can be understood as a counter-trend to the reliance on
bureaucratic or more-official sources. I illustrate this with two examples from my
field data. Bradford described a story idea that had been raised in her newsroom,
interesting but “too late” to pursue. Ramadan occurred in the summer in 2013,
and the journalists considered school-aged children who might be fasting during
the day whilst taking physical education classes which would require them to run
and be active in an unusually hot summer with no opportunity to drink water:
how were they coping, and what measures might schools take to accommodate
them?31 I asked how she would have pursued the story if it had been assigned, and

39 Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, Negotiating Control, 4; see also Karen Ross, “The Journalist, the
Housewife, the Citizen and the Press: Women and Men as Sources in Local News Narratives”,
39 Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital”.
31 A caveat to this story idea: Ramadan 2013 began in July, and the Scottish school term ended late
in June. This story was not possible to accomplish, except through independent schools which
follow the English term dates; however, I include it here as a hypothetical story, which is also how
I treated it with Bradford, asking “what would you do” questions to generate a process for
investigating such a story.
the first problem she described was that of finding sources. After identifying
schools with a high population of Muslims, likely accomplished through census
data and other demographic reports, she would still face the problem of finding
people. She said she could use “official channels,” such as the mosque or MCS, as
conduits; but if she wanted “real people,” she might devise an elaborate scheme
such as visiting McDonald’s restaurant at sunset to “see who turns up.” Bradford’s
tone of voice indicated that the “official channels” did not present a satisfactory
solution and that although the trip to McDonald’s was logistically more
complicated and did not guarantee finding an appropriate source, it was her
preferred option and worth the effort. What makes it worth the effort is the
chance to interview real people rather than sources arranged by a representative
body. That group’s members may have selected these sources and even coached
them on what to say to provide the desired public representation. This is the spin
which Bradford and other journalists shun, and “real people” were depicted as a
guileless alternative.

This hypothetical example reveals how useful the spectrum is when taking
about more- or less-official sources. If we restrict official sources to those aligned
with the state, then people from the mosque and MCS are rendered unofficial.
But for Bradford, in this instance, they are official, in contrast to sources she
prefers. We can think of them as less official than bureaucratic sources—in this
case, we might place school board officials, school administrators, and perhaps
councillors in that category—but more official than teenagers who turn up at
McDonald’s to break their daily fast. This substantiates the need to soften a hard
binary distinction between official and unofficial sources. As well, Bradford used
the example to demonstrate knowledge of Islam and the Muslims living in her
Glaswegian context. At a rudimentary level, she knew that Ramadan is the month
of fasting, that those who fast cannot even drink water, and that the fast is over at
sunset. A journalist relying on stereotypes of Muslims might imagine they break
their fast at home or at an Asian restaurant: a curry house or a kebab shop.
Bradford demonstrated specific knowledge of the practices of a segment of the
population. She wanted high school students, and she suspected that teenaged
Muslims in Glasgow are as likely or more to break their fast with friends at a cheap fast food restaurant. Her insistence on using real people spurred her to seek sources in creative and surprising spaces, and when coupled with knowledge of the community she was reporting on, she could provide original stories for her employer.

The second example comes from MacDonald. She told me that her organisation does not specifically seek stories from any identifiable group. The story must first be compelling, and then the journalists determine whether they can enlarge the coverage or “tick any boxes” in terms of representing diversity. I asked her about an instance when Muslims in Glasgow were a big story—the 2007 attack on Glasgow Airport. She said BBC struggled with it: journalists did not “misreport” the story, in that they got details correct and were prudent in their assumptions about the perpetrators and their connection to the wider community of Arabs, Asians, or Muslims. But she said they had none of the added value of human stories and insights that would come from having “close connections” with the city’s Muslims. Part of this, she said, was because of the composition of their newsroom: it is hard to get good Muslim contacts if there are no Muslims working for the BBC. She said that Farooq was in the newsroom only infrequently and that she would not want to “pigeonhole” Farooq and place on her the entire burden for developing Muslim contacts. She also attributed the less-than-ideal coverage to the broadcaster’s profile in the community: BBC in general can be intimidating, and “real people” and “even experts” may be nervous about commenting for broadcast. They may not even know how to reach journalists or the newsroom, as MacDonald noted that the e-mail addresses and phone numbers for BBC journalists are not readily accessible to the public, unlike such media organisations as STV and the Daily Record which encourage members of the public to contact reporters with stories.

Both of these examples suggest that the use of real people signified for some journalists better coverage than a reliance on more-official sources. BBC Scotland did cover the 2007 airport attack, and the hypothetical story on students doing physical education during Ramadan could be accomplished through the
official channels. But the story improved for journalists when it included sources deemed free of spin or official rhetoric. Moreover, MacDonald positively characterised competing news organisations because of their ability to recruit and make use of real people in their coverage. Bradford and MacDonald were the only journalists in my sample to use the specific phrase “real people,” but it characterises such categories as converts, women who choose to wear the burqa, or Mrs. Gupta/Ghandi the shopkeeper, which journalists mentioned without using the phrase. They are exemplary, and they are seen as valid by journalists because journalists are the ones who selected them, rather than a body with its own agenda.\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{Authority and More-Official Sources}

Despite this desire for independent voices, journalists continue to rely on bureaucratic sources for news.\textsuperscript{33} Scholars of alternative media suggest that their subject is distinguished from mainstream journalism by its reliance on ordinary people.\textsuperscript{34} I account for the references to real people in my interviews with mainstream journalists by considering the differing methodological approaches: a content analysis sees only what is published and makes determinations about sources from this. A production study, such as Garbett et al., or my own experience in newsrooms, reveals a professional value placed on diverse sources which can be overridden by other concerns, notably pressures related to time and publication deadlines.\textsuperscript{35} Journalist participants in the present study indicated an openness to finding new sources but a universal acknowledgement of the

\textsuperscript{32}This connects to the quality of ‘discovery,’ one of Ivor Shapiro’s criteria for evaluating journalism; Ivor Shapiro, ‘Evaluating Journalism’, \textit{Journalism Practice}4, no. 2 (2009): 155–156.
\textsuperscript{35}Garbett et al., ‘Finding “Real People”’. 
difficulty of doing that work in their current conditions. More-official sources, with a title and an institution to support them, are easier for journalists to find, often listed in the organisations’ databases and qualified in the journalistic imagination as “the usual suspects;” and, as discussed in chapter 3, sources with authority conform to journalists’ need for clear, active story narratives. They can make things happen, and the more official they are, the things they say are operationally true by dint of them saying it.36

This preference for institutional authority makes coverage of Muslims complicated. Leask emphasised in our interview his operational problem with Islam: “the faith has no phore.” He was demonstrating knowledge of Islam’s non-hierarchical and decentralised structure. As mentioned above, Leask along with Farooq criticised other journalists for uncritically using “the mosque” and “the imam” as a representative authority for Muslims; Farooq mentioned colleagues asking why there was no “Muslim pope.” The word “pope” is resonant for Glasgow’s exceptional context vis a vis sectarianism and the prominence of the Roman Catholic Church.37 During my interview with Leask, he introduced me to his colleague, Gerry Braiden, and we had lunch together. Braiden was the Heralds local government correspondent, but he had built a niche covering Catholic affairs for the newspaper. These journalists delineated the different authority structures in the religious communities they cover. The Catholic Church is strong and hierarchical. When the archbishop speaks for Catholics, he does so with some clout: institutionally, he is charged with administering faith matters in the archdiocese, just as he takes his own direction from a hierarchy that ascends to the Vatican. Even the press officer at the archdiocese is authorised in a particular way, within the confines of the hierarchical structure.

Braiden and Leask contrasted this with the Church of Scotland. Despite its social and demographic position, they described the church as weak: its Presbyterian structure is intentionally decentralised, and the bureaucrats at head office at 121 George Street in Edinburgh do not speak “for” the denomination or

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36 Bell, The Language of News Media, 193.
37 See chapter 4.
its members. The moderator is a titular head, and he or she is nominated and elected by members and serves a one-year term, during which the moderator’s chief responsibility is to chair the annual General Assembly and ensure it runs properly. They articulated the Presbyterian structure as accommodating a diversity of beliefs and opinions, which makes an authoritative statement from the Church of Scotland difficult to obtain.\(^8\) I challenged them on whether such diversity was also present among Catholics—the laity and even the priests would have differing views, which a properly “plugged-in” correspondent would know and could exploit to add complexity to a news article. In fact, Braiden is quite “plugged in” to the Glasgow Catholic communities, with a network that extends from the laity through teachers and priests to the archbishop himself. Nonetheless, Braiden and Leask dismissed my suggestion: it was not deemed important, and though I did not ask, my interpretation is that the simplicity of the strong Catholic structure makes it journalistically useful.

These journalists then plotted Muslim sources between these poles. Structurally, Islam resembles Presbyterian decentralisation—more so, because there is no moderator who is made representative by a common vote; there is no head office in Edinburgh for Islam. Yet some sources from some Muslim groups in the city do position themselves as spokespeople. This is the context in which Leask told me about the younger generation, who get how media work. Leask said they tired of what they perceived as a fumbling articulation of public views from their elders in the faith and started presenting themselves to journalists, organising voluntary coalitions, and issuing press releases. He said they were careful not to overstate their authority or representativeness, but they spoke with strength and verve, unafraid of being controversial. Leask saw that they were aiming to be what he called “frontline sources,” or sources who get quoted in the first or second sentence of an article. Braiden and Leask compared this expression of Islam to the Catholic archdiocese leaders, who articulate a clear and controversial view on moral matters. They suggested that these kinds of sources

\(^8\) See also the relevant section of journalist Harry Reid’s report to the Church of Scotland, Reid, Outside Verdicti, 73–82.
are better positioned to control the direction of a story and generate effective and ongoing coverage of an issue.

The sources who engage with journalists may be criticised for presenting themselves as more representative than they are, as we saw in the previous chapter concerning criticisms of the “gatekeeper” model. Here, we are considering how journalists frame their sources. Correspondent Print said he was aware of the caution required of journalists: “I get the impression that a lot of the people we go to as kind of Muslim leaders are not viewed as such by lots of Muslims. That makes it hard.” He advocated journalists becoming more familiar with Muslim communities as a way of improving on that tendency, but he also appealed to Muslims to make it “a bit more clear” who the satisfactory spokespeople are. The answer, of course, can be posed as a question: who is satisfactorily representative depends on whom you ask.

**Concrete Examples—Muslim Stories**

Having discussed the sources journalists use or would use in news stories, I turn now to stories themselves. I tallied sixty-three stories mentioned in interviews or during my observation; some were mentioned by more than one journalist. Of these, eighteen are general stories, describing a category of story or an issue, such as **racism in Glasgow** or **community deprivation**. The remaining forty-five are specific. Some of the specific stories are redolent of the general ones, so that **racism post-Chhokar murder** and **investment in Allison Street** correlate to the previous examples of general stories. Some of this apparent overlap results from similar stories being prompted by more than one journalist—one in a general way, another with specific examples. Other times, I include both as distinct stories because the general story is raised in a way that suggests there are many examples that fit with it, whereas the specific story is described by the participant as a case study. Most specific stories, such as **Humza Yousaf in cabinet** or **organ donation**, stand alone without reference to a general story.
I then sorted the stories into themes, for analytical purposes. What I am curious about here is how the producers of news content operationalise the normative boundaries of “Muslim” in their daily work. Most stories fit into one of three themes: religious, ethnic, and social. By religious, I mean stories focused on matters of faith; by ethnic, I mean stories raised by my participants which involve (or are assumed to involve) Muslims but which are better understood as being about their ethnicity than their religion; finally, by social I mean stories which involve Muslims but are concerned with social matters such as governance and education. These themes are not meant to be determining. I have classified stories not necessarily because their content but more because of how the participants talked about them. Some classifications of stories may seem surprising at a prima facie level, but I hope to make clear in these instances why I have glossed them as I have. Not all the stories fit neatly into one theme: after working through my definitions of each category, illustrating them with typical and marginal examples, I evaluate the handful of stories that spread across themes. First, though, I qualify a small number of stories in the list—those raised by me rather than participants during our interviews.

In an obvious instance of researcher effect, four stories on the list were prompted by me as interviewer. In every case, the journalist was knowledgeable about the story and comfortable discussing it with me. One of the four—the Glasgow Airport attack of 2007—was raised by one participant without my prompting, whereas I raised it as an example in my question to another participant. I raised specific conversion profiles and conversion in general with Brown because I had searched the LexisNexis database for stories she had written for the Daily Record about Muslims to prepare for our interview; several of those stories featured Scottish converts to Islam, and these stories were not concentrated in one period of time, as though she were working on a thematic series, but were spread throughout her career with the tabloid. Raising them gave us an opportunity to discuss news values, hard versus soft news, and her personal interest in and attitude to Muslims. The fourth story which I raised concerned the flu vaccine. This reference followed an example Bradford raised about a
dearth of organ donors from Asian populations, with some resisting inclusion on religious grounds. Bradford told me that Muslim scholars had issued a fatwa determining that organ donation was permissible but that people were ignoring it. Her use of the term “fatwa” and the idea of people ignoring an inconvenient fatwa about health policy reminded me of a recent news story regarding a flu vaccine that was delayed in being administered at one Glasgow school due to concerns by Muslim parents that the vaccine used pork gelatine. Again, a fatwa had been issued saying the vaccine was halal, but some Muslims were not convinced. Bradford knew the details of this story and also mentioned “misreporting,” noting “American” coverage saying the outcry held up the entire flu vaccine programme in all Scottish schools because of one religious minority concern, which was not true. Bradford said it was only one school, and it was delayed but did go ahead in that case.

Themes—Religious, Ethnic, Social, and Hybrid

The reference to fatwas leads to the first theme emerging from the examples of Muslim stories provided by my journalistic participants: those concerning religion. This theme had the greatest number of stories—twenty-seven, with six of them general and twenty-one specific. I am not fixing a definition of Islam through these examples; neither were the journalists, though we can discern from the examples they gave some of the parameters they operationalise when imagining Islam the religion and Muslims as the religion’s believers. Stories that focus on religious laws or requirements that put them at odds somehow with others fall into this theme, as do stories that are essentially news reports about faith.

Some of these examples would not be controversial: the general story belief or the specific stories of how ordinary Scottish Muslims live their faith are sensibly classed as religious. Others within this theme, however, need some explanation. I include the veil, why three women choose to wear the burqa, and why a young woman chooses not to wear the burqa as religious stories,
but this is not an obvious classification. Muslims debate whether covering a woman’s head or face is a religious requirement or a cultural demand that is justified on religious grounds (we might gloss it here as “ethnic”). This debate radiates to scholars, politicians, legislators, and indeed journalists. Journalists I spoke with were comfortable offering it as an example of coverage of Muslim issues. These stories, in their interpretation, come about because the people involved are Muslims. The debate about whether it is religious or not is an element in the story—sometimes, as in broadcast debates referenced by source participants, it is the focus of the story.\(^9\) For this reason, I include these stories in the religious category. I also include stories concerning aspects of marriage (e.g., marriage outwith one’s religion), funerary requirements (Muslim cemeteries), and human sexuality (gay mosque in Paris).

Other stories have features that count as “social” but which I class under the “religious” theme. I have already discussed the stories about organ donation and the flu vaccine: both have features typical of stories concerning health or education policy, but what made Bradford mention them to me was the added news value about religious rulings. This quality turns a story about organ donation (i.e., “not enough people are registering as organ donors”) into a Muslim story (i.e., “Muslims are not registering as organ donors in great enough numbers because of their understanding of religious requirements”). Another example from Bradford that fits in this category is the hypothetical case of murders on religious holidays. She suggested that a murder on Christmas takes greater prominence in the news cycle than other murder cases: it appears earlier in the running order of broadcast news or on the front page of the newspaper, it gets more time or space allotted to its discussion, and so forth. This shows, for her, a cultural partiality to Christianity, notwithstanding whether the victim, the journalists, or the audience identifies as Christian. But if a Sikh is murdered on Diwali, Bradford contends that it has comparable cultural significance and should similarly be placed more prominently in the news order. “Murder,” then, is not a

\(^9\) See chapter 6.
religious story; nor even is “murder of a Sikh;” but “murder of a Sikh on Diwali” does constitute for her a religious story because the occasion of the murder, a religious holiday, changes (or should change) the newsworthiness of the story.

The second theme to emerge from interview data is “ethnic.” These are stories which concern (or may concern) Muslims, but the story is focused on elements of ethnicity—for Glasgow, frequently Asian or Pakistani identifiers. This conflation of ethnicity and religion is pervasive among my sample, though many journalists expressed a simultaneous awareness that the two are distinct. They did not, however, have a systemic way of articulating that distinction. My impression is that some of the journalists I spoke with assume that an Asian they are interviewing or writing about is Muslim, but it is not their Muslim status that has compelled journalists to talk to them. For example, Stewart, in listing Muslim stories she has worked on, mentioned the purchase of an old Egyptian cinema by “a group of Asian businessmen. . . . But it’s more about the story than about the ethnicity of the people who are involved.” Tellingly, this could then be classed as “social” or perhaps struck off the list entirely; what interested me was how my question, concerning cultivating relationships with Muslim sources, led to a description of “Asian groups and [the] Asian community,” which prompted her to share this example. She is, in a way, apologising for the story being insufficiently “ethnic” when my question strictly speaking asked for examples of “religious” stories.

I class ten stories in the sample as ethnic: one general story and nine specific stories. I include matters of immigration in this theme, encompassing a BBC-organised debate on independence with a panel composed of immigrants, and the National Health Service recruiting immigrants with medical credentials. Neither of these stories, as summarised by the journalists who raised them, is exclusive to Asian or Pakistani ethnicities nor to groups

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40 Tariq Modood and colleagues have written a concise and cogent defence of ‘ethnicity’ as a social fact and a category of analysis, which not only sets some boundaries around how the term is operationalised but also addresses the contested terms ‘race’ and ‘racism’; Tariq Modood, Richard Berthoud, and James Nazroo, “Race”, Racism and Ethnicity: A Response to Ken Smith, Sociology 36, no. 2 (2002): 419–27.
which might be identified as Muslim, but they raised them with me as examples of Muslim stories. **Racism** in both its general expression ("in Glasgow") and specific instances (post-MacPherson report, post-Chhokar) was the first topic that Editor Print One mentioned when recalling her earlier work as a reporter. She said she “did quite a lot [of reporting on] issues involving the Muslim communities in Glasgow,” before discussing racism in the context of crime and community unease.

The Chhokar case illustrates not only the conflation of ethnic and religious identifications but also the cross-religious commonalities that make “a ‘Muslim’ appearance” a relevant factor for victims of violence.⁴ Surjit Singh Chhokar from North Lanarkshire was murdered in 1998. Activists at the time, including Anwar, compared the case with the murder of London’s Stephen Lawrence and alleged institutional racism on the part of the police and the Crown Office. To connect this story to Muslim issues, we must consider that there was a racist element to Chhokar’s murder and that the victims of institutional racism, in a Glaswegian context, are often Asians; as some journalists connect being Asian with being Muslim, the story then becomes for them a Muslim one. I should be clear that Editor Print One was aware that Chhokar is Sikh, not Muslim.⁴² She was not confused as to his identification but was extrapolating from his case to its impact on the community she reported on: his killing “prompted investigation into the extent of racism in Scotland,” which led her to talk with Muslims.

My final theme describes stories that are “social”: as with ethnic stories, they involve people who are or are supposed to be Muslim; unlike with the ethnic theme, the stories that fall into this category are stories because of their wider social impact. I identified ten such stories, four of which are general and six of which are specific. Examples of general stories in this theme are "woolly ‘nice’ projects" and **community deprivation**. Correspondent Print described the

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⁴² Another journalist indicated distaste that the story had gained the shorthand reference, “the Sikh waiter story,” reducing the story to ethnicity, class, and racialised stereotypes.
former as the kind of story about which he receives many press releases but which he mostly cannot cover, such stories being copious and ill-formed. He narrated the prototypical pitch as follows: “The other thing I get is, ‘We’re doing this really nice project in Govanhill, Sighthill, or in Dundee, or Ayrshire, or whatever; we’re working with—delete as appropriate—young people, old people, disabled people, ethnic minorities; and we’re providing them with—delete as appropriate—financial health, peer education, health screening; you know, and you should write about it.’” Either the agency carrying out these projects or the community that receives these services may be composed of Muslims, but the social function is the focus of the story. Community deprivation stories can be published about many neighbourhoods, but when they report on neighbourhoods such as Govanhill or Pollokshields, which have a higher density of Muslims than other areas, these social stories can be considered Muslim stories.

Specific stories in this theme are likewise straightforward. The story of Systema, a music education programme concerns an enrichment programme offered at a particular school. The school is in a neighbourhood with a high density of Muslims, and the journalist learned of the story through her relationship with a councillor who identifies as a Muslim: because of these factors, she included the story in our discussion. Likewise, Editor Print One commissioned a young Muslim woman who works in community broadcasting to write an opinion piece about women in television being judged on their appearance. She could have contacted many different women to write about the subject, but she chose Faiza Amjid, who had written a previous opinion piece for her about not wearing the burqa. Editor Print One gave several reasons for this: she wanted to provide a second opportunity to an early-career journalist who showed promise; she noted that the journalist had broadcast experience; and the previous article indicated that the journalist had opinions concerning her appearance and its public reception. Editor Print One shared this example in the midst of discussing her desire to recruit more Muslim journalists and see greater diversity in the newsroom, which I interpret as an implicit fourth reason for commissioning this particular journalist. However, she told me that the item “was
not related whatsoever to ethnicity or Muslim issues.” The “social” theme
captures such stories which, despite their focus, include sources or issues that are
Muslim.

These themes, and my disclosure of the reasons for classifying stories
within them, give some shape to our understanding of what Glasgow journalists
consider Muslim stories. We are left, though, with sixteen stories which do not fit
neatly into one or another theme. This does not suggest the need for a fourth
theme, nor does it reveal these themes as insufficient. I coded these stories based
on the focus of the item, and in some cases, the story lacked a single, clear focus.
Two or even three of the themes emerged as foci of the story. This was especially
the case with a broad subject such as terrorism: the ascription of motives for acts
of terrorism is contested, with some giving primacy to religion and others to
politics, which I include in the social theme. Moreover, when the issue of
terrorism abroad—a bomb going off in Mumbai or Bali—reflects back to people
living in Glasgow, they question whether they are entangled in the story because
of their religious or their ethnic identification. The themes I have generated are
able to encompass the complex stories remaining in my data set, but we must
consider them as hybrid stories.

I identified three stories with both religious and ethnic themes. My
definition of “ethnic” already accommodates the assumed conflation between the
two, but rather than being a category mistake, what we see in these stories are
both the religious and the ethnic elements highlighted at the same time. Molly
Campbell/Misbah Rana is the story Anthea Irwin analysed in her chapter on race
and ethnicity in the Scottish media. Irwin’s classification privileges the ethnic
elements, and the story highlights the girl’s dual heritage as the child of a Scottish
mother and a Pakistani father. It would be simple enough to leave it there, except
that family members cited religious reasons for the girl’s dissatisfaction with

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41 See chapter 2.
living with her mother, as discussed above. The religious and ethnic themes are compelling and distinct, and to favour one category over the other elides important aspects of the story and the reason it was raised in the context of this study. These reasons also apply to the story forced marriage—personal story.

The third, Amina’s “I Speak for Myself” campaign, highlights both themes but in a manner more complementary than competitive. The campaign organisers emphasise the subjective identification of women in Glasgow, and the layering of these identifications is deliberate. The women whose images feature in the campaign wrote messages that declare their authors to be Muslims and Scottish, Pakistani, Palestinian, British, Asian, Arab, as well as lovers of fish and chips, Irn Bru, or James Bond films. To restrict these three stories to religion or, conversely, to ignore the religious focus would be an insufficient characterisation of salient themes.

I have created the hybrid classification of “ethnic and social,” and all five stories included were the focus of columns by Aamer Anwar, though some were also referenced by other participants. Anwar listed stories from his columns in quick succession during our interview, and it was sometimes difficult to ascertain the ways in which he characterised the stories and, therefore, which theme fit best; neither was it always clear which audience he was targeting—typical Sun readers or Scottish Muslims. He intended his columns to provoke action, but the ambiguity of the audience made it hard to discern his intention in mentioning the story. Some, such as hate preachers in the UK and Christians persecuted in western Pakistan, were easily glossed in the religious theme. Two, terrorism and protests against the Scottish Defence League (SDL), have features of all three themes and will be discussed below. Five general stories—domestic violence, asylum, poverty, child abuse, and civil rights—require explanation as to why “ethnic and social” best describes them.

45 For more details of the campaign, see chapter 8.
First, I do not consider their content to be related to faith or religious requirements. Moreover, Anwar was reticent to apply the label “Muslim,” especially in characterising himself. He identified as a Muslim, and his religion was known publicly, but he resisted the characterisation of “Muslim lawyer” and described himself as an outlier to the faith community. This is why I do not include them in the “religious” theme. I do identify an ethnic focus, however, and one that, consistent with the category, was characterised by participants variously as Muslim, Asian, and Pakistani. I do not wish to give the impression that, for example, domestic violence is exclusive to Asian populations. It is not. As we shall see in chapter 6, when source participants raised this story, they were careful to specify the context in which they discussed it within their Muslim or Asian community networks. Neither Anwar nor Farooq, who also mentioned domestic violence and child abuse, was so meticulous. Finally, Anwar was typically social in his orientation. Poverty was a concern for him whether the poor were Muslims, Asians, or otherwise; moreover, he argued that Muslims in Glasgow ought to be concerned about issues such as poverty regardless of whether those poor are Muslims. Thus, the ethnic theme was ambiguously present in Anwar’s reference to these stories, whereas the religious was often downplayed; meanwhile, the stories he listed were shaped by his broad social commitment.

The final hybrid category involves stories that highlight all three themes. Eight stories spanned the categories—two general and six specific. Leask’s “negative stories—the bad stuff” was both suggestive and vague: what he was describing here was a category of story that he felt he, as a white non-Muslim, could not access or report on but that a journalist who was an “insider” could. This could involve criminal activity, conflicting cultural practices, or theological divisions with practical implications for a community. This list is in no way exhaustive, nor did he outline even these stories in particular. Rather, he suggested a kind of story with hard news values, often based on conflict and perhaps with some element of accountability or a problem that needs to be solved. Without particulars, it is difficult to ascribe it to one or another theme,
and my interpretation of Leask’s reference is that he intended this category to be flexible and applicable to more than one theme.

A specific example of the same order is **Humza Yousaf in cabinet**: rather than employing negative values, this story was raised as a positive one. However, Yousaf can be (and has been) described as “Muslim MSP,” “Asian MSP,” or simply “MSP;” in the third and social iteration, however, his other identifications are not elided.⁴⁶ This is not to say that every time Yousaf is interviewed for a story, it counts as a Muslim story in the way we discuss it here. But if the story, which was covered after Yousaf’s election and the SNP’s election to a majority government in 2011, is about Yousaf’s acquisition of the role, with a “first for Scotland” quality, it places all three themes at the fore.

Anwar’s **protests against the SDL** combines all three themes in a slightly different way. The SDL, like its affiliated group the English Defence League, positions itself in opposition to “Islamic extremism” whilst remaining “anti-racist and inclusive”; observers and critics have nonetheless noted violence and aggressive rhetoric against ethnic minorities among members of these groups.⁴⁷ Anwar, who has helped organise the counter-movement Scotland United, appealed to social themes both in the disruption this group causes and in the response of the community, rejecting divisions on religious or racialised qualities.

Two stories in this collection are international stories. I include them because there are local filters for these stories: they are told by Glaswegian journalists and interpreted by Glaswegian audiences. Having included them, classifying them remains a challenge. Like **Yousaf in cabinet**, the **conflict in Israel and Palestine** was described by its religious, ethnic, and social qualities. Although Farooq said she had a heightened sensitivity to the story as compared with her colleagues, which she attributed to religious solidarity, she did not deny the multiple factors that make that conflict a story. **Articles on the Arab Spring**

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may start with the ethnic theme—“Arab” as a broad identifier or specific, nationally conceived ethnicities, such as “Egyptian” or “Tunisian”—but enlarge to the social and the religious in their analysis. To say that either of these stories is “about” religion or “about” ethnicity is to ignore its complexity, and none of the journalists who raised these topics reduced or essentialised the story in our interview.

The final set of stories which feature all three of my themes are linked by the idea of terrorism. Terrorism as a general story and the specific stories Glasgow Airport attack and “Councillor Kalashnikov” connect to a complex media discourse which, like the previous international stories, is defined circumstantially by religion and ethnicity but contains strong social storylines. “Terrorism” was used by all of the participants who mentioned it as shorthand for “Islamic terrorism,” even as they undercut the association; the term was used ironically but also unconsciously, assuming that I knew, as they did, that terrorism is linked to Islam but that they did not personally adopt this view. Religion, then, was implicated in the story. Further, ethnicity was broadly linked to terrorism, acknowledging that Asians and Arabs are profiled in association with terrorism regardless of their religion. This ethnic element was a specific feature of the story of the Glasgow Airport attack, as journalists and residents wondered about the attackers’ ethnicity: were they Scottish? When police determined for the attackers a complex of ethnicities that involved Iraqi, Indian, and British, but not Scottish identifiers, Glaswegian Muslims expressed relief, according to Farooq, that he was not “one of us.”

Social themes were prominent, in descriptions of the motivation for terrorism (politics, foreign policy, colonial legacies); the effect of terrorism on policy and residents’ sense of security; and in the response to terrorism, which in the case of the airport attack included politicians and police in Scotland investigating the case and exhorting the Scottish public not to vilify Muslims in its midst. The “Councillor Kalashnikov” story seems to fit more accurately with just ethnic and social themes: in the story, an elected member of Glasgow City Council was shamed in the press and suspended by his party for two months after
his ex-wife provided video footage to a journalist of him at a mountain camp in Pakistan firing an AK-47 assault rifle with some of the couple’s children. However, the story gains context from the existing discourse of terrorism, so I have added it to this set: terrorism encompasses the theme of religion, so religion becomes an element in this story.

Conclusion

The decision to label a source, story, or issue as Muslim connects these elements to a particular kind of coverage, which is contested and politically sensitive. The journalists in this study were alert to that fact, and the boundaries some imposed on the application of the label were an attempt to control and limit its usage. Journalists did not want to use the term indiscriminately or egregiously, though some allowed that this did happen—in other journalistic settings than their own, with one exception. The determination of what those boundaries should be was largely made without consultation with Muslims; only one organisation in this study had a journalist who identified as Muslim working in its newsroom, and we must be cautious not to impute expertise on a journalist solely by dint of her religious identification. Journalists did not claim to study established press guides on covering Islam but developed their sense of accuracy through reading previous articles and talking with people who may or may not be experts or authorities in the matter. None of the journalists mentioned “Googling” the subject, i.e., typing into a search engine keywords such as “Islam” and “burial” for their research; nonetheless, scholarship and my experience working as a journalist suggest this is another method of learning and verification.

The boundaries for the application of the term “Muslim” were not exclusively to do with religious matters. Identification of a person as Muslim could be made subjectively by the source being interviewed or externally by an authoritative body such as the state or the police. This accords with the socio-religious definition of Muslims that I proposed at the beginning of the study. The way journalists speak of Muslims is defined with reference to but not limited to the source’s religious identification. Of the concrete sources and stories journalists listed, about two fifths had a primarily religious focus. I identified this as slight in relation to sources—“only” eleven of twenty-eight (forty per cent) were religious—whereas for stories, the religious category had the greatest number, accounting for twenty-seven of the sixty-three listed (forty-three per cent). What distinguishes these is the nature of the comparison: sources were categorised as religious or otherwise, making the latter category a majority; stories were classed into three themes—religious, ethnic, and social. “Religious” was therefore the largest category. If we include hybrid stories of which religion is one of the identified themes, this increases to thirty-eight stories, or sixty per cent of the total. Seen this way, stories with a (not necessarily exclusive) religious theme do comprise the majority. We can conclude from this, within the limitations of the study sample, that sources can “be Muslim” without “doing religious things;” whereas stories about “Muslim things” are more likely to relate to religious belief or practice.

We see this looser standard for the designation of sources in the examples participants raised. Politicians were identified in our interviews as Muslim sources even when they were making budget deliberations at Glasgow city council. This does not mean they would necessarily be identified thus in the published stories: the insistence on relevance would make such labelling questionable. However, in the context of identifying Muslims in Glasgow to whom journalists would turn for comment, clarification, or contact with other appropriate sources, they were seen as sensible inclusions. Among the sources

who are identified for expressly religious purposes, I have sorted them as more- or less-official and unofficial, depending on the way my journalistic participants described making use of them. For information about Islam or authoritative decisions and declarations, they turned to more- or less-official sources. This contrasts with “real people,” a journalist’s term for unofficial or barely official people, whose stories may focus on religious content but who lack the authority to make things happen. Real people have value for journalists as illustrations of a problem, as in the case of Bradford’s fasting schoolchildren taking physical education classes in a hot summer. The solution to the problem (what accommodation can be made for them) and even the verification of the problem (it is true that Muslims must abstain from water during Ramadan) are addressed through sources with authority.

The issues or events at hand in concrete stories required a more obvious religious theme to count as Muslim stories. That is to say, more of the stories journalists mentioned had religious themes to them. Stories with ethnic themes—either alone or as a hybrid focus—were less common, and many of these stories referred in some way to racism. This troubles Meer and Modood’s findings that journalists distinguished race or ethnicity as an involuntary identifier from religion as a voluntary one and, therefore, that they decried racism as an unwelcome of coverage whilst determining Islamophobia as permissible and even salutary, to the extent that they admitted the concept existed at all.\(^{50}\) Although journalists in this study rarely used the term “Islamophobia,” discussions about media coverage of Muslims led them to discuss racism. Journalists slipped easily between discussions of religion and ethnicity, and that accounts for some of this. Stories with social themes were least common of all: as the focus of the story drifted further away from any religious quality, it became harder to justify the application of the label “Muslim.” Though this does not comprise an exclusive set of boundaries around journalists’ use of the term “Muslim,” it gives us a thicker understanding of that usage than content analysis provides. I examine how this

\(^{50}\) Meer and Modood, ‘Refutations of Racism’.
conception of Muslims works in actual relationship with sources, but before commencing with such analysis, I turn to the other half of my provisional divide: the conceptions Muslims in Glasgow have of journalists.
CHAPTER 6
SOURCES’ CONCEPTIONS OF JOURNALISTS

This chapter offers the complementary half of what I initiated in the previous chapter: a discussion about the ways source from Muslim communities in Glasgow conceive of journalists. There are some qualitative differences between these sets of data, and so the structure of this chapter differs from the previous one. I begin with a summary of responses from participants concerning their attitude to journalists or the media before indexing the conditions in which these participants considered it appropriate to use the label “Muslim” in reporting. Discussion of appropriate use preceded my examination of the stories journalists actually covered or hypothetically would cover, so as to establish some normative boundaries by which to consider their concrete examples. Here, I begin with the attitudes so as to provide a context for understanding the boundaries they would set on journalistic usage of the term. I conclude with an examination of their responses to the question of what they think journalists are looking for from a source or a story.

This chapter is largely based on impressions: except in a few circumstances, the sources do not do journalism themselves. They relate to the product of journalism as a more or less accurate representation of them, their organisation, or the religion with which they identify. They relate to the production of journalism through discrete encounters—points of contact in the midst of their quotidian activity. Their impressions are largely abstracted, therefore, and those recorded in the final section are doubly so, as I asked sources to imagine what journalists need professionally from sources. As such, it is in no way binding as a set of values to help us evaluate news coverage; instead, it helps us understand the ways in which sources prepare for and operationalise their relationship with journalists in co-creating news content. This prepares us for the
following chapter, which looks at how both journalists and sources in Glasgow enact these relationships.

**Attitude of Muslims to the Media**

Although my study is concerned with individuals (journalists) as opposed to structures (the media), this section offers examples that are more general than specific. I use both “journalists” and “the media” in this section; I am not using them interchangeably, for they have different definitions and it is important not to conflate them. However, sources frequently discussed “journalists” in general rather than specific journalists (seventy references in the transcripts and notes), and more often than that “the media” as a catch-all term (ninety references). Many of these participants did not have regular contact with a variety of journalists, such that they would differentiate them or refer to specific journalists by name. Those who did were ones with a more intimate understanding of journalistic practices, such as Osama Saeed and Aamer Anwar, who have more recently been absorbed into news organisations, or an active relationship and an interest in maintaining and expanding that relationship, such as Samina Ansari. If others made distinctions between the media, it was largely at the level of the organisation or the format—how the Herald or BBC Scotland covers Muslims; differences between tabloids and broadsheets; “national press” meaning either UK-wide or specific to Scotland. Although I prompted as often as possible for responses about Glasgow and national media, participants often spoke of UK or global media, and my distinctions did not register with their narratives.

I divide comments concerning participants’ attitude to the media into two main categories: substantive and functionalist. These categories are purely for the purpose of organising data. Substantive responses have to do with what the media or journalists are or qualities of their coverage, and functionalist responses concern what journalists and the media do—how they interact with Muslims. I classify some responses in a third category, particular or contextual, to accommodate responses from a few participants who have more experience with
or a unique insight into journalism. These could not be generalised across the small sample, but they are no less interesting because of it. I include responses from Arifa Farooq, the journalist, but only to the extent that she is describing attitudes of “the community” to journalists. Her attitudes are shaped by more than a decade of professional experience, and I have catalogued some of her responses as a journalist alongside those of her colleagues in chapter 5.

**Substantive Responses**

Substantive attitudes to journalists and the media ranged from positive to negative, but negative was far more frequent. Of all the words used to describe coverage, **negative** or **negativity** was the most numerous, and I have a long list of words or phrases that participants used in our interviews which are negative in tone. In my interview with Saeed—once an active, critical Muslim in Glasgow but now the media relations head of Al Jazeera in the Persian Gulf, distanced himself from his local coreligionists: “[U]ltimately, the Muslim community—and I’m going to make a monolithic, grand, sweeping statement, here—they have a very . . . monolithic view of media, in the same way that sometimes the media have a monolithic view of Muslims, which is that the media are all bad, and they are all out to get us.” As the quotation shows, Saeed was aware of the essentialising nature of his comment even as he offered it, and he strategically connected it to the prevailing language of not just his coreligionists but the orthodox scholarship on this subject, so that the misrepresentations (such as they are) are made by both parties in both directions. He generously attributed media misrepresentations to ignorance, which accords with what I described in the previous chapter—that journalists in Glasgow are not actively seeking to foster negative attitudes to Muslims or malignly represent them. The data that follow, however, accord with Saeed’s depiction of Muslims.

Ten participants used a variation on the word “negative” to characterise journalists. Further, seven participants (with one also among the ten just mentioned) said “the community” believed that **the media were against**
Muslims. One participant, whilst not using the word itself, gave a general impression of negative coverage of and engagement with Muslims. In total, seventeen out of nineteen participants considered here depicted the media as negative towards Muslims. The first expression of this characterisation was direct and typically the opinion of my interviewee, as for example Fariha Thomas described “pretty negative stuff that got massively worse after 9/11, but even before that—just all these misportrayals.” Participants using the second expression distanced themselves from the opinion: it was something “Muslims” or “the community” felt. Farooq described calling Muslims for a story, and as soon as she said she was with BBC, these sources became suspicious and cautious, even if she emphasised her Asian name to indicate a sympathetic, insider relationship. In describing the negativity of news coverage, several participants also said journalists “rarely” or “never” reported positive stories.

Only two participants of the nineteen discussed in this section did not characterise journalists or the media as negative: Ansari and David Eyre. Eyre worked as a journalist for most of his career, and he does not identify as a Muslim. He did not offer any depictions of an attitude among Glasgow Muslims to journalists. Ansari had a far more equivocal view of the media, which was consonant with her manner of speech in talking about other people generally. She avoided stereotypes, and when she was critical of an individual or institution, she often followed the critique with a consideration of why this person might have said this or done that. I interpreted this as partly due to her professional work, which is in counselling and community support, requiring a degree of diplomacy; I also attribute it to her rigorous positioning of herself as an acceptable Scottish citizen. She did not want to be seen to complain, to as it were “play the minority card” to make exceptional demands on society. Whilst she did not employ the negative depiction described here, she did use the term “agenda” twice in our interview.

Agenda is among the words I class as being negative in tone. Four participants used the phrase, twice softening it as “a wee bit of an agenda” and twice tied to the government’s agenda, by which they meant its foreign policy
orientations. Three participants used a variation on the word “stereotype” and two a variation on “bias.” I counted fourteen other words or phrases of this type which were used by only one participant, including sensationalism, propaganda, inaccurate, vicious, and lacking a human element.\footnote{The other words or phrases I classed are the following: essentialising, not interested, unrepresentative of the community, sinister, commercially driven, irresponsible, offensive, provocative, and simplistic.} With a variety of foci, then, the weight of the attitudes of Muslims in Glasgow to the media is negative. Readers of social research on Muslims in Britain will not be surprised by this: within focus groups or a schedule of interviews, researchers often ask about media representations, and similar themes of negativity and vilification prevail.\footnote{Samad, “Media and Muslim Identity”; Sundas Ali, “Second and Third Generation Muslims in Britain: A Socially Excluded Group? Identities, Integration and Community Cohesion” (presented at the 12th Annual Aage Sorensen Memorial Conference, Cambridge, Mass., 2008), accessed 30 March 2011, http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~hos/papers/Sundas%20Ali.pdf; Kabir, Young British Muslims; Ali and Hopkins, “Everyday Making and Civic Engagement.”} My sample is distinguished by the fact that the participants are in relationship with journalists, but that relationship is not indicative of a necessarily more favourable attitude towards journalists.

Nonetheless, participants did have some positive responses. One said journalists were “okay” when a story was “just factual.” Four participants suggested media coverage had improved or was improving since 9/11, echoing impressions of three journalist participants, as mentioned in the previous chapter.\footnote{Eyre also suggested that reporting on Muslims has improved in Glasgow since 9/11. He is not counted among those from chapter 5, as those responses were drawn from “journalist” rather than “journalistic” participants; however, he made the comment as a former professional journalist assessing the progress or achievements of his colleagues. It has, therefore, a different focus from those of other source participants. Farooq, whose responses are sometimes enumerated in this section, is among the journalist participants who said coverage had improved.} Three of the four gave the example of reporting on the 2007 attack on Glasgow Airport as an illustration of better coverage, a more nuanced representation of Muslims, and an effort by journalists not to resort to narratives of Islamic terrorism or Otherness. One, Saeed, also suggested that the economic downturn in Britain and the “Arab Spring” revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa had altered the narratives of reporting: on the one hand, British journalists were less confident about their “own” society, whilst on the other, “the
Muslim world . . . [was] struggling within itself to determine its own future.” One further participant was ambivalent on the subject of improvement: she identified a greater interest in Muslims and Muslim stories, but she was unsure whether she considered the resulting coverage an improvement. A sixth participant was emphatic that coverage had not improved since 9/11; our discussion hinged more on international coverage of conflicts in Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Palestine than local affairs.

The other typical positive response was that reporting on Muslims was different in Scotland as compared with the rest of the UK. This connects to broader statements from many of my participants outwith discussions of the media, that Scotland has a more receptive attitude to minorities as compared with the racialisation of politics in Britain. The four participants who made this statement in the context of media coverage were all political sources. Three of the four were also among those who suggested coverage had improved or was improving, which may indicate a relationship between the two attitudes. It may also indicate a limit on the scope of that improvement—that Scottish media has improved whereas British media has not. From my interviews, Bashir Maan made statements about the media coverage improving and the difference in Scotland in the same part of our conversation, but Saeed and Humza Yousaf gave these responses at different, separate moments in our interviews.

My interpretation is that suggestions of both improvement and difference presuppose a consistent and coherent standard of what news coverage is and ought to be in Scotland and in Britain as a whole, none of which I would grant my participants. These comments, rather, are indicative of a disposition among participants. For political participants, there may be some positioning advantage to speaking well of Scotland and less critically of journalists, who cover the activity of politicians and spread that coverage amongst their audiences. However, they made these comments during interviews with an academic researcher, whose findings are public but not of the same order as those of the

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Miles and Dunlop, “The Racialization of Politics in Britain”; see discussion in chapter 4.
news media. More likely, they are conclusions inspired by their interest in public life, which includes the media, and their subsequently more granular appreciation of media practices.

*Functionalist Responses*

The majority of the remaining responses from participants concerning their attitudes to the media are what I call functionalist in nature. These responses reflect their beliefs about what the media do, how they relate to Muslims, and what effects media coverage has on audiences. The most common response of this type was that journalists employed a double standard for Muslims. This double standard was invoked in different ways among the ten who raised it: Muslims were deemed to be treated unequally in comparison with people with disabilities, with government extremism in foreign affairs, with Sikhs, with the Irish Republican Army, with criminal activity, with Jimmy Savile, and with non-Muslims who research terrorism documents and express anger at the so-called War on Terror. The complexity of this collection of responses merits further distinction. I group these responses in three ways: activity that is deemed permissible for non-Muslims but impermissible for Muslims; language that takes on a different character when describing Muslim versus non-Muslim groups or individuals; and the identification of a source or issue’s religious dimension when the religion is Islam when no such identification would otherwise be included.

The first of these categories carried a taint of hypocrisy for the participants who mentioned it. Hanzala Malik, the Labour MSP, described inconsistencies in the Westminster government’s treatment of foreign states and the conduct of combatants, which the media (specifically, for Malik, BBC) repeated uncritically. The double standard for him was evident in reporting from Libya and Iraq, in which the fact that “the Alliance forces were being handcuffed and being shown on TV was unacceptable. Yet they showed the forces doing exactly the same thing to Iraqis, and that was very acceptable.” Anwar, the lawyer, described not one but two such instances. Anwar defended a young Muslim man
from the small Scottish town of Alva named Mohammed Atif Siddique: Siddique was charged under the Terrorism Act because of materials on his laptop computer and the suspicion that he was planning to engage in terrorist activity abroad. Anwar noted that the Crown’s expert witness in the case had the same materials on his laptop, and what distinguished them was that the expert witness was a white American “terrorism consultant” whilst the accused was a young Muslim male and therefore suspect.

The double standard, for Anwar, extended to his own treatment by Scottish legal institutions and the media: he was charged with contempt of court for comments he made on the courthouse steps after Siddique’s initial conviction in 2008. Anwar said his comments were on behalf of his client, alleging a miscarriage of justice and a prevailing atmosphere of hostility in the wake of the attack on Glasgow Airport the previous year; he said if he had been a non-Muslim, non-Asian lawyer, he would have been praised for his defence of his client, “[y]et because it happened to be me, they said, ‘Oh, it’s Aamer Anwar. He’s playing the race card. He happens to be Muslim. This must be his personal views,’ which is what the trial judge was saying. Rather than actually accepting the fact and taking my word and my client’s written word that these were the viewpoints expressed by him that so happened to align with mine.” In all three of these examples, participants said the activity of Muslims was represented differently from how non-Muslims were or would have been portrayed.

The second category concerns the language and presentation of the news story. Director Activist, as part of a discussion of the negative tone of coverage of Muslims, said they were described in language she termed “playground nasty.” She used a substitution exercise to suggest that journalists would not describe people with disabilities in such terms—such language would be deemed offensive, crude, and hurtful. Yet such language was acceptable to describe Muslims. She did not offer examples of this language. Smina Akhtar’s example was a story in the Evening Times on the opening of a new gurdwara in Glasgow, including a colour
photograph on the front page and more colour photos on the page 12 story. This was a positive story, but Akhtar said a story about a new mosque would not receive the same treatment; it would be reported with suspicion, relating it to themes of insularity and community division.

In the final set of examples, participants implied that religion was only a relevant factor when Muslims were the people involved. Anwar contrasted coverage of Jimmy Savile and others in his circle with the Rochdale child grooming case, in which the ethnicity and religion of the perpetrators was prominent in news coverage. Anwar said the investigations into Savile and other celebrities accused of paedophilia were not pitched as a “white” problem or a “British” problem, nor were Savile and others depicted as Christians. Crime was another iteration of this kind of double standard, which Yousaf summarised in the exemplary phrase, “suspect is a black male”: the racial reference, he said, is made to highlight the suspect’s Otherness, and “Muslim” is used in the same way. The most common reference was to terrorism: four participants (including journalist Farooq) said Irish terrorists were not referred to as “Catholic terrorists,” nor were all Catholics made to answer for the actions of the IRA. This last point relates to another set of functionalist responses besides the double standard: without the comparative element, five participants said the media make Muslims answer for their religion, especially in a post-9/11 context. In all of these responses, the impression was that the media make the fact of being Muslim a problem.

Five participants said journalists do not use diverse sources, and a sixth used the term “gatekeeper” to describe the power journalists have to determine which stories and which sources turn into news. These responses inform my discussion of gatekeepers in chapter 4: the first expression is consonant with my

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5 Rebecca Gray, “City’s Sikh Celebration,” Evening Times, 29 April 2013.
6 Journalist participant Correspondent Broadcast also made this comparison. The implication that UK residents identified as Irish were not subject to the same vilification is troubled by comparative research into the concept of ‘suspect communities’: see Mary J. Hickman et al., ‘Social Cohesion and the Notion of “Suspect Communities”: A Study of the Experiences and Impacts of Being “Suspect” for Irish Communities and Muslim Communities in Britain’, Critical Studies on Terrorism 5, no. 1 (2012): 85–106.
own usage, in which a limited range of Muslims are given voice in the media; the
second expression recalls the term’s original usage in media studies, conferring
power on journalists to limit the range of Muslim sources or exclude them
altogether. One response concerning diversity specifically highlighted one
organisation (BBC) which, the participant said, did not use women as sources
when talking with Muslims. I must interpret her comment rhetorically, for she
has herself been interviewed by BBC Scotland journalists. Her hyperbolic
language conveyed an impression of underrepresentation. Two participants used
the word “lazy” to describe journalists, suggesting that the lack of diverse sources
could be corrected with more of an effort from journalists to seek additional
voices.

One strain of functionalist responses concerned the vexing question of
media effects—the influence news media have on audiences.7 This type of study
must be framed cautiously in terms of making strong causal links. Participants in
my study took no such caution, speaking as a lay audience with concerns about
how media coverage helped or hindered their social lives. Seven participants said
media coverage leads to social mistrust, with two of them specifically telling me
it influenced the ideas Scottish schoolchildren have about Muslims. The two who
mentioned this last point both worked for Amina, members of which occasionally
visit Glasgow schools to talk to students about Islam and Muslims. They told me
that the stereotypes and misconceptions they hear from these students are owing
to media narratives.8

Two of these participants talked about media effects in a more positive
manner: Saeed suggested that non-Muslim news audiences do not understand
the diversity of Muslims because “the media don’t amplify” voices which
condemn Al-Qaeda terrorism and “amplify the idiots too much,” implying that a

7 Raymond Williams suggests that, ‘in non-sociological cultural studies, as in much general
writing, the question of effect is commonly raised by without much or any evidence and often by
simple and even casual assertion.’ Raymond Williams, Culture (London: Fontana, 1981), 20; Brian
McNair concurs, calling it “one of the most difficult and contentious [issues] in media studies,
despite the vast resources and energies which have been expended in trying to resolve it.” Brian
8 For more on Amina’s community outreach work and the attitudes to the media that reportedly
inspire it, see Ali and Hopkins, ‘Everyday Making and Civic Engagement’.
better balance would give a more accurate representation of Muslims and foster better understanding. Thomas, meanwhile, suggested that negative media representations lead people such as her grandparents on the Isle of Wight to mistrust Muslims (Thomas is a convert, and she worried about explaining her conversion to her family for this reason); she said journalists have a responsibility to tell positive stories to counter the negative stereotypes which they help to spread.

Two of the participants who mentioned social mistrust linked it to government activity, but in different ways. Malik singled out BBC and what he described as its complicity with the government’s agenda (by “government,” he meant Westminster rather than Holyrood; though, when I asked him, he did not distinguish between BBC Scotland and the corporation as a whole, since the former took its direction from the latter). He said Muslims residing in the UK are upset about how government forces behave in applying foreign policy, such that they may support leaders in one country (e.g., Egypt) for behaving the same way as leaders in another country (e.g., Libya) whom they actively oppose; they make and shift these determinations on the basis of political expedience. He accused BBC of repeating this government narrative uncritically, so that Muslims living in Britain who pay the license fee become distrustful of their public broadcaster. The social mistrust which Malik articulated, therefore, is not the wider Scottish society suspicious of Muslims but Muslims suspicious of the institutional powers which govern and inform them.

Asma Abdalla, conversely, described a positive government agenda which journalists distort. Abdalla currently works with Amina, though she has worked for several social and community organisations, both in Scotland and elsewhere as part of European Union schemes. She complimented the work the Scottish and British governments do within minority communities, and she told me that journalists ignore this good work and undermine it with negative reporting: “the media [are] working against the government, the people, and everybody.” She
expressed hope that the Leveson and McCluskey reports, concerning regulation of the British and Scottish press respectively, would correct their excesses.9

In Malik’s and Abdalla’s positions, we see opposite poles of Bourdieu’s scale of independence.10 For Malik, the problem is the media’s heteronomy: they are too close to the state. Abdalla’s concern, instead, is with the media’s autonomy: they are too independent of the state. Sociologists of the media have observed that journalists account for this by cultivating an ideology of a professional identity, to the extent that their decisions about coverage are deliberately not oriented to the audience.11 What is important for this study is not whether the media have these effects on social cohesion or mistrust but how the sources who engage in media relations articulate their beliefs about those effects. Abdalla, for example, asked me questions towards the end of our interview, and she wanted to know my thoughts “as a journalist” on whether media regulation would improve their relations and what her organisation could do to build such relations and thereby improve coverage. Her apparent anger at the news media did not lead her to ignore them but rather to engage more effectively with them.

Other attitudes concerning the functions of journalists were related to internal elements of the media. Three participants said the media have a wide audience. Five participants said the media do not employ any or enough Muslims. Though this is not explored in this thesis, both journalist and source participants told me that better diversity in the newsroom would lead to better diversity in the roll of sources journalists employ.12 Finally, three participants said

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12 For more on this subject, see Cole, “Mixed Communities: Mixed Newsrooms”; Muir and Smith, “Keeping Your Integrity—and Your Job”; John Richardson also discusses newsroom diversity in
journalists, media organisations, and even particular programmes within a broadcast channel were **not all alike** (e.g., BBC’s *Panorama* is an investigative programme and therefore tends to broadcast stories with a focus on accountability).

**Particular or Contextual Responses**

Among the responses which indicated attitudes of my participants to the media, several were highly contextual. They are difficult to generalise from even among this sample because they were unique to the conditions of the participant, but they are no less interesting because of that. Anwar, who writes a column in the *Sun* in addition to his continued use as a source by journalists, mentioned **no censorship of his weekly column**. He said he made this a condition of accepting the offer, and he did not expect the tabloid to honour it. He attributed this suspicion to the differences in political and audience orientation between him and the organisation, as well as the reputation of the *Sun*’s parent company, News International. He told me that the editors had not censored him, which was to their credit, even if his opinions are the binary opposite of the newspaper’s editorial line.

Maan, who was among those who described the media as **improved or improving** and **different in Scotland**, noted that the Glasgow media were **against his initial candidacy for a council seat** in 1970. He characterised a typical article as saying, “The Scottish people are not ready yet to vote for a coloured person. . . . [I]t was nice for the Labour Party to give a chance to an immigrant. But he has no chance.” Maan said this line did not register with residents as he campaigned on people’s doorsteps—he summarised responses as, “Well, we haven’t read anything bad about him, so maybe we’ll vote for him.” We are left to infer from this that these residents were not reading the typical articles

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the context of Muslims, although his supporting data come from studies of “Black” journalists; Richardson, *(Mis)Representing Islam*, 39.
Maan described in our interview or that they had a different interpretation of what they were “ready” for.

As mentioned above, Ansari was one of only two participants listed here who did not impute negativity on the media. This is not to say she was uniformly salutary or supportive. She told me of a negative encounter with a journalist and a photographer from the Herald which was influential for her in terms of subsequent dealings with journalists. I discuss this incident in more detail in chapter 8, in which I consider Amina and the I Speak for Myself campaign as a case study of the relationship between journalists and Muslim sources. Here, I record three functionalist responses to journalists which were unique to her interview: that they want dramatic images, that they can be duplicitous, and that they do not care as much about people’s feelings as about getting “the story.” I should be careful with my presentation of these responses: Ansari was among those who said journalists were not all alike, and she was one of the few who distinguished between individual journalists, using their names when she could remember them. These attitudes, then, are not to be applied structurally to “journalists” or “the media,” nor do they apply all the time. But journalists may want dramatic images, they can be duplicitous, and they may not care about the feelings of the people they report on.

The final particular response I wish to highlight is from Farooq. As I mentioned earlier, I have been judicious in apportioning her responses to those that come from her role as a journalist and those that come from her role as a Muslim in Glasgow, in touch with other Muslims. However, one response she gave illustrates the bifurcated nature of the journalist in a mainstream news organisation who identifies as Muslim. She spoke of the insecurity and even fear of her colleagues of asking questions, which for her was generated from an uncertainty about whether their questions were offensive or politically incorrect. The “apprehension” of her colleagues, she said, “drives me insane. ‘Is it okay to ask that question—I’m not going to offend someone?’ No, it’s—it’s—as a journalist, you <need> to ask those questions. You need to get it right.” This may be peculiar to the environment of the public broadcaster—I was not able to observe Muslims
working in other newsrooms to see if there were common or divergent ways of interacting with non-Muslim colleagues. Her comment indicated sensitivity on the part of her colleagues to language and worries about ill-informed assumptions, which we saw in comments from journalists in the previous chapter. I have included her comment in this chapter because she was responding to questions from colleagues, an act which placed her in the role of a source rather than a journalist.

All of these responses—the substantive and functionalist ones and the handful of unique responses particular to the context of individual participants—provide representations of the attitude of sources in Glasgow to journalists regarding relations with or coverage of Muslims. The presiding impression of this sample is negative: a clear majority either expressed a negative opinion of the media to me or indicated such an opinion prevailed among their cohort. Of the two who did not, one is not a Muslim and has worked as a journalist for many years, and the other shared negative experiences but did not generalise from them. Some sources suggested positive attitudes in addition to negative ones, and some also distinguished between institutions, formats, and individual journalists to qualify either their praise or their criticism. Those who did so tend to have more active or sustained relationships with journalists. This does not suggest a strict correlation between contact with journalists and attitude towards them: the two MSPs in my sample, Malik and Yousaf, were not the most charitable to the media, despite the political nature of their work and their correspondingly privileged access to the media.

One commonality that indicated a more nuanced or positive attitude to the media was the orientation of the source towards international or local journalism. Those whose examples of stories and coverage came from global events were the most consistently critical of journalists, especially Malik and Director Activist. Those who spoke of consuming Scottish or Glaswegian media and following local affairs had a more differentiated attitude, such as Maan, Thomas, and Ansari. The catalogue of responses in this section informs the
discussion that follows: an answer from the sources in my study to the question of when it is appropriate to label a story or a source as Muslim.

When the Word “Muslim” Is Appropriate

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, my questions about this issue were inspired by variations on the double standard responses from source participants, and, as with the previous discussion, positive declarations and firm criteria were rare. Common responses were “When it’s relevant,” or the negative inversion, in which they critiqued journalists for using it when it was not relevant. I discuss these, as well as situations in which participants either told me they presented themselves to journalists as Muslims or, more frequently, said they did not want to be identified as Muslims. After this, we are left once again to construct an idea of their boundaries based on examples they offered. These examples are sorted into stories in which participants suggested faith identification had a role, ambiguous stories in which they described faith identification without endorsing or rejecting its use, and a small group of instances in which they said it should not be used.

Seven source participants answered this question by stating “only when it’s relevant,” with varying degrees of strength. Two made positive declarations to that effect, and four criticised media usage of the term when it was not relevant. Three participants talked of “Muslim issues” in our conversations, implying that there were conditions in which the label “Muslim” was relevant. I interviewed Beltagui and Mazhar Khan of the Muslim Council of Scotland together, and their back-and-forth responses show the difficulty of this assertion. Beltagui said journalists should use the word “Muslim” only when faith is important to the story, but Khan suggested that when it is not, journalists tend to try to “shoehorn faith into it somehow.” This, he said, happens often with stories about Muslims, and he gave the example from that morning’s Metro—a free UK

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13 Yousaf, the cabinet minister, articulated all three variations, which is why the aggregate of these responses is nine, not seven.
daily tabloid aimed at commuters—of a woman who was sentenced for fraud: according to the article, she arrived in court wearing “a veil to hide her identity at court,” but following her sentencing, police released a photograph which revealed her face:14 Khan questioned the newsworthiness of the story, wondering if the sentencing of someone for fraud would be front page news if that person was not a Muslim woman who wore a veil during the court proceedings. Earlier that week, newspapers featured the decision of a judge in London’s Blackfriars court to allow a woman to wear the niqab during her trial, which led to widespread media conversations about the issue. Khan believed that the “fraudster’s” niqab and her identification as a Muslim were irrelevant to her crimes and her sentence but that journalists promoted these elements so as to capitalise on a topical story. This exchange between Beltagui and Khan shows the challenge in ascertaining what is “relevant”: journalists might argue that a woman who refuses to reveal her face to a courtroom on religious grounds is making religion and her Muslim identification an element in the story and a justified topic for coverage.

Beltagui and Khan both acknowledged that the wider coverage concerning the niqab in the courtroom was a current news issue, and later in our interview, when I asked him what kind of Muslim stories he would share with the mainstream media, Beltagui indicated stories that “touch over” the community, affecting more than just Muslims. The courtroom debate, if not the specific story of the woman sentenced for fraud, fulfils that criterion. A volunteer with Amina also indicated sharing stories with the wider public when they surpass the community’s interests: here, she was talking about the counselling services Amina provides, which, whilst marketed to Muslims and to women who speak Arabic and Urdu, are available to any woman who wishes to use them. Yasmin Farhat, another volunteer with Amina, said*positive stories concerning the achievements of Muslims* should be highlighted in the news. Three participants also noted that *stories with an ethnic focus can be conflated with religion*, so that “Muslim” may be an element in stories that are otherwise identified and vice

versa. We see instances of all three qualities in the list of story examples I have
drawn from my interviews, but before I turn to this, I want to examine one
further way these participants discussed the appropriateness of the Muslim label:
subjective identification.

Though the sources included in this study are sometimes approached by
journalists because they are Muslim, it was rare for participants to tell me they
presented themselves to journalists as Muslims. Director Activist first declared
that she was rarely called upon as a Muslim: she leads a charity in the voluntary
sector working in general social services, and although she is not secretive about
her Muslim identification, it is not a central feature of the work that she does.
However, she described what she called key moments when she would put herself
forward for public comment as a Muslim, and her examples were as a response to
English Defence League (EDL) or Scottish Defence League (SDL) activity or after
the attack on the Glasgow Airport. These are all events in which Muslims are
portrayed as a threat, and it was in this context that she was willing to identify
herself in terms of her faith in media relations.

Similarly, Thomas separated issues in which journalists contacted her as a
city councillor: sometimes it was due to her party affiliation, sometimes to ward-
specific issues, sometimes to her role as chair of Community Safety Glasgow, and
sometimes to her status as a Muslim. She said the latter set of requests came more
often from ethnic or minority media organisations, but “occasionally they
[mainstream journalists] will want a quote from you about something which is to
do with Muslim or ethnic minority kind of issues.” This justification reveals
something of the assumptions of journalists, as Thomas is a convert: white and
ethnically English. To turn to her for “ethnic minority kinds of issues” suggests
that journalists conflate religion and ethnicity in regard to Muslims, as I have
been arguing. Interpreted differently, her networks extend into the ethnic
minorities communities of Glasgow, and journalists who know this use her as a
conduit to rather than a representative of these groups.

More commonly, participants told me that they disliked or rejected the
use of “Muslim” by journalists to describe them or their roles. Excepting instances
where she presents herself as a Muslim, Director Activist said she preferred journalists to focus on her work rather than her faith. Anwar said journalists rarely describe him as “Muslim lawyer,” and if they did, he would reject it. He had a similar reaction to “Asian lawyer” and “race-row lawyer,” both of which have been used in news reports, feeling that these adjectives imposed limits on his work and were indicative of “institutional racism.” He said the use of these adjectives has diminished as his profile has increased, and more frequently he is now described as “campaigning lawyer” or “human rights lawyer,” neither of which troubles him. He said he would prefer no labels at all, but he understood that journalists needed a frame to help audiences quickly understand what the story was about and that these adjectives provided shorthand context.

Two other participants also discussed the limiting quality of the label: Amina Volunteer said the word “Muslim” could be “a block” for the wider civic community so that Glaswegians did not feel they could access the services Amina has to offer; and Beltagui said the word often became symbolic, so that the person being described (his example was the “fraudster” from the Metro story) was reduced to one aspect of her identification whilst also becoming a symbol for everyone who shared that identification. Neither of these comments was supported by evidence that audiences make these judgements, but they indicate limits which these participants would place around the use of “Muslim” in journalistic coverage.

Sources who are politicians, excepting Thomas, were keen to limit their identification as Muslim. The following responses all conflate religious, ethnic, and racial identifications, suggesting that the collapsibility of these markers is not limited to journalists. Maan, who was described as “coloured” in coverage of his first campaign for Glasgow council in 1970, said journalists and ward residents did not ask him about his religion “because everybody already knew that.” For his part, his campaign team was mostly composed of “Scottish people,” because he thought taking Asians door to door “might be a negative step.” After his election in 2011, Yousaf said he had to tell journalists he was “not the MSP for race,” as he would receive questions from journalists on any “incident” that happened
involving Muslims, not just in his constituency of Glasgow but across Scotland. He said it was important to establish parameters with journalists, or else he could have been answering such questions throughout his political career.

Yousaf’s fellow MSP, Malik, had the strongest, most interesting response of all. He has similarly told journalists, “I may be a Muslim in faith, but you don’t need to <quote> the fact that I’m a Muslim.” He first established these parameters as a Glasgow councillor and maintained them as an MSP. Malik said journalists “tend to overdo it” in identifying Muslims in stories, and when they do, it implies causality—that their actions or misfortunes are because of their faith identification. Often, he said, it is not necessary: “The facts need to be quoted. ‘Mr. Such-and-Such’—that in itself speaks volumes. If you say, ‘Mohammed Javid was stabbed,’ everybody knows who Mohammed Javid is. The perception immediately is [that] it’s an Asian guy, an Asian Muslim guy who’s been stabbed in the street. You don’t need to go on and say, ‘Muslim,’ ‘coming from a mosque,’ or whatever.”

This kind of profiling could lead to misidentification, but, considering the context of our interview and earlier comments he had made to me about his understanding of religion, I interpret Malik as speaking from an ideal position in which no one is marked out as significant because of their faith. The effect of his suggestion, however, would be tantamount to hiding religion or at least debarring it from one element of the public sphere.55 Other participants in this study, such as those who work with Amina and position themselves as rehabilitating the image of Muslims in public and countering negative stereotypes, would be hindered if journalists adopted Malik’s practice. Robin Richardson, former director of the Runnymede Trust, noted that the term “Islamophobia” had “acquired legitimacy and emotional power among people who are at the receiving

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end of anti-Muslim hostility and prejudice,” which meant it could be used as a catalyst for political action; Malik’s proposal would remove the visibility of defined groups and therefore the ability to define problems in this way.16

*Determining Appropriateness through Examples*

Although source participants were able to indicate some criteria for the appropriateness of “Muslim” as a label, the more common response was the vague “when it’s relevant,” just as it was for journalists. In the same way that I scrutinised journalists’ story examples and their context for acceptable boundaries, I do so here for those of sources. In coding these responses, I was challenged to consider whether the fact of a reference to a particular news story constituted a declaration that such a story was appropriately identified as Muslim. On the occasions in which a journalist calls a source for comment, clarification, or contacts, the journalist is in control of how the story is framed, and the journalist will construct and publish the item. An indicator for me, therefore, of whether the source was identifying an example as an appropriately labelled one was whether the source initiated contact with journalists. When the example was a reactive response, I had to look more carefully at the way the participant spoke of the story to ascertain whether it constituted an endorsement. I have removed several stories from my first round of coding for this reason and established the category of “ambiguous” stories for others to account for this scenario.

Stories in which faith had a role for my participants ranged from religious to social, to borrow categories from the previous chapter. Sharia councils and new mosques were raised, as were unemployment and educational attainment. The former were both invoked warily: two staff with Amina mentioned, in response to an investigative piece on BBC’s *Panorama* concerning marriage

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16 Richardson, “The Demonisation of Islam and Muslims,” 7; Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper sound a note of caution, as terms can be marshalled by “identitarian entrepreneurs” and, for the sake of political action, homogenise people into groups even as they oppose their external identification; Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” 27.
counselling at sharia councils, that this was a problem which the media ought to investigate but that it contributed to the overwhelmingly negative representation of Muslims in Britain. New mosques was raised, as discussed above, as a negative hypothetical story in contrast to a positive actual story about a new gurdwara in Glasgow. The second set of stories were made “Muslim” by participants, who referred to social research indicating that Muslims, Muslim women, or ethnic minorities were performing poorly in these areas compared with the rest of the population. These were also stories in which the sources felt they could and should put themselves forward as Muslims in Glasgow with access to the media, trying to make coverage of them a priority for journalists.

Another category of stories was the general one of “incidents” or “events” involving Muslims. Participants used these terms as shorthand to describe situations of crime, terrorism, or social unrest in which Muslims were either subjects or objects—perpetrators or victims. The Glasgow Airport attack was a specific example of this type. Politics and international affairs were also mentioned, with Saeed and Director Activist both keen that Muslims as Muslims not be debarred from discussing foreign policy in the media.

Participants referred to positive initiatives in which Muslims could be identified as such in coverage. These included social activity such as feeding the homeless and working with refugees, gender-specific stories that included a positive portrayal of women, or specific community events such as Islam Awareness Week and Amina’s I Speak for Myself campaign. Positive stories for some participants also meant a positive response to negative events. Participants cited the attack on Glasgow Airport, Glasgow teenager Kriss Donald’s murder, and even the bomb attacks at the Boston Marathon as examples of this. Kriss Donald’s murder, as understood here, is not a Muslim story; rallies from the SDL blaming Muslims for his murder and encouraging Glaswegians to protest Islam’s presence in the city become so; but what participants mentioned to me were gatherings from neighbourhood residents—Muslims and non-Muslims—deploring violence and declaring that they would not let racist hatred divide the community.
Other stories which participants mentioned were ambiguous in terms of establishing boundaries for the use of the term “Muslim.” Typically, these stories were mentioned in answer to my questions about the circumstances in which journalists contacted the source participants in my study. For example, Saeed said he would be called when Al Muhajiroun appeared in the national news cycle. He would be asked for “a bit of condemnation” of the group’s activity or comments, which made use of him in two ways: he responded as a Muslim to statements of another Muslim in the news, and he provided a local Scottish angle to a UK story. It was not clear from our conversation whether Saeed believed this was an appropriate use—whether he would classify a response to Al Muhajiroun as a Muslim story. He spoke in terms of being helpful to journalists, so he was in practice letting journalists define the frame of the coverage.

Though some participants spoke of “events” and the airport attack as Muslim stories, others were ambiguous. Beltagui and Khan mentioned Lee Rigby’s murder and Osama bin Laden’s assassination as moments that journalists had contacted them for “a Muslim response.” Given how adamant both were that the term is often misapplied in news coverage, it is surprising that they did not indicate to me how relevant they believed faith to be in these stories.

Benign social examples could be ambiguous, such as changes to the citizenship test: Ansari and Akhtar both described a request from journalists at STV for someone from Amina to talk about the changes. Neither described it as a Muslim story, but because Akhtar had family who had taken the test and had therefore formed opinions about the topic, she could help the journalist and contribute to coverage.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, issues such as domestic violence and forced marriage were discussed as stories—frequently, here, by staff and volunteers at Amina. This is not surprising, as the centre’s work concerns support and advocacy for women. Unlike the journalists, the sources who discussed it clearly distinguished domestic violence as an issue, which affects women across Scotland whatever their identification, and the peculiar challenges of reporting and correcting domestic violence in Muslim households. It was not, as it were, a
uniquely Muslim story, but elements of the story about which they had particular expertise and were therefore journalistically useful had a faith dimension.

Finally, a small set of story examples delineated negative boundaries, where participants felt it was inappropriate to label a story as Muslim. Yousaf described early efforts in his media relations after 9/11, when challenged journalists on their use of the term “Islamic terrorism” and volunteered to do media monitoring for Glasgow news organisations. He preferred the term “Al-Qaeda terrorism,” removing the religious label so as to reduce its association with Muslims who did not engage in such activity and whose understanding of the faith did not even condone such activity. Yousaf, I should note, was among those who described “Muslim issues” and counted “events” involving Muslims as appropriate stories in which to use the term.

Beltagui and Khan were the other participants who expressed firm negative boundaries. I have already mentioned their example from the day’s newspaper about the “Muslim fraudster;” they also told anecdotes of being contacted by reporters for what they considered spurious stories. Beltagui said he was called by a newspaper reporter about statistics which indicated that “white-on-white” violence had grown, which challenged the common thinking that Muslims were the predominant victims of racialised crimes. Beltagui said he thought, “They are laying a trap for me! It has nothing to do with my community.” I asked whether he gave a comment, and he said he gave a general statement on behalf of MCS that discrimination is discrimination, regardless of who suffers. Khan said he was contacted by a journalist—employed by the Sun, he thought—who asked him for comment about “some guy with a placard saying ‘The End Is Nigh!’ who was observed talking to a Muslim on the street.” Khan says he gave no comment. The wariness that both Beltagui and Khan expressed indicates an awareness of what these journalists were looking for when they called, and this is the subject of my last set of responses from sources.
Source Impressions of Journalists’ Priorities

The conceptions listed in this section catalogue a description of priorities: what these participants thought journalists were looking for. Participants based their responses here on both imagined journalistic criteria, derived from the media they consume, and from experiences they had contacting and being contacted by journalists. Staff and volunteers at Amina accessed media training, prepared by Oxfam’s David Eyre and supported by the Govanhill Community Development Trust; some of their responses reflect both his guidance and their experience of media relations since receiving his guidance. I sort these priorities into three categories: source-oriented, presentation-oriented, and journalist-oriented priorities. The first set is grouped around ideas participants have of what journalists want from sources themselves. The second concerns the content—what sources say and how they say it. The final category concerns technical matters. I hesitated to use the term “journalist-oriented” because all of these priorities are imputed to journalists by sources; and many of the priorities listed in the first two categories reflect journalistic practice. The absolute orientation of this last set of priorities to the professional needs of journalists, however, makes this third category distinct.

It is important to note the provisional nature of these data. They rely on multiple refractions: sources have been asked to imagine what journalists want from them, and so this should not be seen as a valid analysis of journalistic practice itself. It is another representation, albeit from people who are in contact with journalists concerning issues from their communities. These priorities could to an extent have been compared with scholarly aggregations of news values; as I discussed in chapter 5, however, these values may be a chimera.

What follows is a record of the impressions sources gave about journalists, and these impressions are less grounded in observation than those journalists offered concerning Muslims. This reflects the power imbalance between the two groups: journalists make decisions about what becomes a story or not, and every day they are contacting sources to construct news stories. Their work is defined
by a professional role and a set of practices, so that whilst the content of news about Muslims may be unfamiliar, the mechanics of the encounter are consistent with coverage of other groups. Sources are going about their various tasks in various fields, attempting at certain moments to get the attention of journalists or called upon suddenly when their organisation or field of expertise becomes relevant to a news story. They touch the field of journalism only briefly; they are often guessing at what journalists want; and they have diffuse backgrounds and experiences.

Source-Oriented Priorities

Source participants described several priorities concerning what they thought journalists were looking for in sources. The most commonly cited priority was established relationships, which eight participants framed in terms of coverage being “easy” for journalists because they already had the source’s contact details and knew how she spoke and what sort of topics she could talk about. Five of the eight were staff or volunteers with Amina, and they often characterised this quality in aspirational terms, seeing the established relationship as a goal to strive for rather than an accomplished fact; though, as we shall see in chapter 8, they described occasions on which journalists contacted them for help with stories, suggesting some relationship has already been established. This priority must also be considered in light of the critique from several participants listed above that journalists are “lazy” and do not seek diverse sources and that a handful of “gatekeepers” dominate (or have dominated) the representation of Muslims in Glasgow. Their normative ideas about diverse representation conflict with their descriptive understandings that journalists want sources they already know.

Five participants mentioned authority as a quality journalists want in sources. I discussed this from the perspective of journalists in the previous chapter; here, participants with some measure of authority—bureaucratic and more-official sources—described the appeal they had for journalists: Thomas
noted that although she is often contacted on “Muslim issues” because of her roles with Amina and Muslim Women’s Network UK, “[s]ometimes I’ll be on [radio or television] because I’m a councillor, and sometimes they quite like the idea of having someone who’s a councillor but talking from a personal perspective.” Malik noted that a charity cycle tour divided between Glasgow and Lahore received media attention, and “I suppose the fact that I’m a Member of Scottish Parliament would have helped a little . . . It’s a little bit higher up the food chain.” He related this story, though, after a litany of positive initiatives which Glasgow journalists had ignored despite his status, which suggests that although titles and authority are helpful, they do not guarantee news coverage. Three participants also mentioned a broad coalition of voices—the idea that journalists do not rank the concerns of an individual or a single group as highly as those of a wider section of the community.

Four participants mentioned a local Scottish angle, which reflects priorities I observed in both BBC Scotland and Herald newsrooms. Sources understood this as a way for Glasgow journalists to report on stories that took place elsewhere but had generated high news interest generally: one way for Scottish media to talk about, for example, the war in Iraq is to find Scottish people who are from Iraq or have family there. Only one participant mentioned reflect the audience; this was Eyre, the media trainer from Oxfam who had worked for many years as a journalist. I was not surprised that he mentioned this priority—as a journalist myself, I see its value, and I expected more participants to mention it. It is possible that my participants do not imagine themselves as the intended audience for these news media. Nonetheless, this priority could inform their criticism that Muslims are excluded from coverage. I would not wish to speculate on this point, but I note that few of my participants mentioned reading Glasgow newspapers or consuming Glasgow broadcast media. Moreover, editors from my journalist interviews and observations mentioned that they did not want an “imbalance” of Muslim coverage in their respective media, which might put them out of step with their perceived audiences.
Presentation-Oriented Priorities

The bulk of priorities listed by my source participants can be classified as presentation-oriented. They include both the content of the story and the delivery of information. The most frequently mentioned of these priorities was controversial: six described this as a value for journalists, with three of those qualifying it by emphasis, saying the media liked “extreme” controversy; two further participants described stories of conflict and accountability as appealing for journalists. This is consonant with the critique of journalists or journalism as predominantly negative, and the surprise of non-journalists to the media’s fixation on controversy has been noted in other fields besides Muslims. Three participants described the importance of visual components, with one articulating the way images contribute to building narratives. One participant mentioned feel-good stories and surprise as priorities for journalists, and another cited the more austere information and clarification.

Although almost all of these priorities characterise general journalistic practice rather than appraisals of specifically Muslim coverage, four participants mentioned religious or Muslim angle as a quality journalists wanted in stories. Two of them did so in a derisive way, saying journalists used this angle to insert the organisation’s preferred editorial line. They said that these media organisations wanted to position themselves for their readership or in relation to other news organisations or government policies as aggressive to and suspicious of Muslims. One other participant, Director Activist, diminished the significance of the religious angle, suggesting journalists cared little for it. This did not mean they ignored it: she said journalists with whom she was in a relationship were concerned with human rights and could tell a compelling story about social difficulties Muslims face even though they understood or cared little for Islam.

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complementary priority referenced by participants was **personal angle**, which they suggested gave a human quality to stories that were otherwise about issues.

The **personal angle** priority helps us transition from priorities which deal with the content to priorities that deal with how the sources deliver that content. In addition to the insertion of the personal voice, three participants said journalists wanted people who could speak with **media-appropriate language**. This involved speaking in short, expressive phrases that can be cut and quoted in the brief packages of radio and television news items or short print articles. Beltagui contrasted the speech of “younger people” with that of elders and imams, who are used to different rhetorical styles. He said Islamic scholars typically offer a long introduction before discussing “the meat of an issue,” but by this time, the journalist will have turned his microphone off and moved on. Beltagui said younger Glaswegian Muslims spoke “with a local accent,” but he meant this both literally (they sound Scottish) and figuratively, as what Marc Prensky famously called “digital natives.” This ideal manner of speaking was also described as controversial, connecting with priorities discussed above. Saeed, one of those who speak with Beltagui’s local accent, suggested that part of his appeal for journalists was that he “was speaking a little more angrily than” the pre-9/11 gatekeepers and had “a bit more of a robust, not completely apologetic and defensive stance.” A related priority which one participant mentioned was **simple, avoiding complexity**. All of these priorities concerning delivery accord with what my journalist participants described in terms of how they work and with what I was taught in journalism studies and during my professional acculturation.

*Journalist-Oriented Priorities*

The last set of responses from participants concerning what they thought journalists were looking for are what I call journalist-oriented. Though all of these priorities are imaginatively imposed on journalists, the ones classified here

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concern journalistic norms and practices and how sources believe journalists want to be contacted. At the top of this list was availability: five participants mentioned the need to take time out of their work day or, especially for broadcast interviews, their off-work private affairs to speak with journalists. Eyre raised this in the context of his media training, and three of the other participants who mentioned it were staff with Amina; they treated availability as a burdensome priority, and I discuss this further in chapter 8.

Four participants mentioned timeliness—related to other stories. This priority accounts for the news cycle as discussed above, for example in providing a local Scottish angle to a story that is happening elsewhere. It also helps explain why the Metro newspaper published the story of the sentencing of a Muslim woman for fraud. Two staff from Amina mentioned that a press release they issued received an increase in attention because of a global story that became prominent in the news cycle; I discuss this in greater detail in chapter 8.

Along with the priority of timeliness, one participant mentioned quick response, acknowledging the speed at which the news media operate. Ansari said even 24 hours after a story had taken prominence in the news cycle, journalists might no longer be interested in further comment or a new angle, so she needed to be quick to catch their attention and show that Amina had something to contribute.

One way of publicising the quick response is through social media such as Twitter and Facebook, which introduces another priority in this category: technology or social media. Four participants—three of whom worked with Amina—mentioned using social media to take part in a story. Used effectively, these participants suggested, social media could create the timeliness that increased journalists’ interest. Four participants also spoke of press releases as a priority for journalists. Eyre was especially confident about the usefulness of a well-written press release to help journalists who are busy or uninformed about debates within a community understand what a story is about. Akhtar was not as

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confident about them as a tool: she said they are time-consuming to write, and despite their best efforts, they are not a guarantee that journalists will get in touch or cover the story.

I conclude this section with two other priorities listed by participants—one briefly and one in more detail. Two sources said that journalists wanted **contacts**, which connects to the positioning of sources as conduits, as discussed in chapter 4. And Eyre told me of a tool he devised for his media training courses to articulate what journalists want in a story. The mnemonic acronym he taught was “TRUTH”: stories needed to be **Timely, Relevant, Unique, Topical, or Human**. Many of these terms encompass ideas proposed by other participants in this section. Eyre meant **timely** in a strictly temporal sense, meaning not “too early or too late;” this was about the event itself and promoting it in an appropriate window. My use of **timeliness** above accords with **topical**, which he described as a story that “was already in the news”. **Human** referred to the **personal angle**, and he gave **unique** a superlative quality: “the first, the biggest, [or] the best”. I challenged him on the quality **relevant**, which he described in terms of proximity, so that sources did not try to “sell a story about something happening in Dundee to someone in Edinburgh.” Relevance, as we have already discussed, is a vague term, and Muslims wanting to share stories from their communities may feel inhibited if those stories are specific to their religious interests or their neighbourhoods; or, when they do try to share these stories, they encounter a lack of interest from journalists. Eyre acknowledged that this problem was “a difficult one” and fell back on the idea of “a good story” which is somehow evident to journalists regardless of the specific details of the affected community.\(^{20}\)

As a former journalist, I judge Eyre’s list a good tool to help community groups understand media logic and journalistic practices and priorities. It was evident from their answers that the staff and volunteers at Amina who had taken his training course had adopted some of these values and applied them in their

\(^{20}\) See chapter 5.
media relations. However, just as with the scholarly lists of news values, this list describes qualities that characterise successfully accomplished journalism but cannot predict or guarantee news coverage. A story from Amina could contain one, several, or all of these values and still not receive coverage from a journalist: other subjective considerations apply, and participants in my study said they have experienced this disappointment.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored the conceptions sources from Muslim communities in Glasgow expressed regarding journalists. In some cases, these were conceptions based on direct experience with journalists. Others were inspired by their encounters with the media as audiences. By “others,” I am not suggesting another binary separation of the participants in this study. Individual participants shared impressions from both sources of knowledge. For example, Beltagui and Khan discussed the issue of the relevance of the identifier “Muslim” for a news story. Their principal example, the sentencing of the “Muslim fraudster,” was taken from that morning’s *Metro* newspaper, which they read and responded to. As we discussed the issue, they both provided examples from their own encounters with journalists that illustrated their point—namely, that journalists “shoehorn” faith into stories concerning Muslims when it is irrelevant to the story being reported.

Relevance was important to sources, as it was to journalists, in determining the appropriateness of characterising a source or a story as Muslim. For some journalists, subjective identification was sufficient to apply the label to a source, whereas sources were more likely to tell me they did not want to be identified as Muslim in the context of their relations with the media. Several of these were politicians, and I connect their disinclination to be labelled thus with comments they made to me about representing all of their constituents, regardless of their religion.
In this, however, source participants may not be so different from the journalists in my sample, as chapter 5 suggests that whilst identifying sources as Muslim could entail no more than subjective or even external identification, stories seemed to require a more obviously religious element. The category of “social” stories indicated that a person could be (and be known to be) a Muslim doing something newsworthy, and that was sufficient for participants to mention the story to me as a researcher; but it would not necessarily be sufficient to identify the source or the story as Muslim in a news text. This challenges Malik’s claim that journalists “overdo it” in labelling sources and stories as Muslim. The more typical responses from both sets of participants indicate agreement that there has to be some reason for journalists to identify sources or stories as Muslim in the published text.

Structurally, I began this chapter not by establishing this question of boundaries of appropriate identification but by examining the attitude of sources to journalists. This reflects the progress of my research: in telling me their responses to news coverage of Muslims, they articulated a concern with double standards. I was told that that actions that were acceptable for most people were not acceptable for Muslims; that reports of other groups were benign and positive in character where they would be suspicious and negative for Muslims; that journalists would not include religious identifiers for other groups where they would for Muslims. This insistence on exceptionality is consonant with the academic literature on Muslims in the British media, though these studies lack the rigorous comparative element that would strengthen this argument with evidence. It was the assertion of double standards that compelled me to ask when it was appropriate for journalists to use “Muslim” as a label, and I asked it of participants on both sides of the relationship. This question returns us to Linda Woodhead’s challenge, which I referenced at the end of chapter 2, on normalisation—seeing Muslims in the context of the challenges and experiences of other constructed social groups. More comparative work would help us

establish whether and to what extent there is empirical support for the belief that Muslims are singled out by the media.

Regardless of the existence of evidence for or against the assertion, it composed a strong element of the responses of my participants: simply put, it was how they thought they were treated by journalists, and that belief informed how and whether they engaged with journalists. Alongside the functionalist assertion that journalists applied a double standard was the substantive assertion that journalistic coverage of Muslims was negative. If sources did not express a personal belief that coverage was negative, they almost without exception suggested that “Muslims” or “the community” did, and for some, this made Muslims reticent to engage and build relationships with journalists. It has not proven insurmountable, however, because the participants in this study are in such relationships with the media, to a greater or lesser extent. Though Beltagui and Khan suggested that journalists “shoehorned” Islamic identifiers into stories to further a negative editorial line or agenda, they still answered the phone when journalists called, and they visited broadcast studios to participate in programming. Though most did not speak of this, some participants articulated the worth of engaging with the media, either to share information about the work their organisation did and thus perpetuate its viability or to provide a positive representation of Muslims so as to rehabilitate what they perceived was a lingering negative stereotype.\(^{22}\)

To enrich our understanding of this interaction, I turn in the following chapters to examine the relationship at work. My discussion here of the understandings sources have of the requirements of journalists and how they are most effectively approached prepares us for that examination. Because this discussion is sited in the responses of sources, I have retained them in this chapter; they constitute part of the conceptions sources have of journalists. In keeping with the negative tone from the discussion of their attitude to the media,

the priorities they listed often had a critical element: controversy featured as a value they believed journalists held, as well as giving what might be undue prominence to the religious or Muslim angle so as to reinforce the organisation or journalist’s position regarding Muslims. The emphasis on established relationships was often observed as a criticism: journalists were accused of being “lazy” and ignoring the diversity of Muslims available to comment on or to inform coverage. This priority, however, can be advantageous for those who have media access even as it is disadvantageous for those without. As we discussed in chapter 4, some sources accused others of monopolising media attention (or being monopolised by it—the critique was directed at journalists as well as so-called community leaders). Some of those with access said they used it to enlarge the pool of potential sources, acting as a conduit to direct journalists to other Muslims who might be useful for or benefit from news coverage.

For sources to understand, to a more or less accurate extent, what journalists want from sources, content, delivery, or the technical elements of a pitch does not mean that they have learned to control the media, eking out optimum coverage for their concerns. We see that power in this relationship is fluid. Sources can control coverage by refusing to contribute information, and they can assert some control by learning to approach journalists in more effective ways. Journalists, however, retain control by admitting and rejecting story pitches. Moreover, some of the reasons for rejecting stories proposed by one group—itself an act of control—may be the result of a lack of control: a journalist may want to tell this group’s story, but another group has got hold of the news agenda with a different story that is deemed more urgent and newsworthy, and therefore it excludes the first one. For these reasons, Bourdieu’s notion of fields is a helpful frame to consider the accomplishment of journalism, and it is an element of the analysis in the chapter that follows, which considers the relationship.\(^23\)

\(^{23}\) Roger Dickinson, ‘Accomplishing Journalism: Towards a Revived Sociology of a Media Occupation’, *Cultural Sociology* 1, no. 2 (2007): 189–208; Dickinson is not convinced that ‘fields’ are the best or only way to study journalistic production; see also Roger Dickinson, ‘Studying the
CHAPTER 7
THE JOURNALIST-SOURCE RELATIONSHIP

This chapter addresses the core of the thesis: the relationships between journalists and sources. I begin by expanding on the uses of sources—for comment, clarification, and contacts—and of journalists—for coverage and capital—to which I have alluded throughout the study. These uses are illustrated with examples from my data. I then provide a brief narrative of my own experience as a journalist actively building relationships with Muslim sources in Ottawa. This narrative provides a reflexive account of my understanding of the relationship and reveals some practices and some failings which surfaced in the descriptions participants offered of how they initiate and maintain relationships. I then examine these data as they relate to two qualities: trust and reciprocity.

By examining the points of contact between journalists and sources, we are looking behind the curtain of the published text.¹ This is where the ethnographic tools of media production analysis are valuable in advancing our understanding of the issue of Muslims and the media. These interactions—in person, over the phone, or via e-mail and other social media—contribute to the representations that emerge in news coverage. Not all of the examples journalists give in this chapter are specific to their coverage of Muslims, despite the focus of the research project as I explained it to them. Many journalists said they did not have regular contact with Muslims as part of their work. This may indicate the priority media organisations place on covering Muslims in Glasgow. But their general accounts of how they wanted sources to approach them with story ideas and how they nurtured a source who had given them good stories helps us to normalise Muslims as one identified group among many in the city.

¹ Cottle, “Ethnography and News Production.”
The Uses of Sources and Journalists

In keeping with the artificial divide between journalists and sources as two discrete parties to a relationship, I examine how each “side” uses the other. I identified three uses to which journalists put sources: comment, clarification, and contacts. Sources, as subjects with agency, are not merely put to use in an instrumental fashion, however; I identified two benefits which they derive from their engagement with journalists: coverage and capital. I discuss both below, but the weight of analysis is disproportionate to the first set of uses. I acknowledge that this may betray media-centrism, but the agency of sources is evident in the midst of this analysis. Throughout this, we see how sources’ impressions of journalistic practices, listed in the previous chapter, are enacted in their relationships.

Comment, Clarification, and Contacts

By “comment,” I mean attributed or unattributed statements that journalists include in their news text. Attributed comments derive from a named individual or organisation, whereas unattributed comments are protected with anonymity, such as the reference in political stories, “a source close to the prime minister says.” Clarification refers to background information that the source supplies to the journalist to help him understand an issue better. This information is not quoted, though it may be summarised in the text with or without being attributed. Clarification also includes discreet contact between sources and journalists in controversial or “leaked” stories. Here, the source directs the journalist to request particular information or ask particular questions of someone else; she may even give the journalist confidential information. The provision of contacts describes instances when journalists engage one source as a conduit to other, more appropriate sources for a particular story. Journalists may ask this deliberately, saying, “Can you put me in touch with someone who knows
about this?” Alternately, the source can convert her use by saying, “I can’t help you, but I know someone who can.”

Sources in my study described being used in these ways, though only a few described being put to all three uses. Osama Saeed is among the latter. He talked of being “a rent-a-quote” for journalists when, for example, Anjem Choudary of groups such as Al-Muhajiroun and Islam4UK made controversial remarks in the English media. Saeed’s comments provided Glasgow journalists—such as David Leask, who used the phrase “Mister Rent-a-Quote” in reference to him—with a local angle for the story. On other occasions, journalists would call him to talk through conceptual ideas for a feature on Muslims they were planning to write. And, after I described ways that I used sources as conduits to find people with particular characteristics (for example, Lebanese people in Ottawa after an outbreak of violence between Lebanon and Israel), he mentioned instances during the war in Iraq when journalists asked him to reach Glaswegians who had family near the site of an explosion or in a city where British troops were patrolling. Bashir Maan similarly articulated being put to all three uses over the decades of his work as a gatekeeper. Arifa Farooq, the journalist, has enacted these roles for colleagues. For fellow BBC journalists, she offered clarification and especially contacts; and she mentioned appearing on the competing STV’s evening current affairs programme Scotland Tonight “as a Muslim journalist” to talk about the 2012 Youtube video Innocence of Muslims and the reactions around the globe from Muslims who were upset at its representation of Muhammad.

The third use of sources, as conduits to other sources, was relevant for many participants in my study. In chapter 4, I recorded the rejection by participants of claims to represent “the Muslim community” of Glasgow. Eight of them, including Farooq, described enacting this claim to partial representativity by directing journalists to others in their communities. I identified three different justifications among their responses for this practice: ideological, strategic, and helpful.
The first is oriented to ideology, and I am guided in my use of the term by Raymond Williams, who distinguishes a description of “organized beliefs” from “the true origin of all cultural (and indeed other social) production”; it is the former, modest sense of “ideology” that I apply. Saeed, Farooq, and Samina Ansari spoke of eschewing the gatekeeper role so as to serve their coreligionists, sometimes aggregated as “the umma.” Ansari used the word “selfless” and talked of passing the “limelight” to others “for the good of the community”. The “good” which she described was a display of the diversity of the community, countering the claim that Muslims are all alike. Aamer Anwar also described the practice of acting as a conduit in ideological terms, but I interpret his ideals as somewhat different, concerned with justice and equality rather than ummatic solidarity. He mentioned being called by a journalist for Scotland on Sunday to talk about the niqab, after the story of the woman in the London court. He offered comment but encouraged the reporter to speak to women who wear the niqab rather than restrict herself to “community leaders.” He wanted to direct attention to women and to people who were pejoratively represented in the media. Both justifications rest on a set of ideals, though the ideals differ.

The strategic justification is oriented to the goals of the source. Two participants endorsed acting as a conduit because it indicated to journalists and the public a breadth of support for issues. Saeed said it was “useful for other people to be drawn into a particular story . . . [because] sometimes, you create momentum behind a particular idea and get a lot of people to speak on it . . . [which] is more impactful than if you’re just seen as . . . some lone warrior”. Fariha Thomas described the value of connecting the work of the Muslim Women’s Network UK with a broader coalition of women’s advocacy groups that are not defined by religion. Her example was a report the network prepared on child grooming, exposing problems within Muslim communities but including comment and research from other organizations, so that the issue is not limited to representations of Muslims. This normalised the issue, she said, “because then

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1 Williams, Culture, 28.
it’s not just that wee bunch of women: it’s a broader issue.” Thomas’s responses suggest that she felt there were two obstacles the network had to overcome in generating publicity: gender and religion.3 The strategy of expanding the range of voices speaking to journalists was therefore intended to increase the salience of the issue at hand.

Finally, some sources justified the practice of providing contacts as simply being helpful to journalists or ensuring the best and most accurate coverage of the issue, orienting the act to the journalist. Saeed, Farooq, Thomas, and Ansari all made this sort of justification, as did Smina Akhtar, Humza Yousaf, and Maan. For example, Akhtar and Thomas both described being asked by journalists to find women who wear the niqab. Neither Akhtar nor Thomas wears this garment, but because of their access to a network of Muslim women throughout Glasgow, they were well-placed to identify the right source.

These three justifications have overlapping qualities. “Helping journalists” can be a strategic act because it enhances the relationship between source and journalist, positioning the source as trustworthy and useful. In addition, helping journalists and ensuring the best coverage of the issue may rehabilitate the representation of Muslims in the media, which supports the ideology of ummatic solidarity. When Maan directed journalists to Misbah Rana’s brother during the coverage of her disappearance from Scotland, he was helping journalists access principal sources rather than interlocutors; in intervening and in exposing this side of the story, he was also countering a narrative which associates Muslims and Pakistanis with patriarchalism, lawlessness, and forced marriages. Rather than insisting that the justification is one or the other, it is useful to consider both. Despite their porousness, these categories have explanatory value. To collapse the “helpful” responses into justifications of strategy or ideology is to undermine what participants reported as genuine efforts to assist journalists.

Of these uses, only “comment” is visible in the news text itself, and then only when the comment the journalist has solicited is published in the text:

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3 On double marginalisation, see Contractor, *Muslim Women in Britain*, 1–10.
journalists may interview several sources for comment but only quote two or three, deciding on the most suitable when they compose their story; comments from sources may also be edited out after the story has left the journalist’s control due to pressures of space or time or the event of a sudden and more urgent story. Content analyses and reception studies miss these elements of the production of news content and cannot account for them in their determination of the dynamics of representation.

The uses of sources which are hidden from the published text—clarification and contacts, as well as comments that are not printed—are no less consequential to the construction of a news story than the visible one. Sociologist Howard Becker devoted his study of “art worlds” to the collective action of many individuals who contribute to artistic production but are not recognised as “artists”; Becker suggests financiers, typesetters, and the groom who brought Anthony Trollope his early morning coffee contribute to the work without the prominence of the artist.\(^4\) Becker notes that none of these activities are indispensable, but the absence of any of these contributions would mean the accomplished work would not be the same as it is; the “worlds” Becker imagines bear a strong resemblance to Pierre Bourdieu’s “fields;” Becker insists they are incompatible, and media scholars have reinforced that distinction even as they apply both approaches to their studies, but I am not convinced the gulf is as wide between them as these scholars suggest.\(^5\)

The contingent acts Becker observes are manifest in the hidden uses listed here. General reporters and specialist correspondents rely on the knowledge and information of others to construct accurate and meaningful stories. The information from background briefings can appear in news texts anonymously, and when it does not appear at all, it can still influence the frame through which

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\(^4\) Becker, *Art Worlds.*

\(^5\) Ibid., 5.

the journalist understands and reports the story. Equally, the selection of appropriate sources shapes the news story: sources who act as conduits direct journalists to particular people and exclude others. Those decisions about whom to recommend and whom to avoid are part of the exercise of control over the shape of the published text.

Coverage and Capital

To discuss the uses of sources by journalists gives the impression, however, that sources are merely reactive. Richard Ericson and colleagues challenge this in their study of bureaucratic news sources in Canada, providing a list of objectives they seek to gain from interacting with journalists and means by which they can negotiate control over their representation.⁷ I identify those objectives as coverage and capital. The sources participating in the present study were engaged in relationships, to varying degrees of strength. Despite the critical attitude they often expressed regarding the media, they also articulated value in engaging with the media. Those who were ambivalent recognised the usefulness of the news media but despaired at their negative, divisive qualities, and they doubted whether their engagement was sufficient to change those qualities.

Coverage is the publicising of affairs for the wider audience. Michael Warner writes of publicity both as sharing information and also calling “a public” into being by the act of publicising, which strays into my second use, capital.⁸ Sources in my fieldwork spoke of introducing their work to others who could benefit from it and countering messages that were hurtful to them in other news coverage. Two sources spoke of limiting coverage: the converse of Salah Beltagui’s description of stories that “touch over” the community is the notion of stories that ought not to be spread in the mainstream public, though he gave no examples of this. Akhtar spoke of directing communications to different audiences, “the public” and “the converted”, which she reached through different

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⁷ Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, Negotiating Control, 25.
media; I discuss this further in chapter 8. In some cases, sources had specific
publics in mind with the coverage they generated: Anwar spoke of coverage as a
tool to help his legal work, and Akhtar described its instrumental value in
securing funding for Amina’s work.

These invocations of specific publics show how entangled “coverage” is
with “capital.” I separate coverage itself from the capital conferred through
coverage—primarily social capital. Bourdieu defines this as “the aggregate of the
actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network
of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual recognition”; further,
“[t]he profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the
solidarity which makes them possible.” Bourdieu’s theory of fields is concerned
with social positions and position-taking, and social capital acts as currency that
allows positions to be taken. Anwar, who styled himself as “probably the lawyer
with the highest [media] profile in the city”, achieved and reinforced that status
through devoting attention to news coverage and relationships with journalists,
as we see below. Bourdieu describes “conversions” of capital, and although he
begins with the idea that social and cultural capital “can be derived from
economic capital”—for example, the social ascent of the nouveau riche—it is also
possible to convert capital the other way, so that “the profits of [investment in
social capital through building relationships, etc.] . . . will appear, in the long run,
in monetary or other form.” This is illustrated in Akhtar’s enhanced ability to
secure funding as publicity for Amina increased.

*Journalists and Sources in Relationship*

The relationship between journalists and sources, as scholars have
observed, is characterised by an imbalance of power.” Ericson et al. note that

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9 Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital’, 248–249; see also Mark Fishman’s ‘socially authorised and
socially sanctioned knowers’ and Stuart Hall and colleagues’ formulation of ‘primary definers’;
“[w]hile sources can do various things to routinize and influence the process of news communication, they remain vulnerable to journalists’ demands for news of deviance, and to the journalistic thrust for policing and reforming organizational life.”12 As primarily less-official sources, the participants in my study were indeed vulnerable to the power of the media. They provided information for attribution or background, but journalists selected from such material that which they would include in published texts. By acting as conduit, sources could influence the direction of a published text; but journalists decided whom they called to find contacts, whom they chose to interview, and whom they quoted, thereby controlling whom “they do or do not allow to make imprints on versions of reality.”13

Nonetheless, journalists have no news without people to supply it, and so they remain reliant on sources. Ericson et al. suggest that this function indicates a shift in roles, with sources becoming journalists and journalists becoming editors, compiling and tailoring the material for adequate publication.14 David Ryfe, conducting his ethnography a generation later in three U.S. newsrooms, made a similar observation that the journalism of “the future” will be conducted in crowdsourced or networked fashion, with unprofessionalised citizens contributing online content which journalists compile and curate; Ryfe portrayed this as a radical redefinition of the professional role of journalists, but it suggests more continuity with Ericson et al.’s description than rupture.15 The shuttling back and forth of dependence and control between sources and journalists can also be described in terms of Bourdieu’s index of autonomy and heteronomy: journalists tilt to autonomy to the extent that they determine whom makes imprints on the version of reality, but they tilt to heteronomy in regard to their need for imprints other than their own. Sources exercise autonomy in their power to not pick up the telephone or answer an e-mail, or to set the conditions (by, for example, an embargo) under which they release information; their

12 Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, Negotiating Contro, 2.
13 Ibid., 16.
14 Ibid., 7.
heteronomy is manifest in their need to share information publicly through the media or to be seen to engage in that kind of communication.

The relationship between sources and journalists, then, is dynamic. Power is unequally distributed, but neither is it fixed. The data from my fieldwork indicate two themes that characterise this relationship: trust and reciprocity. I explore both in what follows, but I first wish to establish my understanding of the relationship through a narrative of my own professional experience.

Building Relationships: A Narrative of the Ethnographic Self

My past experience as a broadcast journalist is relevant to the exploration in this thesis. As I mentioned in chapter 3, media scholars Chris Paterson and Anna Zoellner identified the utility and increasing incidence of former journalists studying media production, but they were also alert to concerns about distance and how to account for this experience in analysis.¹⁶ Anthropologists Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat have proposed a rigorous method of including the scholar’s memories and experiences as part of the data to be scrutinised.¹⁷ I have alluded to my journalistic past throughout the thesis, but here I narrate a developed account of the work I conducted building relationships with Muslim sources in Ottawa, Canada, for CBC. Following this narration, I endeavour to subject it to the same scrutiny which I apply to the stories of my participants.

My intentional work in building relationship with Muslim sources took place in 2008 and 2009. I classify this project as an experiment in public journalism, as described in chapter 5. Local managers had commissioned demographic research to identify minority populations in the Ottawa region. They told me their goal was to include more sources and stories from communities that were underrepresented in our coverage. This would give us the advantage of offering original stories which our competing news organisations—privately owned newspapers

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¹⁶ Paterson and Zoellner, 'The Efficacy of Professional Experience'.
¹⁷ Collins and Gallinat, 'The Ethnographic Self as Resource: An Introduction'; and specifically, for an example of building personal narratives into scholarly work, Gallinat, 'Playing the Native Card'. 
and broadcasters—did not. Managers also hoped that by covering stories from these underrepresented populations, we might add them to our audience and thereby increase our share of the ratings, an accepted marker of success. As the public broadcaster, we received a large proportion of our funding from taxes, disbursed by the federal government; with higher ratings and strategic coverage, we hoped to convince politicians, bureaucrats, and the public to maintain and even increase our funding.

Another reason for this initiative that occurred to me in retrospect, as I prepared this material for analysis, is that at around the same time, national managers were encouraging CBC stations across the country to focus less on stories from the rural regions in our listening area and more on the urban cores. Therefore, journalists at CBC Ottawa were told to report fewer stories from east Ontario and west Quebec. A scheme to reach underrepresented populations in the city can reasonably be seen as a means of replacing the stories we used to tell from the outlying regions, though this was not a reason given to me by my superiors.

The demographic research revealed four large ethnic minority communities in the city: Chinese, Vietnamese, Lebanese, and Somali. Managers combined these populations into two groups—“East Asian” and “Muslim,” though I subsequently learned that many of the Lebanese in Ottawa were Christian—and assigned two journalists to reach out to these groups. I was assigned the Muslim brief. I am not a Muslim, but I was known among my colleagues as a person who was religious and both knowledgeable and curious about religion. I am Presbyterian and did not keep this identification private. Managers understood, for example, that I balanced my shifts with teaching Sunday School at my church. I occasionally pitched story ideas of a religious nature and, like Farooq in relation to her colleagues at BBC Scotland, was able to contribute information when stories with a religious element were pitched by others or assigned by our producers. I was specifically assigned religious stories because of this familiarity, including a Sunday morning visit to the
congregation of Stephen Harper after the federal election that moved the
professedly evangelical Christian politician from leader of the opposition
to prime minister. Though I had not been made a religion correspondent, I
had established a niche of expertise due to my religious literacy.18 After
defining the Lebanese and Somali populations by their religious rather
than ethnic characteristics, the managers determined that I was an
appropriate choice to build from among them a network of sources.

I was to be given time to go through CBC’s database and locate
Muslim sources we had previously spoken with, and managers expected
me to build, maintain, and expand a file of Muslim sources and issues.
They agreed to make time when possible for me to leave my duties and
attend Muslim community events—not necessarily to bring back stories
that we would cover but merely to be present, talk with people, and hand
out business cards. When Muslims had a story to share, the idea was that
they would know me and my contact details. Reciprocally, when we
wanted a source who fit a particular profile, journalists could ask me to
put them in touch. These sources would not only be reached on “Muslim
issues”: we wanted parents, business owners, people with expertise. The
thinking was that, if we had equally suitable speakers in our database on
the issue of, for example, information technology—a significant industry
in the region—and one was a “white” male and the other an Arab female,
we were encouraged to choose the latter so as to demonstrably represent
the diversity of the region.

I had some success in carrying out this task. I had several
opportunities to attend events and meetings. I was introduced to directors
of community services and youth groups, and I gave them my business
card and described my project. I explained to everyone I spoke with what

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18 Marshall, Gilbert, and Ahmanson, Blind Spot; Julian Petley, ‘Responsible Journalism’, in Pointing
the Finger: Islam and Muslims in the British Media, ed. Julian Petley and Robin Richardson
(Oxford: Oneworld, 2011), 250–74; Elaine Graham, ‘Religious Literacy and Public Service
Broadcasting: Introducing a Research Agenda’, in Media, Religion and Culture: A Reader, ed.
Landau, ‘What the Media Thinks about Religion’. 
makes a “good pitch”: a new event or development, perhaps some conflict, human stories, and people who were available to speak “on the record.” I recall stories that I covered or attempted to cover, including the Lebanese summer cultural festival; a meeting between police, community workers, parents, and teenaged children at a housing development in Ottawa’s west end dense with Somali refugee populations; and two groups attempting to build new mosques. Some of these stories were broadcast as news features. I do not recall being criticised by my producers when stories did not “pan out”: they stated that this was part of the work of building relationships. Members of the community groups I contacted were pleased to be included and often agreed to pass my details to others in their networks. They welcomed me because they believed CBC was already “on their side,” giving more sympathetic and less sensational coverage than other news outlets.

Though these sources welcomed me and supported the project, I do not recall one of them approaching me unsolicited with a story idea. I also recall that I had fewer opportunities than hoped to leave the station or set aside my daily routines to develop this network. We had few staff contributing to our programming, and since the various CBC services in Ottawa had moved into one shared building in 2004, we had been encouraged to work “bimedia,” which is to say we were asked to prepare content for both television and radio. We were also asked to contribute to both news and current affairs programming when working on stories. In such conditions, managers often did not permit me the longer, more exploratory work of building this network. The corporation as a whole had diminished budgets to work with, and not long after I began this project,

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19 By “news,” I mean items ranging from thirty to ninety seconds which would be broadcast in radio news bulletins at the hour and half hour throughout the day. “Current affairs” programmes were talk programmes which typically complemented the news cycle, featuring interviews between a presenter and a guest from the news or a journalist who had spoken to several sources about a news story. Our station offered a “morning drive show” from 6:00 to 9:00 and an “afternoon drive show” from 4:00 to 6:00, as well as a midday programme with a remit and listenership across the province of Ontario.
in the spring of 2009, CBC’s president announced approximately eight hundred job cuts across the service. Mine was one of them, and as of September 2009, I no longer worked for the broadcaster. I do not know if any of the remaining journalists were assigned the brief of nurturing a network with Muslims in the city.

Having provided this narrative, it is also incumbent upon me to analyse it. An immediate critique of its inclusion is to note the assumption that conditions in Ottawa are generalisable to Glasgow.\footnote{Payne and Williams, ‘Generalization in Qualitative Research’.} I could create a list of qualities which the two cities share and those which distinguish them from each other, but this is only helpful if I were trying to use this study as a comparison between the cities. This is not the purpose of my project. By narrating this account, I am describing how I as a journalist operationalised the concept of the journalist-source relationship. What are the practices I put in place, and what were the professional objectives in this form of outreach? Whether there are similar proportions of residents in Glasgow and Ottawa who identify as Muslim is beside the point: my broadcaster made their inclusion in our coverage a priority and assigned me to accomplish it. Should news organisations in Glasgow deem Muslims in the city a similar priority, we could compare how journalists try to accomplish the task.

The question, then, of how generalisable CBC Ottawa is to news organisations in Glasgow is more useful. My brief observation with BBC Scotland suggested many similarities, starting with their shared status as public broadcasters which publish in radio, television, and online media. My field notes indicate comparisons I made between certain people, roles, or programmes and former colleagues or structures from Ottawa; no less, as I note in chapter 3, were the job cuts and the uncertainty of employees resonant with my own experience. I had to remind myself that the purpose of this observation was not merely to identify the ways in which the Pacific Quay newsroom on the Clyde resembled the Queen Street newsroom in downtown Ottawa. Moreover, both broadcasters
positioned themselves as organisations “of record” for their respective markets. Journalists in both environments articulated internal and external obligations to be serious and report the most important news—the activities of the state, for example. Contrasts were evident, too, however: the funding and therefore the scope of programming in Britain were different from Canada; and BBC Scotland’s relation to Scottish society is distinct from its Canadian counterpart, due to Scotland’s devolved status and the questions of nationhood and independence from London.

Specific to this study, I wish to highlight one other point of convergence. One editor spoke to me of an initiative BBC Scotland followed several years before (he suggested more than a decade ago) to be deliberately more diverse. This initiative came from senior managers in London and included an attempt to expand the broadcaster’s contact base. He said this was replaced by a subsequent London-directed emphasis on working in multiple platforms, including online; the work on expanding the contact base was not completed. The period this editor described aligns with Greg Dyke’s tenure as director general, which included “organisational reforms concern[ing] diversity.” Farooq, who was recruited into BBC Scotland during this period, told me that she did not feel the organisation had sustained its commitment to diversity since Dyke’s departure. The impulse, however abortive, to diversify the sources used by the organisation’s journalists makes these environments comparable. I cannot generalise this comparison to other organisations in Glasgow, but I can observe that, despite differences in formats and organisational priorities, the journalists’ work and practices seemed consistent across my sample.

The experience I narrated includes several elements relevant to this thesis. The job I was given recalls the priorities of public journalism, as discussed in chapter 5. Features that Joyce Nip identified, such as visiting “third places’ . . . [i]nterviewing differently . . . finding ‘real people’ . . . [and] representing stories that

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21 Born, *Uncertain Vision*, 470; journalist Mukti Jain Campion gave a critical report on diversity at BBC, and she conducted her research in 2004, after Mark Thompson had succeeded Dyke as director general; Mukti Jain Campion, “Diversity, or Just Colour by Numbers?” *British Journalism Review* 17, no. 1 (2006): 71–76.
focus on issues,” were elements of the work I was assigned. Producers spoke about the project in terms that characterised it as a deliberate venture into a different kind of journalism. On the other hand, many of these features could simply be classed as “good journalism”: all of these had been recommended by my instructors in journalism studies, and my producers would exhort me and my colleagues to do work like this whenever we could on any story we were assigned. Journalists at CBC Ottawa had not ignored Muslim communities prior to starting this project, though we did not attempt to cover them so systematically.

Nonetheless, the picture I have presented is one of laudable goals and a failure of execution. This failure begins with the idiosyncratic identification. The demographic research identified groups by ethnicity, yet the assignment was framed for me in terms of religion. Moreover, one of the ethnic groups included in this project included many people who did not identify with the religion under which they were classified. This confusion of purpose is not so debilitating: I believed at the time and still do that there were good journalistic reasons for becoming more familiar with Muslims regardless of their demographic prevalence. Our lack of familiarity with the population was evident, though, in our classification.

How we went about building this network also deserves scrutiny. We began with sources already in our database—the “usual suspects” of Muslims in Ottawa—and asked them to help us expand it. These people and organisations were already in relationship with us, and should we have needed a particular kind of Muslim voice in our coverage, we likely would have contacted them as conduits; what was different was the urgency and the focus. Urgency can hinder this work: finding the best source at short notice for a news item that broadcasts that day or the following morning can be challenging, as people have lives, work, commitments, and schedules that make it difficult to be available when a journalist needs them. Moreover, “the best” indicates they have qualities journalists need for their stories, such as accurate knowledge of the subject and

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an ability to speak clearly and comfortably on-air. These are reasons why journalists rely on the “usual suspects.” Finding new sources when there is no urgency, then, is a helpful task, because the journalist can identify suitable people with particular expertise and prepare them for what might happen if a relevant story suddenly broke. Focus, however, can help with engaging sources for same-day stories. Calling people to respond to a concrete story is more effective than calling with a vague request about a category of stories to be discussed at an unforeseen date in the future. The leisurely timeline and broad objectives of my project made it harder for me to communicate what CBC was looking for. Urgency balances against focus in recruiting sources for immediate use versus a general contacts file.

Finally, I was not frequently freed from my duties to pursue this relationship-building exercise. I was released on some occasions, both at my request and at the instigation of my producer, but I would not suggest I had even once a month to foster this network. The time to nurture source relationships is increasingly a luxury, as many of my journalist participants told me. I did achieve some goals: more names added to our database, phone calls from me to people in this network that led to fresh story ideas, and opportunities to be visibly present in the community as a representative of the public broadcaster. But I consider it a failure that, to the best of my recollection, none of these sources approached me with original story ideas without being asked.

The relationship-building was founded on two elements which I explore for the duration of this chapter: trust and reciprocity. The people I approached in my work told me they liked CBC because they felt they could trust the broadcaster. We had a reputation for being politically left-leaning and sympathetic to multiculturalism in a national and local media ecosystem perceived generally to be right-leaning; whether this reputation was accurate, it influenced my reception. Personally, I built trust by turning up at events the first time and then turning up again. I noticed the warmth in the greetings I received from police officers and community workers in the west-end neighbourhood on my return visits. The relationship was also, at least in its ideal sense, reciprocal.
When I explained my project to sources, I encouraged them to get in touch with me if they had story ideas. Though none of them did, the element of exchange was a feature of the relationship from the moment of its inception. At a simple level, the relationship was reciprocal because of its transactional nature: sources gave me comment, clarification, and contacts; and I gave them coverage and capital. In the remainder of the chapter, I describe how trust and reciprocity characterised the relationships between journalists and sources in Glasgow.

**Trust**

In March 2013, I attended a discussion at Glasgow’s Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre as part of an event called The Gathering—a conference and trade show for the voluntary sector. This discussion, attended by more than sixty people, concerned the relationship of charity organisations with the tabloid press, and the organisers asked panellists whether tabloid journalists were “friend or foe.” Two media officers with charities and two journalists composed the panel, and in their introductory remarks, each of them talked about trust. Shelter Scotland’s Gordon MacRae asked rhetorically if he had friends that he did not trust, concluding that he did: there were people he would gladly join for a drink, but he would not leave his wallet at the bar when he stepped away. MacRae considered journalists in the same way, knowing he could benefit from their work, as they could from his, but remaining cautious about how much access he gave them. Sam Booth—a former journalist for the *Daily Record* now working for cancer charity Maggie’s Centres—discussed a spectrum of trust, considering her former employer more trustworthy than the *Sun*. Current *Daily Record* reporter John Ferguson pointed to the tabloid’s record as a campaigning newspaper and blithely declared, “I think you can trust us;” whilst *Big Issue* editor Paul MacNamee exhorted those in the room not to trust any journalist at once but to build relationships.

Relationships were, for these panellists, symbiotically related to trust: trust was the quality that allowed sources to build relationship with journalists, and the
enacting of that relationship fostered trust. Yet they admonished their audience that one ought not to trust a journalist until a relationship had been established. All of them acknowledged that journalists need the stories that charities supply, especially tabloids, which focus more directly on the “human” stories from Eyre’s acronym. Reciprocally, charities need publicity to help accomplish their organisational goals, and the press officers specifically needed their organisations to gain publicity in order to justify their positions. Yet MacRae mentioned “predatory journalists” who might interpret stories in ways that surprise or upset the organisation or the individuals involved, and McNamee warned that many journalists are simply trying to advance their career.

Many of the themes discussed at The Gathering were present in my fieldwork. Four of the twelve journalists in my study mentioned trust specifically, with many others detailing practices that help to foster relationships and build trust. Annie Brown of the Daily Record said it was essential for her work, and when she proved she could be trusted by sources, her reputation would go before her: reporting that she had done on Shelter’s campaigns meant that she had an easy time establishing relations with Oxfam and Poverty Alliance, because workers in the voluntary sector talked with each other and would vouch for her work. Only two sources referred directly to trust, but many others spoke about their relationships with journalists in a wary manner, as we saw in the previous chapter, indicating that they did not trust journalists. Nonetheless, they did engage with journalists, setting parameters on their engagement to manage the relationship. Participants spoke of establishing trust through practices I call “presence” and “fidelity.”

The idea that a relationship is constituted through face-to-face contact is a lingering ideal among journalists. When I negotiated my observation study with BBC Scotland, I spoke with managers and editors about wanting to “go out” with reporters “on a story,” to which we all smiled nostalgically, even with embarrassment. Journalism increasingly takes place electronically, through the phone or online technologies such as e-mail and social media.24 “Going out” is not the most accurate description of newsgathering. When I worked for CBC, I managed to “go out on a story” from time to time, but not every day. It was more common when I worked as a reporter than as a researcher, but even then, much of the work was accomplished over the telephone. Paterson and Zoellner note that the desk-bound nature of current journalism work makes ethnographic observation more challenging: what interaction are we observing?

Presence was important for the journalists in my study to build and nurture the relationship with sources. Five spoke of getting into the community and talking to people in a general way that was often tinged with the nostalgia I mentioned. It was seen as “the old way” that was perhaps better but which had been eclipsed by technological changes, shrinking workforces, and increased demands on those who remain.25 Arifa Farooq spoke of its importance for building trust with Muslims, which could be accomplished by “going down and having a cup of tea with them. . . . Especially for the Muslim person who is quite sceptical, who find[s] the whole media thing quite sinister, it would help them a lot to just go down and have a cup of tea.” Farooq said this would help journalists to learn more about Muslims, and it would also allow Muslims to learn more about journalists. Brown also mentioned “the cup of tea,” when she was assigned

to go down to the fire station and “shoot the breeze.” Brown, Farooq, and Eleanor Bradford spoke of not needing to come back with a story: editors would allow them to invest in conversation and relationship-building without needing to return with a news item for immediate coverage. Both of these practices were part of my network-building work with Muslims in Ottawa, and I recall the liberation I felt when I was released from the requirements of daily production.

Journalists articulated the benefits and risks of these informal practices. Brown, who associated these practices with her past rather than her present, said “the end result is a hell of a lot better” when she was able to spend liberated time with sources. Bradford and Correspondent Print saw such visits as a chance to articulate to sources what they were looking for in a story pitch, thereby improving the quality of story ideas they received. But Bradford said those networks could also be abused: correspondents used to spend the day playing golf and justify it by saying they “got some good stories;” but the ratio of time invested to stories produced was not high enough, and the practice was reined in.

Editor Print One described going into the community for her work on racism in Southside neighbourhoods, which entailed parking her car on Allison Street and talking to business owners, customers, and residents on the street. She questioned whether this was the best way to investigate such a story, because she knew nothing about the people she was interviewing: she had no trust established with them and no context for their comments. The risk she identified was sloppy or anecdotal journalism.

Alison MacDonald noted that such informal networks could be unfair: if, for example, police officers gave informal tips to journalists they knew, they were controlling the means by which such information was released, and other journalists and organisations were excluded from the circuit. The alternative she described to me was a formal system of information exchange through press releases, which she also critiqued; I return to her comments below in my discussion of reciprocity, but I note that, of the two, she preferred the formal exchange, considering it fairer.
Journalists said they did not need to go on intentional network-building ventures to accomplish these tasks, nor did they need to sacrifice “bringing back a story.” Three journalists mentioned cultivating sources whilst covering stories. So long as they were out in the community or at a specific location and event, they made a point of talking with people and noting potential stories or sources. Editor Magnus Llewellyn said he expected journalists to hand out business cards and talk with people, inviting them to share stories. Two journalists also mentioned social events which they attended when they were “off-duty” as venues to cultivate sources. Catriona Stewart described an “always on” mentality, which accorded with my own experience at CBC: at breakfast whilst reading the newspapers; at the library or the coffee shop, checking community notice boards; at a dinner party with friends; at church—in all these contexts, I and my colleagues were encouraged to be thinking of fresh ideas, new angles, or interesting sources.

One newspaper, the Evening Times, took an intentional tack with this practice. They instituted the idea of the Community Patch around 2005, according to Editor Print Two, dividing Glasgow and its suburbs into neighbourhoods, aligned with electoral wards that existed at the time. These were grouped into ten defined areas or “patches,” and journalists were assigned a patch. Part of their job was to visit the patch regularly and make contact with community institutions such as schools, businesses, community centres, and neighbourhood associations. The newspaper created a website for each neighbourhood which included a picture of the journalist and her contact details. The idea was that these dedicated journalists would become experts in their patch, using the relationships they established to find both large and small stories. These stories from the neighbourhoods would be posted on the website, and each journalist was responsible for filling the “community column” in the printed newspaper in turn: it ran three days a week, so a journalist would be expected to fill this column roughly once every three weeks. Part of the arrangement was that journalists were freed from their duties periodically to spend half a day with a
company car in their patch, checking with established sources and finding new ones.

This system resembles the outreach I undertook with Muslims in Ottawa, both in its failings and in its aspirations. “Periodically” is a vague term, and Editor Print Two and journalists for the Evening Times with whom I spoke about the Community Patch system said they did not visit their patch as frequently as they wrote about it. As a result, they often “covered” their patch by phone, e-mail, and press release, and they missed the opportunity to find new sources. However, by having a dedicated reporter whose face and contact details were attached to the patch, there was some mechanism for individuals and groups to reach a journalist dedicated to receiving and promoting community stories. Editor Print Two said the system was beneficial and that the Evening Times “covered the city really well.” Stewart, whose patch included Govanhill and Pollokshields, gave herself an extra advantage by buying a flat in the neighbourhood. She said work was not her primary reason for living in her patch, but her continual presence had helped her to meet people and discover stories. Moreover, she suggested that being a resident in her patch gave her more “authority” when she wrote.

Stewart’s presence in Pollokshields and Govanhill has not made her an authority on Muslim community issues. Story examples that she offered me from the neighbourhood focused more on the marginalisation of Roma populations, and some of these stories cast Asians—Muslim or otherwise; her frame was predominantly ethnic—in negative terms, as “dodgy landlords.” She told me it had been “slightly more challenging to build up a relationship with the Muslim community” and that racial tensions had been “hard to overcome...[so as to] build trust with people.” Since the last council election in 2012, Stewart cultivated a new councillor who is a Muslim woman as a source, and she said she hoped that “if people see you dealing with her, for example, and nothing bad is happening, they may be more receptive in coming and speaking to you.” I shadowed Stewart as she met this councillor and listened as they exchanged ideas for upcoming stories and also spoke more generally—to each other but with me as an obvious audience—about the strengths and the challenges in the neighbourhood. Stewart
said she was not aware of Amina, the office of which was in her patch, nor did Amina staff mention her as a journalist they had contact with.

**Fidelity**

Another way that participants reported establishing trust between sources and journalists was to **do what you say you will do**. I link this with the cliché of **going the extra mile** for sources and summarise them as acts of fidelity. Though far fewer participants mentioned this sort of practice, those who did emphasised its importance. Brown said the most important way to build trust was to do what you say you will do. She described arguing with her editor about changes to articles that contravened the organisation’s wishes. She cited a story she had done on prostitution from “the punter’s perspective”; workers with the charity Women’s Support Project helped her find sources and provided information, and they asked that she not include “sexy pictures of women” as visuals with the story, to which she complied.

Stewart referred to a story she prepared about a Muslim woman’s experience with forced marriage: she said she watched the progress of her story through subediting, and the subeditors invited her to call the source in the story to check that the wording of the headline would not be so sensationalistic as to upset her. Stewart described this as “best practices”, and she offered the story in the context of her relationship with her workplace rather than with her sources. Earlier in our interview, she noted that aggressive, antagonistic media coverage of Muslims made it harder for journalists without “an agenda” to report on members of those communities: “once you build a rapport with somebody and they know that you’re not going to catch them out or say anything negative about them, it’s much easier to keep that relationship going and keep the flow of stories coming, as well.”

Journalists need not have an agenda to damage relationships of trust with sources. Fair and accurate reporting might nonetheless be unpleasant for the source, such as the discovery of criminal activity. Fidelity to sources must be
balanced against the risk of being “captivated,” whereby the journalist is overly
and perhaps uncritically sympathetic to the perspectives and objectives of the
source. Correspondent Broadcast mentioned the danger of getting too close to
sources, so that journalists choose not to print negative stories for fear of
damaging the relationship. I asked both him and Brown if they would “burn a
source,” i.e., print a negative story that would damage their relationship of trust.
Brown said it was something she struggled more with as a junior reporter; with
her seniority, she said, she had more freedom to report stories as she chose, and if
the source was unhappy with the coverage, her reputation and her effective
coverage of campaigning work would insulate her from the source’s censure. She
said that she would not misrepresent a source and that she valued the
relationships she has forged, so it would have to be “a pretty amazing story” to
burn the source. Correspondent Broadcast said he would, “without question,” but
he would not expect to get any good stories from that individual or organisation
for a while.

Both Samina Ansari and Fariha Thomas of Amina talked of the
importance for them of journalists doing what they say they would. I discuss the
specifics of their encounters in chapter 8, but I mention their responses here
because they were the two sources who explicitly mentioned trust in the context
of their relationships with journalists. They both sifted the news organisations
they chose to deal with, making judgements about whom to engage with based on
their encounters with individual journalists and their impressions of the
representations news organisation made of Muslims; by “sifting,” I mean selecting
the favourable ones for engagement. The journalists Thomas said she could trust
were those who “were very true to what they said they were going to do”;
ocasionally, she said, BBC Scotland journalists gave Thomas and her colleagues a
final listen to radio pieces before broadcasting them. Meanwhile, she said,
“[t]here’s other papers and things that we wouldn’t even go near—we would never
have gone near—because you could never be sure of the headline stuff they put

26 Schlesinger writes about this phenomenon between ethnographers and research participants,
and the risks are the same; Schlesinger, ‘Between Sociology and Journalism’, 353–355.
out.” Ansari spoke of learning to appreciate that there were “good journalists” who report honestly and “naughty journalists” who add “spin” to get a “good story”; elsewhere, she used the descriptive phrase “their own salt and pepper”. For these sources, trust at an interpersonal level was built on fidelity and damaged by duplicity; at the institutional level, it was built on fair coverage and damaged by negative coverage.

Anwar, however, offered a different model of engagement. Whereas he used to sift certain journalists or organisations because of his political identification, “I don’t put the phone down on any of them anymore”. The principal example of this is the fact that he writes a weekly column for the right-leaning, populist tabloid the Sun, and, when he is quoted in a Sun news story, he is sometimes introduced as “Scottish Sun columnist and lawyer”. Anwar’s response implies that there was a previous time during which he did sift news organisations, hanging up the phone on certain journalists. Previously, Anwar engaged with the media as an activist and campaigner; now, he is a lawyer and a more-official source than the members of Amina, and he has established relationships with journalists over many years. Though Anwar said his ideology has not changed, his manner of engaging with journalists has, so as to reflect the social role he now inhabits.

Aside from Thomas, the other political and more-official sources did not mention avoiding particular media organisations. They did have strategies for setting parameters, however. Yousaf and Malik, as mentioned in the previous chapter, both described limiting the kinds of stories they were willing to comment on or the way they wished to be labelled. Thomas mentioned a formal parameter set by Glasgow council: when journalists contact her about her work as a councillor, she said she has been instructed to direct those media requests to the council’s press office.

27 Kevin Duguid, “Sick Tattoo Tribute to Tragic Kriss: SDL Extremists Slammed: Hate Group in Slain Teen Storm,” Sun, 2 March 2014; see also Cameron Hay and Gail Cameron, “We Want Answers: Death in Pakistan: Family Agony: Couple Stop at Cafe on Taxi Trip They Collapse after Tea ‘Spiked’ Abdul Wakes to Find Wife Dying,” Sun, 24 September 2013; Cameron Hay, “Union Jerk: Yob Revealed as Head of New Fascist Hate Mob in Scotland . . . but Dad Says He’s a Good Boy: Sinister Group Has Links to Despised BNP,” Sun, 24 November 2013; http://lexisnexis.com/.
Setting parameters is a strategy sources reported to me for engagement in the absence of trust. It was a practice to help them maintain or initiate relationships with journalists. In this regard, they were enacting what MacNamee advised at The Gathering: do not trust them immediately, but build relationships. Journalists in my study did not discuss mitigating the absence of trust. Editor Print One mentioned her concern about the veracity of what she was told when she visited Allison Street to talk about racism, and Correspondent Print indicated that the people to whom he might turn for authoritative comment on Muslim issues might not be regarded as authcritative by Muslims. Neither journalist offered any strategies to overcome this, though. Editor Print One said that, without a reason to be suspicious, her inclination was to believe what people told her. Otherwise, I assume that practices of verification, which scholars have identified generally as journalistic practice, insulate them from the need simply to trust sources.28

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a feature of relationships between journalists and sources. Empirical research on relationships reveals this to be not merely an ideal description but an observable quality: in terms of their heteronomous reliance on source, journalists receive the raw material from which they build their stories—what Oscar Gandy calls “information subsidies.”29 In return, sources publicise the information they want to promote and position themselves, in Mark Fishman’s words, as “socially authorized and socially sanctioned knowers.”30

The matter of reciprocity was discussed at The Gathering’s “Friend or Foe” panel. Audience members who identified themselves as media relations officers for charities asked about protecting their organisation’s “line” when sending a

28 Shapiro et al., ‘Verification as a Strategic Ritual’; Ryfe, Can Journalism Survive.
29 Oscar H. Gandy, Beyond Agenda Setting: Information Subsidies and Public Policy (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1982); see also Sigal, Reporters and Officials; Gans, Deciding What’s News.
30 Fishman, Manufacturing the News, 95; see also Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, Negotiating Control.
story to journalists. This was described as a “tit for tat” transaction, in which the charities provided quotations that described a problem or responded to an event (comment), information about a newsworthy issue such as poverty or drug addiction (clarification), and “case studies” in the form of clients of the charities who were willing to illustrate these issues with a personal angle (contacts). These workers were giving journalists useful material, and they expected, in return, that the charity’s “line”—be it a particular interpretation of events, a slogan the charity used in its marketing, or a positive reference to the charity’s work—would be included in the published piece. Ferguson of the Daily Record said he tried to keep the line in, but in a short tabloid article, lines that look too much like spin are vulnerable to editing; the Big Issue’s MacNamee went further, saying that “protecting the line” was tantamount to advertising. Booth, however, summarised the feeling of betrayal that charity workers feel in those instances: she gave good stories to journalists and expected some payback. She acknowledged, though, that journalists have “their own priorities” and returned to the issue of trust and building good relationships.

Journalists in my study used the language of exchange, sharing, and reciprocity to describe their relationship with sources, but responses from many source participants gave me the impression that the relationship was not, in their opinion, reciprocal. This is difficult to separate from questions of motivation, as sources were not equally keen across my sample to be in regular relationships with journalists. At heart is the question of who calls whom. Politicians—past and present—and members of the MCS said journalists primarily initiated contact with them. Active and aspirational participants, such as Anwar and members of Amina, discussed a more mixed relationship. They related instances of journalists contacting them but also of using press releases, social media communications, and direct contacts with journalists they knew to offer their messages for consideration as news.
Points of Contact

Press releases were the most commonly cited tool from participants describing sources communicating with journalists. Technology has made it easy to disseminate press releases, but their ubiquity raises questions about their effectiveness. I recall deleting many e-mails to my personal CBC e-mail account and to general accounts connected with specific programmes, often after only a cursory glance through it or even by making judgements from what was written in the subject line. Journalists in my study likewise talked of full e-mail inboxes, as they are inundated with story pitches. Whilst this presents a notionally secure stream of stories for journalists to choose from in filling their newspapers, broadcast hours, or web pages, it creates challenges both of quantity and quality. Correspondent Print said he received too much—more than he could ever use in the pages for which he is responsible. The quality also suffers in this bulk contact approach: he described the “woolly ‘nice’ projects” that I recorded in chapter 5. MacDonald talked of all the “corporate shite” she received, and she described as an unfortunate consequence of the continually reducing workforce the fact that stories her organisation would not have reported “before” were now pursued to fill time—not because they are good but because they are easy. She used the term “churnalism,” a snide neologism that evokes the increasing quantity and decreasing quality of this material.31

David Eyre said he surveyed community groups in Govanhill to ask what media relations help they thought they needed, and the most frequent response, well before any other, was training on writing effective press releases. A press release is a short document, often structured in the form of a news story, that announces an upcoming event or relates a particular group’s response to an event. It contains contact information for the journalist to continue his investigation, though there are suggestions that these press releases are often

31 Tony Harcup attributes the term ‘churnalism’ to Waseem Zakir, a journalist with BBC Scotland; Tony Harcup, Journalism: Principles and Practice (London: Sage, 2004), 3–4; see also Nick Davies, Flat Earth News (London: Vintage, 2009), 59.
published in part or in whole as news stories in the media.\textsuperscript{32} Journalists and sources who had sustained interaction with journalists balanced the merits of the press release against that of the targeted pitch or direct communication.\textsuperscript{33} The targeted pitch is not released generally to a news organisation but specifically to an individual journalist. Whilst it might take the same form as a press release, it includes direct claims on the interest of that journalist, perhaps because of previous stories he has covered or because of his relevant status as a specialist correspondent. This kind of communication was deemed more successful by press officers and the preferred method of contact by journalists; sources who described it recognised its value, though not all of them felt that it would necessarily result in more or better coverage.

Eyre said the press release was “a very simple tool, but in terms of getting media coverage, it’s a very effective tool.” MacRae, press officer for Shelter Scotland, described matching the tool to the organisation’s goal: if its aim is merely to “get there”—to have the information printed in a newspaper, included on a website, or mentioned in a broadcast—a press release could be effective. Correspondent Print and Correspondent Broadcast spoke of such strategies as being “just fine,” and the lukewarm quality of all of these responses indicates that they were preparing for a contrast which they believed would be more effective. Correspondent Broadcast said mass releases “tend to go into the maw of the planning chain.” The better option was to “know your audience”, which involved research into which news organisations covered the kind of stories a group wanted to publicise and which journalists in those organisations tended to cover those stories. Correspondent Print said groups “are pretty clued up” about targeting their pitches. MacRae questioned whether the coverage of a press release, which might turn into a hundred-word news brief that occupied part of one column in the newspaper, engaged the public in the same way as a two-page

\textsuperscript{32} Lewis, Williams, and Franklin, “A Compromised Fourth Estate?”
spread, complete with pictures and a personal story, which could come from the targeted pitch.

In addition to offering the press release training, as groups in Govanhill requested, Eyre offered a second course at his own instigation on building a media strategy. This session involved scrutinising the group’s message, its audience, and the media for transmitting that message. When possible, he would conduct this session first, so that when groups turned to writing press releases, they had already thought of these elements and could factor them into their preparation of the release. His purpose was to help groups surpass the press release and target their pitches, so as to connect their messages with the rhythms of journalistic practice. Bradford and Correspondent Print, as mentioned above, made a point of talking with people who contacted them by phone or e-mail or whom they meet when on assignment, educating them as to what elements they were looking for in a “good story.” In addition to these, Correspondent Print mentioned “exclusives”, echoed by Correspondent Broadcast. As part of the targeted pitch, sources could offer journalists exclusive or early access to a particular source or story. Both correspondents made it sound like a tantalising offer, but I believe it unlikely that a journalist would take interest in an exclusive story if she did not first think it was a “good story.”

Social media communications are another point of contact mentioned by participants. They can fulfil the same function as a press release in terms of piquing the interest of journalists through projecting story ideas into spaces which they are monitoring. Although tweets, status updates, and other such communications are often less targeted than even a press release, they can still attract attention. Messages that are frequently “shared” or “liked” demonstrate some degree of public interest, and savvy use of networks and tools such as “hashtags” can help them spread. A team of researchers studied a particular social media service which facilitated journalists who sought sources using these
networks, but none of the participants in my study indicated such practice. They did indicate the importance of sharing stories on these networks so as to maintain their public profile. MCS had largely inactive Twitter and Facebook accounts which published their press releases; Amina, as we see in chapter 8, were more vigorous in using these networks to spread information and comment on news in addition to publishing their own messages. Anwar described social media as a way to lessen his dependence on mainstream journalists: “You can bypass them. You can get the story out there instantly. Which means they normally have to run to catch up.” Anwar’s final sentence suggests that whilst these technologies may have reduced his reliance on journalists, those journalists remained an important audience for his communications. He wanted them to “catch up,” and later in our interview, he noted the continuing value of mainstream media in traditional formats: “[I]f you get something on the front page, you’ve done your job.”

Anwar’s practices exemplify the reciprocal quality of relationships, as expressed through these various means of communicating. He said he has spent twenty-five years building his media profile and his methods of media relations. Over his career as an activist and, later, a lawyer, he negotiated its trajectory through the media. He said he got a reputation during the Chhokar trial for effective media management, so that the justice minister at the time, by his account, believed he had “a huge media machinery operating” for him; this was in fact, he said, “me and a couple of other people in my room” sending e-mails. Anwar said he crafts a general press release to contain elements that will appeal both to “quality journalists” (broadsheet) and “the red-tops” (tabloid); the former want “a lot more information” whereas the latter want “one or two lines” that are “controversial.” All of this, Anwar said, can be accomplished on one page, with “a soundbyte” in the first line to catch the journalists’ attention. Anwar did not offer evidence of how a coherent release could contain all of these things and still

succeed in gaining coverage for his messages. The evidence, however, may simply be the fact of his success: five of the twelve journalists in my study referred to him during interviews, and he described other occasions when journalists have contacted him for comment, clarification, or contacts. Meanwhile, he has achieved a high public profile as a campaigner and lawyer, so when he contacts journalists about coverage, he has confidence that his message will be used.

Two stories that he told me illustrate the capital he had with media organisations. He recalled that the Daily Record had made reference to “Al-Qaeda terrorism” in its headline when Anwar’s client, Siddique, was first convicted. When the charges were overturned in 2010, he negotiated with the tabloid for an exclusive interview with Siddique, provided that they use the jocular headline, “Terrorist? I’m just a Numpy.”

He related a more recent story, contemporary with our interview, of managing broadcast coverage of a client who was charged with murder in Pakistan. Anwar described phone calls with editors and lawyers at STV and BBC Scotland, addressing their fears of whether they were legally allowed to broadcast certain information. He used his contact with both organisations to ensure that, once one had published the material he wanted aired, the other would follow suit.

Both of these stories indicate Anwar’s confidence that he could demand certain conditions for coverage. They also show his familiarity with differentiated media priorities. In the tabloid case, he was aware of the appeal of playful headlines, Scottish phrasing (“numpty”), and exclusive access. Though the coverage would be embarrassing for the Daily Record, which had previously declared Siddique a terrorist in bold, capital letters, the newspaper accepted this to get exclusive access to a newsworthy source. In the second example, Anwar knew of the competitive positioning between STV and BBC Scotland and manipulated this to ensure maximum news coverage. He used his authoritative status as a lawyer to address particular concerns over legal processes in a convincing manner. And his relationship with these organisations was sufficiently

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established that he had the phone numbers of the relevant editors and knew when to call them to ensure the story ran when he wanted it; he used their first names when relating the story to me, which was a further performance of his relationships. Perhaps the clearest indication of his position is that they answered his calls, heard what he had to say, and acted on it.

The Frequency and Quality of Contact

Reciprocity requires an exchange, or at least the possibility of such exchange. Recalling my own work with CBC, although I did not receive, to my memory, any story pitches from the sources in my network, I gave them my contact details, described what elements I was looking for in a story, and encouraged them to get in touch with me. I have related some of the journalists’ discussions about how they wish to be approached by sources, but a press release is easily deleted from a list of e-mails when there are other stories available. Responding to these communications, therefore, is a clearer indication of the mutual enactment of the journalist-source relationship.

Anwar’s was the most integrated example of reciprocity of the sources in my study. Saeed, during the period when he was active in Glasgow, was also able to generate coverage for his messages, with his most prominent example being the rally in George Square after the Glasgow Airport attack; meanwhile, he related many instances when journalists called him for help with stories. Director Activist indicated four journalists in Glasgow—two reporters and two columnists, none of whom was Muslim—with whom she had established relationships. Outwith those journalists, her media relations efforts took the form of mass press releases and social media communications. She was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with these relationships; she expressed limited interest in local affairs, concerned more about justice issues in Muslim-majority contexts. Beltagui and Khan from MCS said there was no pattern to their engagement with journalists: they were more likely to be contacted by journalists than to seek media attention, and even so, sometimes weeks could pass without a phone call or an e-mail.
Politician sources were more apt to report being contacted by journalists than to contact them. Maan and Malik both cited examples where they received a positive response and coverage from journalists in response to their media outreach, but they both described these circumstances as exceptions to the norm, in which journalists called them unsolicited for comment, clarification, or contacts. Yousaf, as a cabinet minister, reported a high degree of reciprocal responses from journalists, but this was, at his insistence, seldom to do with Muslim issues. As mentioned above, Thomas described specific controls on her engagement with journalists in her role as a councillor.

The endurance of the relationship between journalists and sources is another marker of its success. The network I was asked to build among Ottawa Muslims was meant to be a continuing element of my work, and CBC Ottawa was notionally interested in the stories of these populations not just in the next six months but for as long as they remain a part of the fabric of the city. With this in mind, I asked participants how they nurtured the relationship. Correspondent Broadcast referred to a policy he called “aftercare”—calling back sources to see what other stories they might have to share. It was insufficient for him simply to find a good speaker with an interesting story to relate: he wanted to keep drawing stories from her, which he said was important for maintaining his role as a correspondent. Indeed, his employer expected it of him. During my observation at BBC Scotland, several journalists talked about the difference between general reporters, who are frequently assigned stories, and correspondents, who more typically pitch the stories they cover. Correspondents, they told me, were paid more but had the accompanying expectation that they would continually provide interesting and original stories from their beat. A network of sources, therefore, helped them fulfil that professional role.

Correspondent Broadcast said not every source enacts that sustained relationship. Some people he has interviewed have had a part in several important stories, whereas he recalled a group who had worked fourteen years on a project which turned into a good story for him, but the group has not provided anything worthy of coverage since. This, he said, was “not a bad thing”, and he was careful
not to belittle their efforts. The sources in my study, however, would not be satisfied to have “one good story” and nothing else in terms of media exposure.

Six journalistic participants (including Eyre) spoke with me about aftercare, though only one used the phrase. All of them described it as a good practice but one they were struggling to continue. Correspondent Broadcast said he had tried to use technology to help him manage this task: he would schedule reminders in his online diary to flash at him and incite him to check back with regular sources weekly or monthly. He said he was unable to sustain the practice because “you never have enough time.” I interviewed Correspondent Print on a slow day in the midst of his weekly schedule, and he said such days should be devoted to checking back with regular sources, “but it’s just been frenetic in terms of just trying to do stories for the weekend, stories for Monday’s paper. You don’t always get the time to do that kind of making contact and contact building that you might have done in the past.” Brown related it to our discussion of getting out into the community, saying the practice improved the quality of stories she produced but she did not have enough time to do it anymore.

All of these participants spoke about the practice in the context of a paucity of time and an increased workload. Correspondent Broadcast offered a simpler strategy for aftercare, which I recall hearing from instructors during my journalism studies: after a story is published, he tries to phone the sources in the story and ask what they thought of the coverage. During that conversation, he asks them to consider him in the future if they do anything or hear anything that might make a good story. This not only nurtures the relationship for future contact but also fosters trust, as sources are invited to respond to the published news story, including the chance to offer critiques or corrections.

Three sources spoke of their own strategies for following contact with journalists to build a relationship. In the context of introducing journalists to would-be sources in his network, Yousaf said he admonished his fellow Muslims to make good use of the connection he was forging. He would facilitate the introduction, which might lead to coverage of a specific event. Once the source had the journalist’s name and phone number, though, it was that person’s
responsibility to make use of it and get back in touch with the journalist to facilitate ongoing coverage. Amina Staff referred to a “warm contact” list, and Khan mentioned efforts from MCS members to keep a list of journalists who had contacted them for stories. These practices imply that, having done a story once, the journalist would be favourable to covering another story from Amina or MCS or, failing that, at least be an appropriate person for that organisation to contact concerning future coverage. Amina Staff said she felt, though, that she still did not know who the best journalists were to whom to pitch the stories her organisation was trying to publicise. And Khan and Beltagui said their list was not effective because journalists changed roles and even employers too quickly. The journalist who first covered their organisation might be sympathetic but no longer in a position to help them. Beltagui said his colleagues in other faith communities report similar difficulties. Moreover, their organisation may be in a news organisation’s database, so that journalists know how to get in touch with them, but different journalists are calling every time, so there is no opportunity to build a personal relationship.

The journalists’ database is a tool news organisations provide to manage contacts over time. Journalists at the Herald & Times Group referred to such a catalogue, but I saw it systematically applied at BBC Scotland. The Electronic News Production System, a technology introduced to BBC in 1997, gives journalists across the corporation access to a searchable database of sources. During my observation, one journalist showed me how she could search for “Glasgow” and “Muslim” and find a list of several sources. My notes suggest the assembly of the list was “rather random,” but it included names, titles, and contact details as well as shorthand notes. She drew my attention to Osama Saeed, who was listed as a spokesperson for the Muslim Association of Britain–Scotland; this role was out of date, and in fact Saeed had by then moved to Qatar. He did, however, confirm in our interview that, specifically with BBC, “once you

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come on . . . your number gets passed around, and once I did one or two appearances . . . you get called pretty regularly to talk about things.” Several BBC journalists reported using the system for finding sources, and Eyre, formerly an employee of BBC Scotland, said it was “very likely” that sources in this database would be approached on subsequent occasions. He said he included reference to it in his training, warning his tutees that once a journalist had their contact details, they were likely to get called back. As we see in the following chapter, this warning proved true for Amina, though the response of members was ambivalent.

Eyre said the benefit of regular contact between journalists and sources was that the journalist became a champion for the story in terms of pitching it to editors, which supported his preference for the targeted pitch over the general press release. He told me, “If a journalist feels it’s their story and they’ve got a sense of ownership over it, it’s more likely to actually make it onto the news agenda.” Correspondent Print agreed, noting that a lack of journalists in the newsroom who identify as Muslim meant that stories from Muslim communities lacked such a champion. I asked whether he felt it was necessary for the journalist to identify as Muslim in order to pitch Muslim stories effectively; he said it was possible for any journalist to develop an intentional curiosity and “establish a passion” for the subject, though he then suggested that, if Muslims were perceived not to read “the mainstream press,” there would be less urgency to cover such stories and therefore less advantage for a journalist to cultivate such a familiarity.

Conclusion

This chapter has put the relationship at the fore. Both journalists and sources reported three uses of the latter by the former: comment, clarification, and contacts. The term “uses” suggests an unreciprocal relationship, whereby the benefits of their engagement flow in only one direction. It is important to remember what sources “get” from their encounters: coverage and capital. “Uses” has a media-centric slant which gives the impression that journalists, as the
“users,” have the power in the relationship. This ignores what motivates journalists to build relationships in the first place—their need for stories. The comments and clarification which sources provide, or the contacts they give for others who can comment and clarify, are the raw material from which journalists fashion their published texts. Power is fluid, and the relationship is dynamic.

For this reason, the panel discussion at The Gathering was an instructive event to observe. Journalists and media officers—one of whom previously worked as a journalist—portrayed this dynamic relationship as essential for achieving their disparate goals but nonetheless fraught. Trust emerged from their discussion, as it did from my fieldwork, as an important feature of these relationships. Presence was identified as a beneficial way to establish trust: though journalists in my study reported this as an elusive practice, it was nonetheless one that they valued. Fidelity was described as beneficial for maintaining the relationship, though journalists cautioned against developing loyalty to sources to the extent that it prevented them from rigorous scrutiny of the sources’ activities. Sources, meanwhile, spoke of being setting parameters to manage their relationships with journalists when trust was lacking. Trust is therefore not essential for news-making, but it facilitates effective communication, which is enacted through the exchange between these parties. Sources pitch stories, whether in the form of a chance social media communication, a press release, or a more targeted pitch; journalists contact potential newsmakers, either with a “cold call” to a new source, aftercare for sources who are already engaged, or regular meetings with established sources. In these ways, material is exchanged which confers benefits on each party.

A general description of journalistic practice, though, tells us little about the actual experience of Muslims courting media attention. Members of Amina aspired to be established sources for journalists, but the impression they gave me was that this has been an unsatisfactory process. Doubts about trust and reciprocity characterised their descriptions of their media relations, and I examine in greater detail stories of their encounters that have only been alluded
to here, to give a thicker description of one group which is negotiating its role as an authorised knower for a particular slice of Muslim life in Glasgow.
CHAPTER 8
AMINA AND I SPEAK FOR MYSELF: A CASE STUDY

This chapter examines the media relations efforts of one Muslim organisation in Glasgow to illustrate the dynamics of relationships between journalists and sources. Amina gained prominence in the national media as I began my fieldwork during their promotion of the I Speak for Myself campaign, and members of the centre described that experience as a fulcrum in their engagement with journalists. After a brief description of the organisation, I examine whether and how this change occurred and what it has meant for the members and their work. There are no content analyses concerning coverage of Muslims in Scotland or Amina’s work, so I begin with a brief content search to establish a provisional comparison of the reporting on Amina before, during, and after the campaign. I then use responses from my fieldwork with Amina—interviews, observation, and document analysis—to generate a thicker description of the centre’s relations than the content search allows, using the same temporal periods. I pay close attention to participants’ depictions of relations since the campaign, looking for evidence of a more sophisticated media strategy, increased engagement with journalists, and enduring relationships with individual journalists as markers of the imputed change.

Amina is a charitable organisation offering services targeted to Muslim women in Scotland. Its offices are in Glasgow and Dundee, but its remit covers the entire nation. It has a board of directors and a small staff serving the two offices (seven permanent positions, four part-time administrators, and various contract positions, the number of which changes from year to year depending on their funding; the 2012-2013 annual report lists five positions which were ending
by April 2013). The report also lists fifty-three volunteers in Glasgow and twenty in Dundee. Amina’s work is both internal, serving Muslim women, and external, linking issues which affect their constituency to the wider Scottish society. The centre operates a helpline offering information and advice, which can cover topics such as access to government services, religious information from imams, and sensitive matters such as domestic abuse and racist incidents. It provides “capacity building” services, which include language instruction and education concerning legal rights, and a friendship group, which is a social service. Externally, the centre’s helpline can provide “third-party reporting” to police on crimes, including hate crimes. The campaign officers do advocacy work on perceptions of Muslim women (I Speak for Myself, hereafter referred to as “I Speak”) and violence against women (You Can Change This, hereafter referred to as “Change This”) in concert with other civil society organisations.

I Speak, the campaign which generated such media attention, began with visits which Amina staff and volunteers made to Scottish schools. Funded by the Scottish government, the project involved asking schoolchildren what they thought of regarding Islam and, specifically, Muslim women; sharing information; and answering questions. Members tell me they were surprised at the negative stereotypes that the children mentioned, including “terrorist” and “oppressed.” The I Speak campaign aimed to change public perceptions by offering alternative, challenging representations. The central element was a series of photographic portraits of women holding messages they had written on a large sheet of paper with a felt-tip pen; the messages had examples such as “Irn-Bru, Tunnock’s Tea Cakes & Me: Phenomenal SCOTTISH Goodness” and “YOU DO SOMETHING WRONG IT’S ‘JOHN’ I DO SOMETHING WRONG IT’S ‘MUSLIM’”. An exhibition of these images was displayed in the lobby of Holyrood before touring across Scotland.

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2 Ibid., 26.
I am not the first scholar to conduct research with the members of Amina. Rahielah Ali and Peter Hopkins studied civic engagement among Scottish Muslim women, and their focus groups and interviews were conducted with the centre’s staff and volunteers. Their general thesis is that Muslim women in Scotland are upset by the negative media representations of Muslims and therefore take part in civic activity organised outside of mainstream politics (i.e. voting, campaigning, running for office) as a way of countering this derogatory image. An insufficiently critical acceptance of the content in their participants’ responses hinders the study, as the authors suggest, first, that media representations are negative because their participants say it is and, second, that these participants volunteer in civil society because of those representations. Media effects, as I have already suggested, are easy for researchers to assert but difficult to prove, especially when the media are not the subject of the study but merely a variable in social research of another kind.

Nonetheless, the findings of their study are consonant with the impressions recorded in chapter 6 that news coverage is negative. Asma Abdalla spoke of the media as a socially destructive force, and in a blog post for the I Speak website, Samina Ansari wrote an excoriation of the media. She did not characterise the media as starkly in our interviews, but this can be attributed to differences in the medium of communication—typing before a screen with an intended audience of sympathetic insiders as opposed to speaking words out loud to a relative stranger—and also to researcher effects: I am a former journalist, and she may have wanted to speak less critically of my former profession to safeguard my feelings or forestall awkwardness. Ali and Hopkins identified the news media as a concern for the women who are members of Amina, and this is useful information as we consider their specific relations in the last three years.

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4 Ibid., 141.
Media Relations—Analysis of Coverage

To establish the idea of a change in Amina’s media relations, I conducted a simple news article search to assess the coverage they received before, during, and after the I Speak campaign. This was not a rigorous content analysis, as I am not concerned in this study with how Amina were represented in the texts. As a counting exercise, it is limited and incomplete. I used publicly available online databases, including LexisNexis and Google, to find news texts, and I relied on self-reporting through Amina’s documents and social media to find others. I searched using combinations of keywords such as “Amina,” “Muslim women,” and geographic references such as Scotland. I also conducted searches for specific names, such as “Smina Akhtar” and “Samina Ansari.” Multiple searches helped to locate items, but I cannot assume these databases are complete. For example, a 2010 feature “Scots and the Burka” in the Sunday Herald did not appear in the LexisNexis database, though I located it on the newspaper’s website.

My initial searches collected forty-four news texts that referred to Amina’s work, dating back to December 2001. I have limited the date range, however, to balance the comparison, examining articles from January 2011 to June 2014. I call the period from August to December 2012 “I Speak;” the eighteen months that followed, from January 2013 to June 2014, I name “post-I Speak;” and the corresponding nineteen months preceding the campaign I name “pre-I Speak.”6 The sample includes thirty-three verified news texts. Within these periods, there are likely media appearances which I have missed: references in Amina’s annual reports suggest the centre’s work was occasionally included in broadcast coverage, but broadcast items are not always searchable in the way archived newspaper articles are.7 I have been able to find dedicated webpages for some broadcast items which make specific reference to Amina’s work from 2012

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6 For balance, it might seem more appropriate to make the pre-I Speak period eighteen months, from January 2011 to June 2012; however, a feature on STV from 8 July 2012 reports on an outdoor fundraising event Amina organised, which is not related to the I Speak campaign. It made thematic sense, therefore, to include July 2012 in the first period rather than the second.
onward, and I include them. In this search, I include items from media outwith my fieldwork sample, such as the Scotsman, and UK newspapers such as the Sun; what I am measuring here is a simple comparison of their engagement with media as it turned on the fulcrum of the I Speak campaign.

One third of the thirty-three items in my sample are broadcast items; the remainder are from newspaper sources. Ten items feature in the pre-I Speak period, nine in the I Speak period, and fourteen in the post-I speak period. This supports what participants from Amina told me during fieldwork: that media interest increased after the campaign. Given the provisional nature of the data, the difference from pre-I Speak to post-I Speak may not seem so great. But five of those ten articles were published on 28 November 2011 and report the same story—a visit from Nicola Sturgeon, at the time the Cabinet Secretary for Health in the Scottish Government. This visit was also the occasion for the 2011 Annual Report’s reference to broadcast items. I am comfortable assuming that these items also reported the health minister’s visit and statement regarding forced marriage. The newspaper articles concerning this event include brief stories from UK media the Sun, the Morning Star, and Metro as well as local tabloid the Evening Times; national broadsheet the Scotsman reports similar content but includes a “case study” of a young man from Glasgow who said he was forced by his relatives to marry a woman in Pakistan. All the articles included a variation on the same quotation from Akhtar (except the Sun, which did not quote her) and from Sturgeon, and these quotations can also be found in a press release issued by the Scottish Government. Given this concentration of stories on one day, inspired by a press release issued by the government rather than Amina, I feel justified in proposing that, outside of one active media event, the pre-I Speak period had a lower frequency of news coverage than the ensuing periods.

Amina’s publicity for I Speak was effective, generating almost as many news items over two months as they had done for the entire pre-I Speak period.

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The first item to register was Annie Brown’s feature for the *Daily Record*. As we see below, Brown’s coverage of the campaign depended on several factors, some to do with trust and relationships and some to do with the content itself. Other reports soon followed, including appearances three days later on BBC Radio Scotland and STV. An interesting feature of the items in this period is that they are primarily derived from broadcast media. Although the *Daily Record* was the first to cover the story, none of the UK, national, or local broadsheets or tabloids followed suit. A brief letter to the editor, “Who We Are,” appeared in the *Scotsman* on 12 September, written by Ansari and describing Amina’s work and the I Speak campaign; and on 25 September, the *Paisley Daily Express* published a news story which recorded Renfrewshire MSP Hugh Henry’s support for the campaign and included comment from Ansari. The remaining six verified items were evenly split between BBC Radio Scotland, STV, and BBC Asian Network. The latter organisation is a part of BBC, originating from Radio Leicester and now a UK service, the “primary target audience [of which] is British Asians under 35”; Catrin Nye’s radio reports for BBC Asian on Amina’s work were presented online under Scottish news.

After the centre’s successful media campaign for I Speak, there was a gap of over three months before the next story appeared. The post-I Speak period began with an 8 January 2013 feature for BBC Asian on Amina’s campaign concerning violence against women, Change This. From this point on, the centre generated modest but continual media coverage. The fourteen items range over the eighteen-month period, and the longest gap between items was a three-

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month stretch over the summer of 2013. Print media paid more attention to Amina in this period, with broadcast items returning to their overall balance of one third of the sample.

Two features apart from the frequency make the stories in the third period distinct from the other two: who speaks and what that person speaks about. In the pre-I Speak period, one story featured Ansari and another Gabrielle MacBeth, the centre’s volunteer co-ordinator at the time. All of the others used comments from Akhtar, the director, except the Sun’s brief, which included no quotations from Amina members. Sixty per cent of the stories concerned forced marriage, and no other issue dominated more than one story. In the I Speak period, the I Speak campaign as subject and Ansari as co-ordinator of the campaign featured in all but one of the stories. Two of those stories also included comments from volunteers. The remaining story was a feature on Nasim Azad from the Edinburgh group Behind the Veil: she contributed a photograph and message to I Speak, and the I Speak campaign was mentioned in the article.\(^\text{12}\)

In contrast, no subject had a majority in the post-I Speak sample, and the Amina sources were more varied. The niqab was the most mentioned subject, with three items. Violence against women and the centre’s Change This campaign were the focus of two items. Two items also discussed Amina’s work in schools, although the STV Dundee story seems to be an online replication of the Daily Record’s feature.\(^\text{13}\) Every other subject, including forced marriage and the I Speak campaign, received only one mention, alongside more diffuse subjects such as changes to the citizenship test and the independence referendum. Akhtar was the most quoted source from the centre, but she appeared in only four of the fourteen stories. Ansari was referred to three times and quoted once. Ghizala Awan, who at the time of writing worked as the co-


ordinator of Change This, commented in two items, and four other staff or volunteers were quoted once.

The result of their increased engagement with the media seems to be differentiated coverage. Observing a qualitative change in the frequency of the centre’s coverage, the range of subjects covered, and the people who contribute to that coverage, we are not in a position to determine how that change may have come about or, indeed, whether Amina’s members were satisfied with the change. This brief content study provides a context for the analysis of fieldwork data that follows.

**Media Relations—Fieldwork Data**

The responses from my participants in Amina show an organisation aspiring to effective media relations but feeling ambivalent about the worth of the enterprise. The question that emerges from responses is not whether Amina should be engaged with media but whether it should do more and whether, if it were possible to do more, that effort would in fact generate more coverage. As with the content search, I examine their descriptions of the relationship historically, beginning with a representation of the centre’s engagement prior to the I Speak campaign. In the I Speak period, I include responses concerning media training, which was offered to community groups in Govanhill just as Amina prepared to publicise the campaign, as well as accounts of the campaign publicity itself. Finally, I consider their responses on what they have done since that concentrated period of exposure—how they have built their strategy for subsequent efforts such as the Change This campaign. Responses considering their post-I Speak strategy also reveal internal dynamics that shape their organisational response to media relations.
Two participants provided representations of Amina’s media relations prior to the I Speak campaign, and they are quite distinct from each other. Fariha Thomas is secretary for Amina’s board of directors. Prior to being elected as a city councillor in 2012, she served as “project co-ordinator,” a liaison between staff and the management committee (precursor of the board). At times, she has served as media spokesperson for the centre. She said Amina had “built up” relationships with journalists whom she trusted, though many had since moved to other positions and organisations. She named BBC Scotland and, later in our interview, the Herald as institutions that were curious about the issues that informed Amina’s work and responsible with the coverage they gave. She described the process of securing coverage and building relationships as almost accidental, claiming she and her colleagues had no training or precise ideas of how to pitch to journalists: “We just kind of said, ‘We’re doing this stuff—are you interested?’”

The topicality of perceptions of Muslim women after 9/11 meant journalists were interested, and their fidelity gave Thomas and her colleagues the confidence to continue sending them story ideas and contributing to coverage when they were requested. Thomas mentioned positive coverage of the Muslim Women’s Voices report Amina prepared in 2008, and she attributed it both to their interest in the subject and to the relationship Amina had already established.

Ansari’s story reveals a different tone to the centre’s engagement. Ansari is the Glasgow helpline officer and co-ordinator of the I Speak campaign, and she has worked with Amina for eight years. She was the subject of what she terms an Islamophobic incident in 2009: whilst getting into her car in Govanhill with her husband and young child, a group of men shouted racist epithets, and one of them smashed a chain-style dog lead against her windshield. Her husband drove away, and they reported it to the police, but Ansari said it was a disturbing encounter. She wears the hijab, and she told me she believed her religious identification was the reason for the attack. In addition to calling them “effing Paki” and telling them to “go home,” the men called them “bin Laden lovers.”
Two years later, Amina staff issued a press release promoting a video they had prepared on women and “the veil”—that was Ansari’s word, which can be ambiguous, meaning the hijab, niqab, or burqa, or any combination of the three. She received a phone call from a journalist concerning the video: in our interview, she said she could not recall whether he worked with the Daily Record or the Heraldo, though she thought the latter; she also said she could not remember the journalist’s name, and she called him “Joseph” for the sake of her narrative. It was in fact the Heraldo, and the report was written by Jasper Hamill, who no longer works for the Herald & Times Group. As she spoke about the difficulties Muslim women face in Scotland, he asked whether she had experienced any prejudice on account of her religion. She related the story of her attack of 2009, and he asked if he could include it in his report, telling her the personal angle would help make a compelling two-page spread in the Sunday Herald magazine. He also arranged for a photographer to meet her at her house the following day. She agreed to all of this.

Ansari said the photographer arrived as arranged, and as she posed, he asked her to cover her face with a corner of her hijab. She said she did not typically cover her face, but he suggested she give it a try. In our first conversation, she described it as though he justified his request by getting a “white balance,” which is a typical technique for photographers and videographers to balance the light and colour exposure in their particular setting; in our formal interview, she described the exchange as follows:

[H]e was like, “I’m just going to check out the light and take a few snaps.” And he said, you know, “Would you take this,” and he held on to it [the corner of her hijab], and, “Do you mind doing that with it?” <Ansari gestures over face> And as soon as he asked me to do that, I was like, “I don’t wear the face veil. At all.” And he goes, “Oh, right.” He goes, “It would make a really good shot.” And I was like, “I don’t wear the veil, and I feel that’s the wrong interpretation of me.” And he was like, “Oh, let’s see,

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'cause it might be just your eyes, and we won’t get the veil on,” or blah, blah, blah. Ansari said she was uncomfortable with the representation and stopped it after the first shot. He took many other photographs, and when it was finished, she asked him to delete the photograph of her covering her face and to let her know which image he was using in the published piece. He agreed and left. Still uncertain, she sent an e-mail to the journalist, alerting him to what had happened and asking him not to use the offending image. She said she did not hear back from him, and the photograph that accompanied the story was of Ansari with her face covered, only her eyes showing. She sent another e-mail to the journalist and searched on Google for guidance about challenging what she termed “bad” and “untrue” reporting; she did not receive a reply or find information that she could use, and so she “let it go.”

I had an uncomfortable feeling as an interviewer and a sense of culpability as a former journalist whilst she narrated the encounter. She said she immediately regretted allowing it to happen, and its repercussions remain with her: she said when she searches her name on Google, that image and that article still come up. She said there were also inaccuracies in how she was quoted in the article’s text, but this did not seem to bother her as much as the image and the way it was used. Ansari said she still reads the Herald for local news, “despite” this encounter; and she said she is more guarded with her media relations. In the following section, we see practical examples of her setting parameters with journalists to manage as best she can how she is represented. Thomas characterised relationships of trust between her and certain Glasgow journalists; Ansari spoke of betrayal of trust and poor ethics. Regardless of the quality of the relationship, their accounts and the content search from this period suggest encounters were infrequent.

Neither Thomas nor Ansari spoke of the coverage in November 2011 that followed Sturgeon’s visit to the centre and the legislation concerning forced marriage, but this was an instance of wide and consistent media coverage. It also seems to be work that was not of their own doing, as the press release that
matches the brief news accounts originates from the Scottish Government; this may account for why Amina members did not mention it to me as a node on the trajectory of their media relations. Akhtar highlighted it in her contribution to the 2011 annual report, writing that the centre was “increasing its media profile” as a result of the visit.\textsuperscript{16}

I Speak Campaign

The sporadic nature of Amina’s engagement with the media would change in 2012, but its effectiveness was helped by a serendipitous offer of media training as they were preparing to launch I Speak. Coinciding with Amina’s campaign preparations, David Eyre offered free media training to groups working in Govanhill. Eyre is a former journalist who has worked in print and in broadcast, primarily in Scotland. He started monthly newspapers \textit{G41} and \textit{G42}, which covered the neighbourhoods of Pollokshields and Govanhill, respectively. Eyre was hired as media officer for the charity Oxfam, and the first year of his position was partly funded by the Govanhill Community Development Trust, on the condition that he offer support to groups in the neighbourhood. As described in the previous chapter, his primary training session was on writing press releases, though he also developed a session on media strategy and encouraged groups to take both sessions. He trained seven groups, and of all of them, “Amina were the most invested.” He attributed their investment to the “short time scale”: the campaign would launch 6 September 2012 at Holyrood, and the summary notes from the group’s training session are dated July 2012.\textsuperscript{17} Eyre also noted that the members “were extremely enthusiastic.” They completed both sessions in one day, and Eyre added a third session on preparing for broadcast interviews; this would be useful for the group, as the content search shows twice as many broadcast items as print in this period.

\textsuperscript{16} Annual Report 2011, 5.
\textsuperscript{17} See Appendix C for a copy of these notes.
The notes from the session show a single-sentence message describing the campaign, a list of audiences the group hoped to reach, a list of media through which they hoped to reach each audience, a “target” or commitment to action, and finally a list of “pegs” or events which would serve as new occasions to contact the media. The list of audiences includes both specific and broad categories, and its rankings show the external focus of the campaign. At the top of the list is “People who hold stereotypes,” and third is “General public”. It was to reach these audiences that Amina planned to engage with mainstream media, though sifting is already apparent: alongside national newspapers, television, and radio, they include the Guardian, which is relatively sympathetic to questions of Islamophobia and Muslims in Britain.\(^8\) Right-leaning broadsheets such as the Times and the Daily Telegraph do not feature, nor is there mention of any tabloids. Social media and local media are included as other means to reach these audiences.

Alongside the training, Eyre also offered some direct help with the campaign. He said he appraised their promotional materials, which included black and white images illustrating some of the campaign’s themes. He said that although the images were “actually very strong . . . they weren’t connected to the women they had interviewed as part of the campaign.” Eyre recommended using the exhibition portraits in their press release package. These images, he said, “rooted” the campaign in Scotland and in the experiences of the women Amina works with. In terms of the “TRUTH” values he espoused in training, the images were relevant, unique, and human. Eyre also used his own network of relationships to put them in touch with Brown at the Daily Record.

Brown’s responses support Eyre’s assessment of the promotional materials. She said she saw the potential in the I Speak campaign as soon as she showed her the press release package: she could visualise the two-page spread in her newspaper which, as a tabloid, emphasised images.\(^9\) She said it “dispelled myths in a simple way,” and it was “one of the best campaigns like it I’d seen.” Her

\(^8\) Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes, 167.

\(^9\) For more on tabloid culture, see chapter 7.
judgements of newsworthiness compelled her to write the first news report of the campaign, for which Ansari said she was grateful. Brown’s journalistic practice also led to a tense moment for Ansari, however. Brown’s research uncovered the *Sunday Herald* story from 2011, and she asked Ansari about it during the interview. (Brown described to me disappointment in her professional colleagues when Ansari told what happened, just as I felt during our interview.) Ansari said she told Brown it was not a subject she wanted to discuss—that she wanted to separate her personal experiences from her professional campaign. She told me that she had to repeat this proscription when she appeared on STV’s *Scotland Tonight* and that the journalists were “quite good about it”. After her interview with Brown, Ansari contacted Eyre, anxious that the story she was promoting for work would once again change and expose a personal experience once it was in the media’s control. Eyre assured her Brown would be responsible. Brown’s story mentions the attack on Ansari but not her experience with the journalist and photographer.

Outside of these comments, participants had little to say about the work of promoting the campaign. They did not discuss any other encounters with journalists during this period. My observation at BBC Scotland took place during this period, and one of the editors pointed out to me, as an example of their coverage of Muslim stories in the city, that the group and its campaign were entered in the diary for the following week. This was an interview on the radio current affairs programme *Good Morning Scotland*, the only verified item in my content search to happen on or around the launch on 6 September at Holyrood. Ansari told me she was surprised at the relative lack of attention from journalists for the launch: given the interest after the press release was issued and the *Daily Record* story was published, she expected more coverage of the event itself. Overall, though, she said her experience had been “pretty positive.” Akhtar, in defending Amina’s output relative to being a “small . . . women’s organisation”, pointed out that the campaign “did receive a lot of positive coverage—locally and nationally.” Two volunteers said they were impressed with the reports the campaign generated, and they considered it a step towards gaining more media
coverage. This matter leads us to the final period in my analysis: the post-I Speak period and the impact that concentrated coverage had on subsequent relations with journalists.

*Post-I Speak*

The aspirations of Amina’s members indicate that one intense period of media attention was not adequate for their organisation. In the previous chapter, discussing the mechanics of the relationship, I recorded journalists and sources discussing aftercare or following up to nurture the relationship. Eyre spoke of having a champion inside the newsroom who would fight for a source’s story because of her own sense of ownership. My expectation during my interviews and observation was to hear and see evidence of a more sophisticated approach to journalists, greater engagement with journalists, and multiple stories from reporters.

*Media Strategy*

Concerning their approach to the media, I observed the influence of Eyre’s training. Three of the four staff I interviewed and Thomas, the board secretary, all spoke of the adjustments they had made concerning strategies. Thomas said the training would enable more people associated with Amina to speak to the media. One of Amina’s volunteers, Hannah Rastall, had a temporary position as media officer. Rastall had helped with preparing visual elements for the campaign, and she subsequently applied for and won a sponsorship from the Vodafone Foundation that provided two months of funded charitable work. The project she submitted involved training in amateur video production for volunteers at Amina. Over March and April 2013, she helped five volunteers prepare a video about the I Speak campaign, which the centre could use in social media promotion and show
along with the exhibition as it travelled around Scotland. During those two months, Rastall also helped with general communications for the centre.

Part of Amina’s adjusted strategy included an incorporation of journalistic terminology and an appreciation of journalistic practices, which was evident in their responses. Three staff members used the terms “hook” or “peg”—once, both terms in the same sentence, followed by a self-conscious laugh—which are synonyms that describe the answer to the question, “Why should I tell this story now?” Pegs are news events through which sources can frame their pitch to journalists and journalists can frame their story to audiences.

Amina Staff demonstrated the incorporation of Eyre’s training whilst discussing her efforts to promote a video Amina had produced for Change This. Though she did not mention the “TRUTH” acronym, we can see her awareness of the elements in her answers: the video was new, just released to coincide with the campaign launch in December 2012 (timely). It included voices from “some pretty big names” in Scottish society, including MSPs, MPs, Anwar, and other “really well-known folk” (relevant). She used the word “unique” to characterise the project, saying, “[Y]ou’ve never seen a video like that before”. She acknowledged to me the campaign’s deficits regarding “topical” and “human”: for the former, there was no peg in the news cycle to which she could connect the campaign. Her press release was not “picked up”, which she attributed the dominance of more significant stories in the news cycle that week. Over Christmas, however, a high-profile story entered the news cycle concerning the sexual assault and murder of a woman in Delhi; Amina Staff said the campaign “got quite a lot of media attention on the back of that.” For the latter, the personal angle was absent from the campaign: declarations from politicians and other notable community leaders are not the same as “real people” stories about encounters with violence. She said

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“a survivor” had since told her she was willing to speak about her experience with journalists, and Amina Staff included this detail on subsequent press releases, ensuring that journalists knew Amina could provide the human element.

Another change in the centre’s media strategy is the speed of public communication, though this was changing over the time of my fieldwork, and it revealed Amina’s ambivalence as much as its aspiration. Ansari discussed receiving requests from journalists for comment and criticising her organisation for being “too slow,” because it had “this silly protocol in place” which required getting approval and insights from four directors (previously, management committee members), thereby building a rudimentary consensus before commenting. Ansari said by the time she was able to give a statement, “we were too late to respond to it.” Neither Akhtar, the director, nor Thomas, secretary of the board, mentioned the protocol. Ansari said the protocol had changed, after some challenges from her and other colleagues. Nadia El-Nakla, her counterpart in Dundee, published a blog post in November 2012 after more than a week of deadly conflict in Gaza; El-Nakla is “half-Palestinian” and wrote a personal, angry post. Ansari noted that the personal and politically charged writing on an organisational website could be “dangerous as well,” but she spoke of “finding a balance and making that statement, because no one’s interested a week later.” On the occasion of the bomb attacks at the Boston Marathon in April 2013, Ansari said, she put a message on Facebook “just saying, oh, ‘Thinking about the family and friends.’ Something like that, anyway, and I’d gone into work the next day, and I was told off. That I shouldn’t have done that.”

Ansari said that, following that occasion, Amina staff members had another training session with Eyre about “responding and getting the word out there.” They instituted a new protocol with a simpler consultation process and a goal of responding the next day. Ansari said it proved its worth: when Lee Rigby was killed in Woolwich, London, on 22 May 2013, Amina members identified it as a matter to which they ought to respond. El-Nakla published a blog post on 23

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May 2013, and it was viewed and spread via social media more than any other post on the I Speak website.\textsuperscript{23} Amina also posted an organisational response on its Facebook site.\textsuperscript{24} I found no evidence, though, that either communication was used by mainstream journalists in local coverage of the event. Ansari described the new protocol as “[s]till not ideal” and said she tries to use the I Speak Facebook page to respond more quickly, when she can. At the time of writing this thesis, the Facebook page for the campaign no longer existed, and the link to it at the bottom of the campaign’s website was broken.\textsuperscript{25}

**Engagement with Journalists**

Ansari’s responses concerning the protocol for external communications began with a problem: since the I Speak campaign, she had been contacted by journalists as they prepared news texts, and the protocol hindered her ability to respond. My second expectation was to observe increased engagement with journalists. The content search already suggests this is the case, with more stories than the pre-I Speak period and a greater diversity of Amina members used as sources in those stories. Moreover, data from my fieldwork suggest many points of contact between journalists and Amina members which are hidden from such searches, including requests for contacts and clarification and what I call “failed requests.” Failed requests are requests from journalists for comment, clarification, or contacts which do not result in content for the published text. These could be requests sources are too late to respond to, unable to respond to, or decline. Thomas mentioned requests from journalists to find women who wear the niqab: no one at the centre wears the garment, and the women they recommended

\textsuperscript{23} Nadia El-Nakla, “No Cause Justifies This Murder. Not in My Name,” *I Speak For Myself*, 23 May 2013, accessed 13 June 2014, http://www.ispeakformyself.org/no-cause-justifies-this-murder-not-in-my-name/. The post shows 121 shares and 133 likes on Facebook; the post with the next highest of such statistics has only half that number, and more than 40 per cent of I Speak’s blog posts are not spread at all.


declined coming to the television studio to appear. Abdalla and Akhtar both spoke of declining requests because they were too busy with their work, and Ansari mentioned the pressures of her family life: she has a son in nursery school, so getting away to the studio is difficult.\footnote{For more on availability, see chapter 6.} Failed requests are nonetheless points of contact, indicative of a relationship between journalists and sources.

The four Amina staff members whom I interviewed characterised their engagement with journalists as improving but not positive. Ansari called it “so-so”; Akhtar said it was “getting better”, but she felt Amina was still at the mercy of the news cycle. Amina Staff said the centre had not achieved such a status that journalists would “expect” to hear from its members on issues related to Muslim women or violence against women, but she and her colleagues were trying to be such a source. It was in this context that she referred to the “warm contact” list mentioned in the previous chapter. Abdalla was the most negative of the four in her representation of Amina’s media relations: she said there was no ongoing relationship and that it was not “deep” or “mutual”, though she thought a relationship that had those qualities would be beneficial for Amina’s work.

Three sets of interactions surfaced in my fieldwork that illuminate aspects of this engagement with journalists. The first concerns the linking of Amina’s Change This campaign with stories from the news cycle. As mentioned above, Amina Staff assessed the campaign’s launch in ways consistent with Eyre’s “TRUTH” acronym. The topicality of the story was absent when she issued the press release, but the assault and murder in Delhi prompted journalists to contact the centre: Change This became a local angle on a story prominent in the news cycle. She mentioned getting “quite a lot of media coverage” after that incident; Akhtar said “the phones were ringing” when staff returned to the office early in January. She reported appearances on radio and television, saying she could not recall whether there was any coverage in the press. My content search revealed no newspaper coverage and only one story in early January connected to the Change This campaign—a report from BBC Asian’s Catrin Nye.\footnote{Nye, ‘Violence Campaign Targets Muslims’.} In lieu of verified stories,
all I can report here is that both staff members felt their efforts at media relations followed a sound method but did not return any results of coverage; however, when there was an interest in the subject from local journalists, their efforts were rewarded in that they had relevant material ready to contribute.

The second set of interactions occurred shortly after the first. Late in January 2013, Ansari said, she received a call from a researcher with STV’s Scotland Tonight. I do not know if the programme was one of the broadcast venues for the Change This campaign’s post-Delhi appearances, but Ansari said in general she “regularly gets calls” from STV about contributing to their programming. The instance she described concerned changes to “the citizenship test”—the Life in the UK Test which the Home Office requires from prospective residents when applying for settlement visas and citizenship. Ansari is part of what is sometimes called the “third generation” of immigrants: Glasgow-born with a thick west-coast Scottish accent; her mother born in Dundee, her father in Wolverhampton in England. When relating her biography to me, she told me that she does not include “Pakistani” in the labels with which she describes herself, though others might. Her heritage is in Pakistan, but her family is in Scotland, and that is what she considers home. Therefore, she knew nothing about the citizenship test, beyond the fact that it exists; but she told the researcher she would find somebody in the organisation who could talk about it.

Though Ansari had no direct experience with the test, the centre’s director did. Akhtar was born in Lancashire, but she had a family member going through the residency application, so she was familiar with the test. However, she was reluctant to do the television interview. Ansari described her as “camera shy” and unwilling to speak publicly when there is a risk of getting details wrong. Ansari said it was a struggle to convince her: everyone else in the office declined before Akhtar agreed to go on the programme, and she was apprehensive about what to say. Ansari said she and Amina Staff reiterated advice from their training with

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Eyre: “make up your mind about the three points you want to get across from an Amina perspective.”

Akhtar’s account of the same occasion did not include the staff’s efforts to convince her, but her reluctance was evident in her resigned tone of voice, saying, “It had to be me. I had to go on.” She said the producer told her after the interview that he had her contact details and would be in touch again, “[a]nd I go, ‘Okay, fine. But I’m only coming on if it’s something I know about. I’m not going to come on and make a big idiot of myself.’”<laughs>” In making that comment, Akhtar may have had the impression the interview did not go well; Ansari said the centre received “a wee bit of negative feedback” about the interview, though she did not specify whether that came from the journalists or from people who had watched the programme.

The third set of interactions is evident purely from digital sources. Amina has a Facebook page, and it also administered discrete pages for the campaigns I Speak and Change This, though these seem now to have been taken down. The two campaigns have websites which include blogs; neither has been updated since November 2013. The campaigns also have organisational Twitter accounts, as does Amina, and it is here that more recent and dynamic activity has taken place. Akhtar spoke of her preference for using social media to communicate, but her contrasting description of mainstream journalists as the “traditional” and “actual” media suggests that she perceived social media as somehow diminished.

In some instances, Twitter has proved a site for points of contact between Amina members and journalists. In one series of tweets, dated 24 April 2013, the account user published three general messages over the day promoting the centre’s press release, which was crafted in response to a programme on BBC’s Panorama concerning sharia councils in Britain. Two of them began with “PRESS RELEASE” in all capital letters, and the third was a more informal invitation to “[c]heck out” the press release on the Change This website.20 The user also sent

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20 You Can Change This, Twitter post, 24 April 2013, 10:21 a.m.; You Can Change This, Twitter post, 24 April 2013, 10:25 a.m.; You Can Change This, Twitter post, 24 April 2013, 12:26 a.m.; accessed 17 June 2014, http://twitter.com/ChangeThis_Scot.
five tweets directed at specific Twitter accounts, asking if the account holders had seen Amina’s press release. These range from accounts of journalists, including Nye, to institutional accounts such as @TheHeraldPaper and @TheEveningTimes. On 7 October 2013, they varied the tactic: their tweet included references and a link to a news story regarding forced marriage, the Twitter account of the broadcaster that carried the news item (@itvnews), and related hashtags—strategies for being found and spread on Twitter. By mentioning that the Change This campaign has been working on the issue alongside Scottish imams, the user attempted to tantalise journalists who might see the tweet with the prospect of a relevant local angle.

Finally, I found one instance in which a journalist initiated contact through social media. The account holder of @DaniGaravelli, the name of a journalist with the Scotsman, directed a tweet on 19 September 2013 to Amina’s account, asking for help with a story on women who choose to wear the niqab and including her e-mail address. The person using Amina’s account responded with a message that she had forwarded the request to the director, who would get in touch. The user of @DaniGaravelli replied with a brief thank you. Garavelli, I should note, is the same journalist Aamer Anwar referred to in chapter 7, who contacted him on the subject of the niqab, to whom he gave a comment, and whom he enjoined to seek women who wear the veil and talk to them directly. In the story, which appeared in Scotland on Sunday 22 September 2013, Akhtar and Anwar are both quoted.

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30 You Can Change This, Twitter post, 24 April 2013, 8:13 a.m.; You Can Change This, Twitter post, 24 April 2013, 4:14 a.m.; You Can Change This, Twitter post, 24 April 2013, 4:15 a.m.; You Can Change This, Twitter post, 24 April 2013, 4:17 a.m.; You Can Change This, Twitter post, 24 April 2013, 4:19 a.m.; accessed 17 June 2014, http://twitter.com/ChangeThis_Scot.
31 Liana Evans, Social Media Marketing: Strategies for Engaging in Facebook, Twitter, and Other Social Media (Indianapolis, Ind.: Que, 2010).
32 AminaMWRC, Twitter post, 19 September 2013, 6:07 a.m., accessed 17 June 2014, http://twitter.com/AminaMWRC.
Multiple Stories from the Same Journalist

Observing increased engagement with journalists supports the proposition that Amina experienced a qualitative change in its media relations after the I Speak campaign, but one of the qualities of the relationship between journalists and sources is its endurance—journalists repeatedly using sources for their reportage and sources finding a reliable venue for their material. This section is much shorter than the previous two, because I found little evidence of this. The content search reveals a diffuse array of coverage, spanning many newspapers and broadcasters. This is as much a sign of strength as of weakness—it indicates that Amina receives broad coverage and is not transmitting all of its stories to one audience; but it suggests that its members have not forged enduring relationships with specific journalists who act as the champions that Eyre described.

The journalist mentioned most frequently by name during my interviews was Brown of the Daily Record, who published the first news story on I Speak. Eyre suggested that, “as well as approaching the news desk, they [Amina members] can individually approach Annie and say to her, ‘We’re working on this story. Do you think you’d be interested in that?’” Ansari mentioned being able to do just that, though she spoke of it in hypothetical terms rather than giving examples of instances in which that had happened. According to my news searches, Brown has not published a story on Amina since that initial feature. In our interview, she spoke highly of the campaign’s qualities. She said, however, that the aftercare had proven difficult, referring to a lukewarm response when she contacted members about other stories. Someone from Amina sent an idea to her, but she said that person insisted she use the copy written by an intern at the centre, which was not what the Daily Record needed. I attribute these infelicities to the internal ambivalence over media relations. The newspaper published one story on the centre’s work in the post-I Speak period—a feature on its school visits programme, featuring Ansari and Safa Yousaf (spelled “Yousef” in the
article) at Glasgow’s Castlemilk High School; it was written by Melanie Harvey, not Brown.34

Broadcast current affairs programmes Scotland Tonight (STV) and Call Kaye, later renamed Morning Call (BBC Radio Scotland), have included Amina in repeated coverage. I included two verified appearances on the former and three on the latter in my content search, and it is possible there were unverified appearances, summarised in the annual reports or in my interviews as “lots of coverage”. Ansari and Akhtar referred to these researchers anonymously and collectively, so I do not know if it was the same individual who contacted them each time. From my own experience as a researcher for current affairs radio, I recall that it was beneficial for my position at work to recall “good talkers” from previous interviews, but it was not necessarily the case that I would be the one to call back those sources for subsequent stories. It was just as likely that I would give their names and contact details to a colleague who had been assigned the story. My observations of BBC Scotland suggested that journalists rotated responsibilities and were seldom dedicated to a particular programme. Mazhar Khan of MCS said, as referenced in the last chapter, that journalists used their organisational databases to contact him, but it was “never the same person twice”; whilst not descriptive of Amina’s experience, this contributes to a representation of how journalists in Glasgow interact with source groups. What emerges is an organisational relationship between BBC Scotland or STV and Amina but not necessarily between individual journalists and members such as Akhtar or Ansari.

My expectations in observing Amina’s media work after the I Speak campaign were to find a sophisticated media strategy, increased engagement with journalists, and multiple stories from journalists as indicative of an enduring relationship. The strategy was evident: all of the staff members spoke in strategic terms, demonstrating their absorption of the lessons from Eyre’s media training and their own experiences with journalists. Engagement was difficult to measure, given the imprecision of the subject and the reliance on memory to compare and

34 Harvey, ‘We Show Pupils the Human Side’.
contrast these periods. Participants told me their impression was that they had more contact with journalists than before but not as much as they would like. Certainly, they have not forged relationships that allow them to rely on individual journalists to champion their stories in the newsroom or trust that journalists will call them for help with stories.

Discussion

As a case study, Amina presents an opportunity to observe how a Muslim group positions itself as a resource for journalists. The consistent storyline from members was that their situation changed after the I Speak campaign. My ad hoc content search supports this, showing an increase in published reports, in the range of media covering the centre, and in the sources speaking on behalf of the centre. The search, though, is an unsophisticated tool: it is missing news items which participants reported to me or, through their annual reports, to their membership; and it does not reveal the hidden points of contact which also mark the relationship between journalists and sources. Accounts from my fieldwork—interviews, observation, and documentary analysis—enrich this representation, allowing us to see the work participants did to bring this coverage about.

Consistent with the content search, the pre-I Speak period was not prolific, yet Thomas suggested there was positive engagement and that journalists were willing to hear their stories. Those stories could be abused, though, as Ansari’s encounter with the Herald’s journalist and photographer shows. She was misrepresented, and her trust in journalists was damaged. This influenced her subsequent engagement with journalists as she prepared to publicise I Speak, though it proved not to be insurmountable. Drawing on her own experience and on the training Eyre offered, she set parameters for her engagement, and journalists at the Daily Record and STV respected those.

The training also gave Ansari and other Amina members language to help them engage with journalists and anticipate their needs and responses. Beyond his general advice concerning strategy and the mechanics of relationships, Eyre’s
advice about the presentation of I Speak’s materials and the contact he provided with Brown helped its publicity. It would be an exercise in counterfactual thinking to wonder whether the campaign would have generated the same coverage using the attractive but generic images staff had prepared: Brown’s assessment of the campaign matched Eyre’s, and both have worked for many years as journalists. What we can say from this is that Eyre’s interventions made the material attractive to Brown, and Brown’s article served the campaign well. She was an effective journalist to begin the campaign with: her newspaper is widely read, and the tabloid format and priorities favour a story with visual elements and personal stories. Brown was already familiar with and curious about Muslims. Eyre had mentioned in the training session that once the story appeared in one mainstream outlet, it would be easier to gain successive coverage for the campaign. This was the case through August and September 2012: Amina generated more coverage in those two months than it had over a comparable span before or since.

My content search shows a long gap in coverage from the end of September 2012 to the beginning of January 2013. Interview accounts suggest members were not idle in that period, though they were considering how best to capitalise on the increased profile. Brown’s responses suggest that the previous media protocol may have hindered their engagement. That autumn, they launched the Change This campaign, following the same advice that succeeded with I Speak. As I have noted, this campaign was initially ignored by journalists; what prompted them to contact Amina was the assault and murder in Delhi, which was unrelated except in the broad matter of violence against women. I note that there was no such topicality which helped boost I Speak’s newsworthiness, yet it generated more coverage for the centre. News values, as I have already mentioned, are a useful rubric for diagnosing coverage but remain imprecise as a predictive tool.
Ambivalence and Aspiration

It is helpful to discuss Amina’s media strategy in concert with the members’ interactions with journalists to understand the internal and external dynamics of the centre’s media relations. During my fieldwork with Amina, I noticed a difference in attitude between the two most engaged members of staff, Akhtar and Ansari. Akhtar’s responses were often negative, pointing out what did not happen or how little control or influence she had; Ansari spoke about the urgency of communicating and the positive effects it could bring—not just for the centre, but for its constituency, Muslim women in Scotland. I characterise these dispositions as ambivalent and aspirational, and together, they describe Amina’s post-I Speak engagement with the media.

Akhtar returned several times in our interview to the example of the coverage of the Change This campaign as an illustration of the capriciousness of media relations. Though the promotion was designed effectively, with journalistic practices in mind, it was unsuccessful until events outwith Amina’s control made it newsworthy. The preparations of the campaign and the press releases that had been sent may have helped position Amina well once there was an interest from journalists, but they were insufficient to create that interest. The concept of the peg was for Akhtar evidence that she was vulnerable to the news cycle: “[t]he peg doesn’t matter how good we are [at media relations]—if it’s not a story, it’s not a story. . . . Do they [journalists] have something they can hang it on? And if there isn’t, it’s just going to get ignored.”

Akhtar acknowledged instrumental value in media engagement. She recalled meeting a woman from a funding organisation at a workshop, “and she said, ‘Yes, Smina, I’ve seen you. I’ve seen you on Newsnight, or I’ve heard you on the radio.’ So obviously, people hear. And when they see a funding application with your name on it, they think, ‘Ah! I’ve seen her.’ It does make a difference. It does help.” It has also helped the centre’s relations with politicians: Hanzala Malik moved a motion at Holyrood in June 2013 supporting the campaign and its goal of challenging negative stereotypes. The motion received cross-party
support, and Akhtar attributed this achievement to media attention. However, she said that attention had not come on Amina’s terms.

In contrast, Ansari described positively the centre’s ability to direct media attention. She said that issues which affect Muslim women in Scotland, such as education and employment, should be discussed and that Amina could and should be active in discussing those issues in a public forum. She said the research that Amina sometimes helps with—for example, by arranging focus groups for researchers—and the information the centre receives directly through its helpline give members material which would interest journalists. The peg, for Ansari, was a tool to help them craft more effective communications: she used the term when talking about the debate on Malik’s motion. She spoke of the occasion with a deflated tone of voice, disappointed at the political priorities that seemed to be overwhelming her project; and she said she would issue a press release about it but without much hope that journalists would attend. She had not heard any responses from journalists on the day of our interview, just two days before the debate, and she recalled the lack of media interest at the occasion of the launch at the parliament—an event she had expected to be significant and newsworthy. Nevertheless, she thought that “with what’s been going on in the world, particularly here in the UK, there might be something they want to pick up on. Might be a peg for them.” This was a reference to the murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich just a fortnight earlier.

The story of the citizenship test illustrates the different dynamics of media engagement between Akhtar’s ambivalence and Ansari’s aspiration. In chapter 5, I classified the story as social, not religious; the journalist’s decision to contact Ansari is perhaps idiosyncratic, but we have already seen how journalists in this study easily conflated religion and ethnicity in their conceptions of Glasgow Muslims. Akhtar expressed two reasons for not doing the interview: the changes to the citizenship test had nothing to do with Amina’s remit, and Akhtar was personally uncomfortable in that kind of media encounter (a live television conversation as opposed to a short statement from an organisational perspective). Her reason for doing it was an understanding that, of all Amina’s members, she
had the greatest connection to the story. In addition, she brought up the
interview right after discussing the usefulness of media appearances for her
relations with funders, so the issue of raising Amina’s profile in public may also
have influenced her decision to appear on the programme.

Ansari was certainly conscious of this factor: raising the profile of the
organisation was one of the arguments she offered when convincing Akhtar to
take part in the interview. She was also mindful of the relationship that she was
building with researchers at Scotland Tonight. Whether she was able to respond
helpfully every time they asked is unclear: the content search suggests this is not
the case, but again, there were allusions to broadcast items I could not verify.
Generally, she was concerned that Amina was too slow to respond in a useful way
to media requests. Here was a request she felt the centre could help with, and, as
she put it, “we were being thrown a line.” STV was offering opportunities to
include Amina in news coverage for Glasgow. In order for that relationship to be
properly reciprocal, she had to be able to offer something in return: an
appearance, or help in finding someone appropriate who could appear. She
continued her response by saying, “they’re not going to contact us unless, you
know, they think—” Her unfinished sentence suggests she felt Amina risked
losing the relationship they were crafting and the opportunity to be an authorised
knower in Glasgow if they did not reciprocate with useful comment, clarification,
or contacts.

Though Akhtar was uncomfortable with the live-interview encounter, she
was enthusiastic about the opportunities social media presented. She described
two different audiences, “the public” and “the converted,” with mainstream
journalists as “gatekeepers” to the former whilst Facebook and Twitter gave her
direct access to the latter. Part of her media relations work was assessing which
stories were interesting for “the converted” and which were worth the effort of
trying to communicate with “the public.” Akhtar acknowledged press releases as
the preferred method of communication for journalists, but she also indicated
that they are a significant drain on the centre’s resources: the staff roster is small,
and many press releases they have invested in promoting have not led to
coverage. Ansari was likewise supportive of using social media: for her, being quick and present on these media demonstrated an active engagement with public issues, so that journalists would be aware of what the centre had to say on topical issues and could get in touch for comment, clarification, or contacts. The decision to simplify the centre’s media protocol suggests that Akhtar also recognised the value of prompt online engagement.

The effectiveness of social media is unclear, as the examples listed above show. The series of tweets from April 2013 functioned just like e-mail: the tactic combined the general press release and the targeted pitch—sometimes in the same tweet. The purpose of these communications was to announce that Amina members had knowledge relevant for Scotland about events reported from elsewhere in Britain, which could fulfil a local angle for journalists who noticed the communication and chose to get in touch. The primary content was the link to Amina’s press release, and the phrase “press release” appears in all eight tweets. This seems a clumsy use of the medium, compared with the subtler approach in the October 2013 tweet, which served a similar function without announcing itself as the vessel for a widely released document.35

In the case of Garavelli’s digital approach concerning the niqab, the tweet seems to have been the point of contact that led to their exchange and interview. Garavelli’s published report quotes Farah Khan, a woman in Glasgow who sometimes wears the veil; should the reporter have asked Akhtar for names and should Akhtar have put the two in touch, we could attribute much influence to that point of contact on Twitter. However, it would not be difficult for Garavelli to reach Amina by other means: were the centre not in her newspaper’s database, a simple search on Google would lead her to its website, on which she could find a

35 The literature on the uses of Twitter in journalism is recent and growing; there are some studies which explore interactions between journalists and sources, the most relevant of which for this study is Cision and Canterbury Christ Church University, Social journalism Study 2013 (London: Cision, 2013), accessed 10 June 2014, http://www.cision.com/uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/social-journalism-study-2013.pdf; see also Waters, Tindall, and Morton, “Media Catching”; Peter Verweij, “Twitter Links between Politicians and Journalists,” Journalism Practice 6, no. 5-6 (2012): 680–91; Marcel Broersma and Todd Graham, “Twitter as a News Source: How Dutch and British Newspapers Used Tweets in Their News Coverage, 2007-2011,” Journalism Practice 7, no. 4 (2013): 446–64.
phone number and e-mail address. Why reach them this way? Given the novelty of the medium, the notification of a direct tweet may stand out on the screen in a way that one e-mail among many in an organisation’s inbox may not. Novelty and the experimentation with new methods may also answer the question of why Amina sent a string of tweets to journalists and news organisations rather than sending e-mails or calling what telephone numbers they had. There is no evidence from my content search that any of the account holders included in the first five tweets pursued the press release on sharia councils and turned it into a published story. However, Garavelli’s was one of the accounts included in April, and though she likely did not respond to that press release, she may have recalled that Amina contacted her via Twitter and thus, when she needed the help of its members, reciprocated on that medium. Garavelli, working for an Edinburgh newspaper, was not included in this study, and these tweets occurred after my fieldwork with the centre concluded, so this is only speculation.

It is tempting, given the above discussion, to make “ambivalence” and “aspiration” binary poles and place Akhtar and Ansari as dialectic representatives of these poles. This would be misleading. First, it does not account for other staff members, who are also influential in the dynamics of publicity. Abdalla was the most hostile to mainstream journalists and media representations of Muslims; yet she was keen to build relationships and counter what she considered negative representations. She led the centre’s friendship group, and Ansari noted that the volunteers and clients of that group “were quite vocal” about the centre’s need to participate in media coverage and “quite annoyed” that a slow response was hindering that engagement. Amina Staff had a workmanlike approach to media engagement and spoke of its necessity; she also indicated parts of her work in which media coverage was not appropriate. Her work, concerning violence against women, included sensitive subject matter, and she gave the example of “conversation cafes” she had organised in which women shared personal stories as an event to which she did not want to invite journalists. Thomas, as board secretary, was the most positive concerning past and current media relations; but her position as a city councillor is a consuming one, and she had withdrawn from
much of the centre’s publicity efforts. She encouraged the media training as a way to equip more staff members and volunteers to represent the centre, so she was not opposed to engagement. These positions do not neatly cluster around one or another pole.

Second, Akhtar and Ansari do not exclusively inhabit one position. Though Akhtar was pessimistic about Amina’s ability to direct coverage, she was not advocating a withdrawal from media relations. She discussed its value for her work in terms of her relations with funders and with politicians, and she mentioned the necessity of participating in media coverage. Ansari was energetic in her efforts to publicise her campaign and eager to do more, but she was also cautious in her encounters. Her experience illustrates more poignantly than any story I heard in my research the risks of engaging with the media as a Muslim woman who wears the hijab. She was also disappointed that events she took care in preparing, including the campaign launch at Holyrood and Malik’s motion in the Scottish Parliament, did not receive more coverage from journalists.

Nevertheless, Ansari spoke of “getting in there” to engage with journalists and spread the centre’s messages. She described the centre’s role in terms not unlike the gatekeeper role she disdained in others: “as a Muslim women’s organisation, we’re almost carrying Muslim voices across Scotland and perhaps Muslim communities as well. And we’re almost being that platform between them and . . . wider agencies that are out there.” By comparison, Akhtar saw media communications as a secondary concern to the centre’s development work with communities of Muslim women in Scotland: “Our main purpose is to do the work.” If a particular project or achievement seemed worth sharing broadly, she said, she would take the time to make and issue a press release. “And if it’s taken up, fantastic. If it’s not, fine. It’s not really had an impact on the work. . . . We don’t live for it [media coverage].”
Conclusion

The women who work and volunteer for Amina described the I Speak campaign as the most intense period of media relations in their organisation’s history and a moment of change in how they carried out those relations. I conducted a simple content search from January 2011 to June 2014 to examine these claims. I discovered nearly as many verified news stories during August and September 2012—the first two months of publicity for I Speak—as I found in the preceding year and a half. This supports their claim of a dramatic rise in coverage. In the eighteen months from January 2013 to the end of the search, we see more news coverage and greater diversity of sources and subjects, supporting their claim that the campaign and the attention it generated changed their relations with the media.

The purpose of this study, though, is not merely to count references and draw inferences from them. This is a qualitative fieldwork study, and my intention was to observe and understand the interactions between journalists and sources. My interviews, observations, and documentary analysis interrogated these claims. I feel confident asserting that their media training with David Eyre in July 2012 contributed to their success in publicising the I Speak campaign, and the concepts and language Eyre imparted have influenced their subsequent relations with the media. Members spoke of having a strategy whereas before, according to Thomas, they engaged with journalists intuitively. What helped them generate coverage at the time was the interest in Muslims living in Britain after 9/11, and the question of journalistic interest returns in the post-I Speak period: armed with knowledge about journalistic practices, are Amina members any better able to control their relations with the media?

The ambivalence expressed by Akhtar and others suggested not: no matter how effective their strategy and materials were, they remained subject to what science journalist Andrew Revkin calls “the tyranny of the peg.”⁶ Akhtar did not deny the usefulness of the media in securing coverage and capital for Amina, but

she did not believe in her agency to secure those qualities and, perhaps consequently, she did not characterise it as a priority. The aspiration expressed by Ansari and others indicated that, by investing more in the relationship with journalists, they could become authorised knowers and manage their representation in the media. To do this, Ansari was alert to the need to provide comment, clarification, and contacts in a timely and successful manner. Though she had reason to distrust journalists, she nonetheless endeavoured to supply useful material.

The juxtaposition of these two qualities makes Amina an intriguing case study of the operations of a Muslim group as a source for journalists. The internal dynamics reflect members' uncertainty, and I was interested to note that the Facebook pages for the separate campaigns were taken down even as they streamlined the organisation's media protocol. This took place after my fieldwork had ended, so I was unable to inquire how and why the decision was taken. My speculation is that the group's members are trying different things to determine how they can best balance publicity with organisational control. A follow-up study examining the evolution of Amina's media protocol would be valuable, as the group negotiates its aspiration and ambivalence to occupy a position in Glasgow's news ecosystem.
CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have described relationships between journalists and sources in Glasgow—a particular kind of source, identified by religious ascription. Muslims face unique challenges in their media relations, although I argue that these challenges can and should be compared with the challenges other identified groups face in participating in their media representation. I have argued that the conventional line among scholars studying the representation of Muslims in the British media rests too much on inference concerning the conduct and intention of journalists. These studies miss the agency of Muslims as sources and co-creators of news coverage, and a qualitative examination of their relations—even the relations which are not manifest in the published text—teaches us more about the act of representing Muslims in public.

Scholars of media production have long made the analysis of practice the focus of their attention, and the analysis of journalist-source relations comprises a valuable seam of that literature. Scholars of Muslims and the media have seen a sharp increase in interest in the subject and in material to study since the rise of public concern over Islamophobia and, more acutely, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. However, these scholars have in the main scrutinised published news texts to derive their conclusions about the nature of coverage. This thesis is the first to combine these concerns, analysing Muslims and the media using the methods of media production analysis. This work makes a modest start at the subject, but its originality is clear and its importance cannot be discounted. It is responsible scholarship to turn to the human subjects who are discussed in remote content analysis and ask them about the nature of this representation.

I make makes two other scholarly contributions in this thesis. By locating the study in Glasgow, I have opened up research in a neglected part of the United Kingdom. Research on Muslims in Britain has largely been concentrated in dense
urban regions in England such as London, Birmingham, and the northern mill towns of Bradford, Oldham, and Leeds. Scotland has nothing like the population of identified Muslims that England has, but as the study indicates, it has unique qualities that deserve more scrutiny. Glasgow, within the nation of Scotland, has a high density of Muslims, and its vibrant media culture likewise distinguishes it as a site for my research.

Additionally, this thesis incorporates a highly reflexive anthropological method as a template for scholars who wish to make use of their prior professional experience in journalism. There are advantages to studying media production after working in that milieu, including ease of access, an understanding of the lexicon of participants, and the ability to ask specific questions. It also raises important questions about proximity blindness and ethics, which are layered on top of general concerns in human research about the representation of the scholar to the subject and the authorship of the resulting data. The answer that satisfies me is transparency at all stages: mindfulness of these concerns when designing the project; language during the interview encounters that discloses my position but also makes it clear that I am not an authority whose narrative will trump the participant’s story; and the insertion of reflexive accounts and considerations in the written product. I expand on this point before continuing, in this conclusion, to address the other implications of this thesis.

The focus of this thesis grew from my own experience as a journalist. I began the introduction with an account of my background, not merely as a narrative device or sprinkling of colour but to locate myself as the researcher within the project. I would be remiss not to disclose my experiences to readers when I write about journalism practice as a journalist who practised, about media representations of Muslims as a journalist who represented Muslims in the media, about relationships with sources as a journalist who forged and maintained relationships with sources. Reflexivity is not new, and scholars of all disciplines and descriptions engage with a particular subject because of personal experience
or interest. It is responsible scholarship to reflect in the text on my positionality as a researcher.

I have done more than that, though, in this thesis. Throughout the data chapters, I have accounted for a specific line of questioning I took with participants or a certain judgement about what I was told by referring to my professional past. This practice makes transparent my positionality not merely at the genesis of the research problem but throughout the work. Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat, whose essay and edited volume gave me a structure for this approach, note that to do this is to introduce data to the project and that this must be accounted for as part of what was generated during fieldwork. Gallinat goes further yet, including narratives of her experience as a young citizen of East Germany and a grown researcher visiting these parts after reunification; she then examines these narratives as she would the responses of participants. I have done this in chapter 7, providing several paragraphs that describe work I was assigned in building a network of contacts with sources in Ottawa who identified as Muslim. Like Gallinat, I then examine the narrative critically, identifying features of the work and the relationship which I bring to bear in the ensuing analysis of relationships between journalists and sources in Glasgow.

Throughout the research, I continually asked myself whether such an inclusion was merited. After all, what contribution does a first-person account of journalistic work in Ottawa make to an analysis of journalist-source relations in Glasgow? What convinced me to include it was the fact that I introduced this material so frequently during the fieldwork. I told the narrative to explain to participants why I was undertaking the project, and I used it during interviews to ask source participants if they had been contacted by journalists in this way. I described it to journalist participants, eliciting spontaneous responses that it sounded like a good idea or that their organisation had tried something like that some time ago. It became part of our conversations, and it is from those

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2 Gallinat, ‘Playing the Native Card’.
conversations that I generated the data for this project. In the thesis, I have illustrated what I mean by “building relationships” using examples from my experience. It is not my intention to let auto-ethnography overwhelm the distinct analytical focus of the project, but the inclusion of these elements enriches the written product as it has the previous stages of the research.

In this thesis, I have been reflexive not only about my professional past but about the current work of research. Much of chapter 3 concerns a description of how I conducted the fieldwork. This includes the ideal design, the negotiation of access, and the limitations of access being denied or curtailed. In my introductory preamble, I always began with an account of my past—my role as a journalist, my work building relationships with Muslim sources, and my desire to analyse these relationships in a British, Scottish, and Glaswegian context. Though my research began around the tenth anniversary of 9/11, I did not make much use of this fact: it remained a background issue, and I explained to prospective participants that I was interested in the quotidian rather than the exceptional. I did not want to introduce the language of terrorism myself but observe when participants spoke of it.

The journalists who spoke with me about the project did not question its value or importance. The news organisations that elected not to participate simply did not respond to my requests for access. Representatives of the two organisations that admitted me were interested, asking questions and answering mine. The Herald & Times Group restricted my access to a bare minimum, but this was explained as a consideration of time and workload of the journalists rather than opposition to the project: they had two newspapers and several websites to produce daily and fewer and fewer news workers to produce them. BBC Scotland granted me full access for my initial pilot, including a temporary login for the networked computer system and a photo pass for the security point at the front entrance. Though representatives were offering less time for observation than I was requesting—their offer was two weeks; my request was three months—I took this as a flexible bargaining exchange that could be negotiated in light of my conduct. When my follow-up requests were put off, the
language was vague and allusive, but as I detail in chapter 3, I believe this had to
do with internal management-employee relations and external pressure and
scrutiny rather than any discomfort with the project.

My negotiations with sources and source groups similarly fell into two
categories. Amina, the women’s centre, needed little convincing to take part. My
timing was good: I had contacted the group just after the intense media attention
that accompanied their “I Speak for Myself” campaign of August and September
2012, and they felt they had much to contribute. I cannot properly parse the
failings in my negotiations with a second group: e-mails and telephone
conversations were supportive and cordial, but the members never actually
invited me to see them at work or arrange interviews. My impression is that the
group was loosely organised, that members were split in focus between the
project and their paid work, and that my questions were not a priority for them.
When I changed my focus and made the project more interview-based, my
explanations and negotiations were mitigated by personal contacts: these
participants were largely secured through the recommendation of other
participants—journalists or sources, as well as other community contacts. Below,
I discuss the way these limitations may have constrained the thesis, but I will
build to this by talking first about two of the prevailing ideas in this thesis:
identification over identity and normalisation over exoticism.

**Identification and Normalisation**

I began this thesis with a distinction between identity as a category of
practice and identification as a category of analysis, following Rogers Brubaker
and Frederic Cooper. To make identity a category of analysis risks anchoring
“Muslim” as a fixed quality; those who claim to be Muslim or are labelled thus
must display certain dispositions or characteristics. I have chosen instead to note
the act of claiming this identity—of identifying. It is a verb, characterising a

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process, and it prompts us to ask questions. What are the conditions whereby a news source identifies herself as Muslim? What is the source doing by making this claim; and if she has identified herself or is identified as a Muslim in other circumstances, what is significant about avoiding that claim or rejecting it, as with participants in this study who do not wish to be labelled in a news report as a Muslim politician or a Muslim lawyer? Given the energetic scholarship which discusses the negative associations with Muslims, especially in British news discourse, those who reject the term are rejecting a pall of suspicion that could cloud their work. Framed more positively—as many of the participants who described this practice did—the choice to avoid, restrict, or reject the label is intended to widen the constituency which they represent when speaking to journalists. Politicians such as Hanzala Malik and Humza Yousaf do not wish to represent only Muslims in Glasgow but all residents.

Representation is also at stake for those who do claim the identifier. Fariha Thomas and Asma Abdalla both spoke of being public as Muslims to show the full extent of their participation in public life, thereby countering tropes which suggest that Muslims are reclusive and isolated, do not mix with Western institutions, or restrict women to the domestic sphere. Brubaker and Cooper use the term “political entrepreneur” (also “cultural” and “identitarian” entrepreneur) to describe those who seek to fix identity for political purposes. This has a pejorative slant, but the act of identifying, as Thomas and Abdalla related it, can be an act of deliberate self-assertion rather than the imposition of a categorical definition: Thomas, for example, was careful not to suggest that all Muslim women do or should wear the veil, however it may be understood.

Conversely, examining identification as a process can have the effect of avoiding questions. For my own purposes as a scholar, it lifts from me the burden of insisting on a bounded definition of what a Muslim is. I do not have to rule out certain people or practices by saying, “But so-and-so is not really a Muslim.” To make such a declaration has profound social and theological implications: the

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4 Ibid., 14.
Arabic term *takfir* is to accuse another Muslim of unbelief—on the face of it, a theological act, but one which has been used in both early and current Islam to political and social advantage.\(^5\) It amounts to heresy and, as such, is no light accusation to make; and however inconsequential such a pronouncement might be coming from an outside scholar who is not a believer, it seems an inappropriate act to take. To some, this may indicate a lack of commitment, but I believe it is the only responsible way to study human behaviour in social context, exhibiting what Ninian Smart first labelled "methodological agnosticism", a term that has now become accepted procedure for the sociological study of religion.\(^6\) It is not for me to impose boundaries on the term but to observe when and in what ways people apply the term to themselves and others.

Journalists may also use this practice as a kind of cover. Gaye Tuchman has observed that the practice of attribution is a convention that journalists invoke to support the norm of objectivity? In chapter 5, I record journalist participants who discuss both subjective and external identification of Muslims. The source can claim, "As a Muslim, I . . ." or the police can say, "The suspect is a Muslim man, aged . . ." and the journalists record and report these statements. It is not, in these circumstances, for the journalist to arbitrate whether that is an accurate claim or not, and indeed Editor Print One mentioned her reluctance to interrogate sources too deeply in terms of what the identifier means for them. To do so in every interview might become exhausting, and it is unlikely such contextual information would make its way into the published news copy, as I discuss below.


It is not merely “Muslim” which should be considered as a process of identification rather than a fixed identity. Malik did not complain about being identified as a “Labour” MSP, nor Yousaf as “SNP.” For that matter, the role of “politician” itself is one that people will foreground or downplay depending on circumstances. To identify Aamer Anwar as a lawyer rather than a campaigner (or for Anwar to identify himself as such to me) is to make a decision concerning representation, with elements such as authority, social capital, and vocation-versus-avocation at stake.

“Journalist” is no less a label that is claimed through a process of identification. Another role Anwar inhabits is that of newspaper columnist, which contributes to my compromise designation of “journalistic participants” in the thesis. In setting my terms in chapter 1, I restricted my operational use of “journalist”: although some source participants did things that looked like journalism, such as spreading information through social media, they did not typically identify as journalists. Meanwhile, one participant that I class as a journalist, Arifa Farooq, identifies as Muslim. I was directed to her by a manager at BBC Scotland specifically because of her religious identification, which she foregrounded in work contexts. She made use of her identification as a Muslim after 9/11, when she was able to provide a series of contacts and other information to colleagues, thereby advancing her career and proving her usefulness as a journalist. The tension between the two identifications surfaced in interesting ways, such as her critique of her colleagues—directly, for their language concerning the occupation of Palestine, or indirectly to me in the interview, for their coverage of the Rochdale child grooming story. This does not suggest that the acts of identifying as a Muslim and as a journalist are incompatible but that, as researchers, we should be alert to when participants identify themselves in a particular way.

Implicit in the responses of both those who feel that journalists overuse the term “Muslim” in news copy and those who use it irresponsibly is a desire for normalisation, or making the term less exotic and exceptional. This concept, which I discussed in chapter 2, works at two levels: normalisation in research and
in news coverage. Linda Woodhead, whom I quoted, spoke of doing comparative research to remove the singular quality to problems faced by Muslim populations. In terms of media studies, this means holding the experiences of Muslim source communities against those of other source communities, such as AIDS research and advocacy groups or voluntary sector organisations. The inclusion in chapter 7 of questions from voluntary sector workers at The Gathering—who exhibited such concerns as ensuring their “line” is reflected in coverage, building relationships of trust to ensure responsible and effective coverage, and balancing the provision of useful case studies with the protection of vulnerable clients from the intrusive effects of coverage—suggests that these comparisons are possible. I compare this to the ambivalence of Amina staff, especially the director, Smr Akhtar, who doubted that following the strategy for media relations would necessarily lead to coverage. By discussing her impotence in controlling Amina’s news coverage, she revealed the structural inequality between journalists and sources which was as pertinent to the audience and panellists at The Gathering. The more diverse the series of source communities we can include, the better placed we are to isolate what variables in media coverage are particular to groups that identify themselves or their concerns as Muslim.

I also write, though, of normalisation of Muslims in news coverage. Hanzala Malik made this explicit when he stated that reference to the religion of a Muslim source or subject was overdone. He assumed a shared understanding among the news audience that “Mohammed Javid” identified as Muslim and Asian, much in the way we might read a story about someone named Patrick O’Malley and assume that he identified as Catholic and Irish. Avoiding the labels opens the possibility of misidentification—that we are wrong in our assumption—but employing the labels adds complexes of information which may not be relevant to the story at hand. Muslim participants suggested, in their accounts of double standards, that journalists elect not to identify the Catholic Irish (for example) but do identify the Muslim Asian. Normalisation as Malik

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proposes would thereby encompass the deliberate eradication of “Muslim” as an identifier. *Herald* editor Magnus Llewellyn, meanwhile, said it was his policy to avoid such identification unless it was relevant, a point which several journalists within the organisation repeated. Correspondent Broadcast said he may have interviewed hundreds of Muslims in his career, but he did not know because it did not come up: it was irrelevant for his story. If the religious identification of the source is irrelevant, normalised coverage would be coverage without the inclusion of such identifiers.

As utopian as this model may sound, I found examples in Scottish news coverage that did precisely this, even in stories in which it would arguably be relevant to identify sources as Muslim. As I began my fieldwork, the *Sunday Herald* prepared a series of pieces helpfully organised under the headline “Scotland and Islam” as part of the global reaction to the Youtube video *The Innocence of Muslims.* The video made a critical and, for some, insulting representation of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers, and whilst rallies in cities such as Cairo and Benghazi drew headlines for the violence that followed, people in Glasgow also chose to congregate and express their anger at the film and its consequences. The reporters, who attended the rally in George Square, invoked Muslims generically in the story, but individuals were not typically identified as Muslims. The reader is left to label “Mohammed Aqib Ahmed, 19, from Cambuslang, [who] said he felt ‘outraged’ at the movie” as a Muslim by a process of profiling. Meanwhile, “Bernard Elliot, 61, from Dennistoun” who called himself “a friend of Islam” was present at the same rally; journalists may have described him in this way to clear any confusion on the part of the readers as to whether the Anglo-sounding Bernard Elliot might be a Muslim. Certain people in the article are associated with Islamic institutions such as the Muslim Council of Scotland or the Glasgow Central Mosque, strengthening the implication that they are Muslims without describing them as such.

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
A second example concerns an infant from Peshawar, Pakistan who suffered serious burns in an industrial explosion near his home. The blast killed everyone else in Mohammad Sudais’s immediate family and left him in peril; doctors in Pakistan reached what they said was the limit of their ability to help the boy. His uncle and aunt live in Glasgow, and they ascertained that the Yorkhill Hospital had appropriate facilities and medical expertise to treat the child. They began a campaign, first to lobby the Scottish and British governments to provide an emergency visa for the boy to come across and second to raise money to cover his travel and medical costs. Campaigners dubbed the child “Scotland’s Baby” and “Baby Mohammad”, and the appeal was disseminated widely, using the mainstream media. The Glaswegian uncle, Mohammad Asif, is chair of the Scottish Afghan Society, and one friend in his network is Robina Qureshi, another Glaswegian Muslim and head of the charity Positive Action in Housing: they used their networks to spread the campaigns, and Qureshi became the media contact during the story. Two prominent Glaswegians who identify as Muslims, references to Pakistan and Afghanistan, a boy named Mohammad—the story had plenty of connections to Muslims. One of the pictures on the campaign’s Facebook page showed a woman in a hijab comforting the boy during an operation; the hijab is a visual signifier for the religion. Yet I could not find the word “Muslim” in any of the stories from the beginning of the lobbying campaign to the news of his successful operation. In terms of overt textual reference, the “Muslim” quality of the Muslims in the story was invisible.

The argument for normalising coverage of Muslims, as both sources and journalists told me, is to avoid flagrant or exceptional identification. The first example I cited, therefore, is curious: the story was clearly about Islam, yet none of the sources were labelled as Muslims. The second example, by contrast, was

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not about Islam; if it had taken place during my fieldwork and journalists had mentioned it, I would have glossed it in chapter 5 as “social.” As content analysts have suggested, however, the exceptional coverage of Muslims is also primarily negative. Avoiding the identification of a source as Muslim may, therefore, be a kind of self-censorship in the interests of preserving community cohesion or, more cynically, not appearing to perpetuate Islamophobia. The purpose of the George Square rally was to protest, fitting in with certain tropes of Muslims being “against” things. This could be viewed as negative, though it is also worth noting that the rally was not violent and that the assembled masses represented a broader swathe of the population than one religious community, as Bernard Elliot’s presence confirms.

The second example is different: to identify the protagonists as Muslims might have been flagrant or exceptional, but it would not have associated them with negativity. On the contrary, the “Baby Mohammad” appeal was a positive story about a community—both a micro-community of Scottish Muslims and the macro-community of Scotland as a whole—providing help for a child in need. As such, the decision not to label the story or the sources as Muslim represents a missed opportunity for the entrepreneurially minded. Normalisation of coverage for these participants looks different from the previous model: they do not want their Muslim identification to disappear but rather be rehabilitated. As mentioned above, Thomas and Abdalla said they engaged with the media to provide an alternative representation of Muslims to the dominant negative one, and they further expected journalists to write reports that reflected this alternative. Normalised coverage of Muslims, in this scenario, is coverage in which the Muslim identification is fully present and responsibly portrayed.

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“Responsible” is a plastic term, defined differently depending on the values and expectations of the person using the term. The focus of my thesis is not a normative evaluation of responsible coverage. I note, however, that the word has a particular meaning in media studies that has been discussed in normative terms since Fred Siebert and colleagues’ *Four Theories of the Press*, which included “social responsibility” as one model which presided in liberal democracies. The theory begins from the “major premise” that “[f]reedom carries concomitant obligations; and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under our [United States] government, is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary society.”

Philosopher Jay Newman expanded on the notion of the journalist as educator, which relates to this issue in terms of articulating in coverage how a particular source identifies as Muslim and what the term means—in short, not leaving “Muslim” as what Stuart Hall might call a “floating signifier” but giving it concrete shape.

Social responsibility is articulated as an extension or updating of another model, “libertarianism,” which stresses the independence of journalists and news organisations. Journalists, according to this theory, are not beholden to any institutions and free to report what they choose. This philosophy draws on the Enlightenment liberal ideals of John Milton, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill.

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15 Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press*, 74.
17 Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press*. The other two theories, authoritarian and Soviet Communist, are not salient to this discussion. It is worth noting that this book was drafted in a particular place and at a particular moment in history, namely the United States during the Cold War. As such, they reflect contemporary preoccupations concerning freedom and social control.
and it accounts among other things for the assertively partisan quality of British newspapers. This is the source for counter-arguments to both visions of normalisation described above: that of eliding references to Muslims and that of employing such references responsibly. The ideal-typical libertarian journalists reject the first model because they are not constrained to avoid use of the word “Muslim” if it suits them; they reject the second claim because they do not see it as their job to promote the interests of any community or organisation. They do not interpret the news but merely report it, as discussed above with the convention of attribution. The most basic constructionist perspective says this is incorrect—that description is an act of interpretation. But these are professional myths or ideologies that persist.\(^8\)

These theories are limited in their empirical utility. They are normative theories, relying on ideal types and binaries that are not necessarily as polarised as the theoretical writing suggests. Libertarianism does not apply unfettered even in the British press, which performs its ideological independence and lack of restrictions. Libel laws constitute one limitation, and statutory regulation of broadcasting is another, governing both private and public broadcasters in terms of neutrality and standards of content. The Press Complaints Commission represented a notional check on press independence; a tighter regulatory regime in the wake of the Leveson Inquiry may improve the means by which those who are upset about journalistic process can seek redress. Whereas Parliament has approved and the Privy Council has sealed a Royal Charter proposing such a regime, news organisations continue to cavil about the process. In the autumn of 2014, two regulators were established—one, the Independent Press Standards Organisation, by several UK press institutions and one, the Independent Monitor for the Press, by a group of campaigners for press freedom.\(^9\) That same autumn, the government’s Appointment Committee established the Press Recognition

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Panel, which will audit press regulators according to the standards set out in the Royal Charter.

Many of the constraints listed above are informed by the arguments of social responsibility. We can see this tension between norms in a recent column by \textit{Guardian} media columnist Roy Greenslade concerning the January 2015 attacks on \textit{Charlie Hebdo}: his language evokes that of Siebert and colleagues in evaluating whether his newspaper and other British newspapers should have reprinted the French magazine’s controversial cartoons in an act of solidarity.\footnote{Roy Greenslade, ‘Charlie Hebdo Cartoons: Press Strives to Balance Freedom and Responsibility’, \textit{The Guardian}, accessed 12 January 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/jan/11/charlie-hebdo-cartoons-uk-press-publish.} Greenslade’s arguments surpass adherence to regulations, relying on ethical norms. As I have mentioned in this study, Pierre Bourdieu observes that journalism is a heteronomous field, bound by government regulation, source relationships, and the appetites of the audience.\footnote{Bourdieu, ‘The Journalistic Field’.} Philip Schlesinger, in his newsroom ethnography, notes the political context that conditions the actions of individual journalists, as a matter of both routine decisions and specific examples such as BBC reporting on the Troubles during Margaret Thatcher’s premiership.\footnote{Schlesinger, \textit{Putting 'Reality' Together}.} Such factors contribute to the complex of pressures from media competitors, observers, and the general public on media organisations to act responsibly.

But if the news media in Britain are informed by theories of social responsibility, this is not to say they are always socially responsible. The Leveson Inquiry was established precisely to respond to failures of the police to enforce existing laws and the insufficiency of the Press Complaints Commission to insist on standards of conduct among journalists and proprietors. There are structural, ideological, and practical reasons for this. Private news organisations are commercial businesses interested in making money, and public organisations which compete for audiences with these businesses are drawn into their story selection decisions and discourses. Some news outlets are disposed to view Muslims negatively, whether for reasons of ideology on the part of proprietors or
news staff or an attempt to cultivate audiences which hold to that ideology; content analyses have shown a tabloid narrative of negativity which can, in some cases, be taken to an extreme of Islamophobia and an eagerness to represent Muslims malignly. Nasar Meer has observed that some journalists challenge Islam and religion in general as an assertion of their professional role and independence or an expression of the zeitgeist which deems it acceptable to be critical of religious beliefs.

Finally, journalistic practices and conventions can contribute to less socially responsible coverage of Muslims. The terminology journalists use is conditioned by journalistic style and convention—for example, the impulse to use plain speech and economical language—and the degree of research into daily news articles is considerably lesser than that of scholarly work, especially in conditions of reduced news staff whereby journalists may write three articles a day on different subjects. As I noted in chapter 5, the word carries many associations and does a lot of heavy lifting, and in a short news article or radio broadcast, a single word that conveys dense meanings is a useful one. The news media are constrained by more mundane factors than the meaning of the content: newspapers and magazines are bound by space; broadcast media by time and, in television's case, availability of images; and the internet by interest—the ability to hold attention before readers click away to something else. In the face of these constraints, thorough and nuanced reporting can seem ponderous and get altered or cut on the cusp of publication. I have experienced this during vetting as a journalist, and I observed it at BBC Scotland, as the editor of a televised news broadcast made changes to the text of story introductions minutes before airtime because the programme was “heavy;” the journalists who wrote the text were not present.

Moore, Mason, and Lewis, Images of Islam in the UK; Muir, Petley, and Smith, ‘Political Correctness Gone Mad’.
Particularities of Glasgow as a Research Site

By rooting this study in Glasgow, distinct features of the city as a media environment and a home for Muslims emerge. I examine some of these particularities before concluding the study. The journalists introduced here come across as well-intentioned and moderately well-informed concerning Muslims generally and those living in Glasgow, the area on which and to which they report. As a micro-sociological study, concerned with individuals and generating data from individual accounts with no effort to make broad generalisations, its attention is on their actions and motivations. Nonetheless, these journalists work in the context of a journalistic field, a media industry, and a set of economic and political priorities that can overwhelm their actions. Content analysts have consistently found evidence that the news media represent Muslims in a malign fashion, which suggests that the good intentions of individual journalists are insufficient to bring a more socially responsible kind of journalism to bear on the subject. It is not the purpose of this study to interrogate the structural, ideological, or practical macro-level elements described above, but we get glimpses of them in comments from the fieldwork.

We see from participants’ comments that stories about Muslims—positive, negative, or otherwise—had a place in coverage but only to a limited extent. Editors did not want coverage of Muslims to get “out of balance” with the group’s demographic share—not so much as a strict percentage of Glasgow’s population but as a component of their perceived audience. This is offset, however, by comments from one reporter that his newspaper positioned itself as a tolerant news organisation, in line with liberal middle-class values. Sympathetic stories concerning the sufferings of minorities at home or abroad were in fact helpful in this regard; this would be a fruitful area for reception studies to examine in more detail. This helps transition to the ideological elements: none of the journalistic participants in my study expressed any sympathy for Islamophobic or even aggressively sceptical views, and such approaches were described to me as bad or inappropriate journalism. Annie Brown of the tabloid Daily Record described her
disapproval of the *Herald* reporter and photographer who allowed the misleading photograph of Samina Ansari covering her face (see chapter 8) to be published and not corrected; the article in question was nonetheless sympathetic to the choice of Muslim women to wear the veil in public, so the problem in that instance may better be classed as a practical one. In the category of practices, we saw journalists struggling with the benefit of the economy of language (e.g., “Islamist”) versus the lack of clarity and its accompanying potential for injury. Balancing Ansari’s troubling story about her encounter with the photographer, Catriona Stewart of the *Evening Times* described editors and sub-editors working with her to ensure that a story about a young woman’s experience with forced marriage was treated as sensitively as possible. This is not to suggest that problems in one story are mitigated by exemplary conduct in another but that across the range of cases explored in this thesis, we see examples of both and that it is difficult to generalise.

The limitations in my sample may account for some of this. In chapter 3, I indicate some of the areas in which my participants were consistent in their responses. It remains a small sample, and it is incomplete with respect to journalists. The inclusion of journalists working for private television and the tabloid press may have widened the range of comments. For example, the only journalist to admit that her organisation used the word “Muslim” irresponsibly was Brown of the *Daily Record*. Speaking with more of her colleagues may have exposed more insights of this nature, as would including Scottish editions of UK tabloids such as the *Sun* and the *Scottish Daily Mail*. It is worth observing that the two organisations from which the bulk of my journalist participants were drawn, the Herald & Times Group and BBC Scotland, were the two organisations most frequently mentioned with approval by source participants. It may well be the case that journalists from what we might call the “friendly” organisations were disposed to participate and those from the “unfriendly” ones chose to keep silent. This narrows the range of my sample.

A more rigorous schedule of observation would also have enriched questions concerning these elements, as I would have had the opportunity to
connect what they told me in the context of an interview with what they did when they were working. It is unfortunate that my time with BBC Scotland was curtailed, as the broadcaster was broadly favourable to my presence and many journalists were animated by my questions and keen to help. As well, observing the media strategy of a second source group would have provided a foil, an alternative, or a complement to Amina’s aspiration and ambivalence. Without these data, I have scaled back the scope of the project to an interview-based fieldwork study, and the conclusions must be equal to that modest scope.

How well the Muslims of Glasgow have been represented in my sample also affects the outcome. I have noted in chapter 4 the various ways in which the diversity of Muslims has been captured—by gender, by age, by political orientation. I have also marked ways in which it has been poorly captured, including ethnicity and sectarian identification. Ethnicity is not so much poorly captured in a strict numerical sense, as my small sample tracks closely to the census data, but I had hoped to expand on the dominance of Muslims with Pakistani heritage. This would have disproportionately weighted minority voices but would have led, I think, to interesting results.

Similarly, the Shi’i population is not represented in this study among my participants. Two journalists mentioned the sectarian split in terms of acknowledging that the representative authority of “the mosque” is partial, but none mentioned it by way of stories or story ideas. The website muslimsinbritain.org, which is run by a private individual, Mehmood Naqshbandi, contains a directory of active mosques in Britain. The site lists twenty-eight mosques in Glasgow, of which two are explicitly Shi’i, both located in the Woodlands neighbourhood in Glasgow’s inner north-west.5 Clearly, there are Muslims in Glasgow who identify as Shi’a, but they were not recommended to me by journalists or sources, nor did I find explicit mention of them in news coverage. Elsewhere on his site, Naqshbandi discusses sectarianism as a pernicious force: part of his reason for identifying the sectarian affiliation of

particular mosques is “to push this dishonourable charade into daylight and tackle it with plain-speaking.” We need not subscribe to his diagnosis of virulence to note that differences between communities and the relative dominance of Sunni Islam in Glaswegian and indeed British circles may contribute to the desire of Shi’a to keep a low profile, not least in media relations. The inclusion of Shi’i voices would undoubtedly have brought a novel perspective to the data set, but I believe the thesis offers a reasonable representation of Muslims in Glasgow without their participation. To conclude this point, I will note that Glasgow is a city familiar with sectarianism. As Christian (or notionally Christian) communities work—in concert with institutions such as the Scottish government, police, voluntary sector groups, and football clubs—to counter sectarianism, a narrative is constructed which could provide a communal point of reference for discussing Islamic sectarianism.

The Scottish location for the study may also have had an impact on the quality and character of responses. As I describe in chapter 4, scholars have suggested that Scotland takes a more benign attitude to Muslims or to racialised politics generally. Source participants mentioned a qualitative difference between Scotland and England which was present in the journalism and the conduct of journalists but not limited to this sphere: Bashir Maan especially praised the positive engagement of social institutions such as the police and the council, though he felt this was not the case in the 1950s when he first arrived in Glasgow. It may well be, then, that including a greater swathe of journalists from a more diverse selection of news organisations may still have resulted in a more “responsible” tone from participants, simply because they are part of this differently mannered Scottish environment. This thesis does not prove that relations with Muslims are different in Scotland, though it does contribute data that support the idea. I would not suggest that journalism itself is different in Scotland, but the people who contribute to news—the sources who act and speak

and the journalists who report and publish—and the people who consume it as the audience are Scottish, and this appears to be distinctive.

Glasgow, correspondingly, emerges as a distinctive city in which to conduct research. London or regional centres such as Birmingham, Leeds, or Cardiff are fruitful sites in which to locate a companion study to this one. Populations may vary, of course, the migration histories will differ, and the density of both Muslims and media organisations in this city will not be wholly replicable; but they remain places in which journalists and sources, some of whom will identify as Muslim, operate. Glasgow, as headquarters for many Scottish editions of UK organisations, has a high media density. As the seat of organisations which also position themselves as national news outlets, it is certainly a distinct media environment. A lower density of Muslims contrasted with London or Birmingham put Glasgow at the low end for large regional centres in the UK. Geographer Sadiq Mir, in his study of Glasgow-Pakistani residents, suggests that Glasgow is likely not unique among these centres for the phenomenon of moving to the suburbs.²⁷ What does make the city distinctive for him is that Glasgow-Pakistanis are “better off” than their counterparts in northern England, in terms of employment and also enfranchisement.²⁸

For my purposes, the enfranchisement and the political history of Muslims in the city are significant. As recounted in chapter 4, we have signs of political integration in a series of electoral firsts for Muslims in Britain. Someone needs to be first somewhere, but that it has consistently been Glasgow is noteworthy. This is especially the case because, as I have mentioned, the proportion of Glaswegians identifying as Muslim is comparatively low, and they do not dominate a single constituency (even now, with the disrupted Pollokshields East ward) to the point where a result could be explained away as an aberration owing to an energetic Muslim bloc. Glasgow as a polity seems distinctly open to the participation of Muslims in the public sphere. This makes the city interesting for social research, perhaps as a representation of positive results for those who favour integration.

²⁷ Mir, ‘From Villages 477 and 482 to Suburbia’, 191.
²⁸ Ibid., 192.
What struck me, given this quality, is how few Muslims I encountered working in newsrooms. There is no causal requirement that success in one public field should lead to success in another. I do not believe the media organisations in my study were hostile or closed to the idea of Muslims working there; outside of the hiring scheme that brought Farooq to BBC Scotland prior to 9/11 and Editor Print One’s attempts to cultivate Muslims as contributors to her opinion section, I did not learn of any deliberate efforts to encourage such participation. Interest among Muslims may also be a factor, however: there is a trope that immigrants and specifically Asians living in the West discourage their children from entering journalism as a career. Anecdotally, I can say that among participants in my study and others to whom I speak about my research, this is a problem attributed to other parents and community leaders. Muslims who spoke about the issue lamented that few young people who identified as Muslim chose a career path in cultural production, and several said it was imperative for the representation of Muslims in the UK to change. Journalists in this study described the lack of Muslims in their newsrooms as a deficit which cut them off from a seam of stories and sources.

I am interested in studying this question further, though there is no guarantee, as perhaps the question implies, that more Muslims in journalism will lead to better coverage of Muslims. Two journalists told me with some intensity that fixing the representation of Muslims—as journalists and as sources—was all well and good but that their enduring concern was to fix the representation of women. Media scholars have studied what difference women make in newsroom environments, especially where they attain editorial leadership. The results of content analyses are mixed: women do not necessarily write different published copy or report different stories; however, these scholars raise the point that the

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differences they seek may not be evident in a content analysis and that ethnography is a more appropriate methodology to assess the impact of diversity. Tracy Everbach’s ethnography of a US daily newspaper with an all-female editorial staff offers a richer, more subtle portrayal of newsroom dynamics and the relationships in that environment. There are, of course, many ways of being female, just as there are many ways of being Muslim. Moreover, women make up a proportion of the population in Britain that Muslims simply do not approach. If a critical mass is what is required to “make a difference” in the newsroom, it is unlikely this would be achieved.

Qualitative case studies are well-placed, however, to examine the impact of even one Muslim in a single work environment. The ways in which journalists act as resources for their colleagues can spread influence in ways that quantitative analysis can easily miss. From my own experience with CBC Radio in Ottawa, I found that a colleague who identified as Muslim was a powerful check on all of our reporting and a source of precisely the elements—clarification, comment, and contacts—that compose the role of sources in the journalist-source relationship, as I argue in this thesis. Farooq described to me filling a similar function within BBC Scotland. The experience of a single journalist in a single newsroom is thin gruel for the substantial work of identifying (for the scholar) or effecting (for the political entrepreneur) systematic change, but it can change the culture of that particular newsroom. Tracing that impact through close ethnographic study could yield a general picture of journalists as resources for colleagues in their particular fields of interest, with a specific interest in how their religious identification intermingles with their professional identification.

As noted above, the good intentions and responsible use of language from individual journalists still confront the structural, ideological, and practical realities of journalism. The question of what impact Muslim journalists can make is similar to that of the importance of observing, recording, and analysing the hidden points of contact between sources and journalists, which has been the

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focus of this thesis: in the end, why does it matter? Both occur at the micro-level of individual activity, and the latter is by definition invisible to the public. Orthodox content analysts, political or identitarian entrepreneurs, politicians, and indeed some journalists have described the problem of negative representation of Muslims in the media. This problem is located in the news texts that are published, offering aggressive coverage or merely banal reporting that nonetheless acts as a carrier for Islamophobic sentiments that can be socially harmful. By this reasoning, if a story does not come through, or if a source provides contact details for another source whom the journalist ultimately quotes, this is of less consequence. Put more starkly in the context of reporting on Muslims, nice reporters with several important Muslims in their contact files do nothing to counter negative representations if these features do not surface in the published text.

This view, however, ignores sociological study of the influence of sources on journalists. The contact journalists have with sources provides the continuing stream of content which journalists need to prepare their copy, and this exchange is a reciprocal one. In different ways, Pierre Bourdieu, Jeremy Tunstall, and Herbert Gans have identified the ways in which journalists are beholden to sources for the imprint on society that is delivered in news coverage. The educating impact of contact over time is both identifiable and measurable; though this study was not conducted on the timescale necessary to observe this impact, it remains a worthwhile target for sociological study. The circuitous paths through which such changes would travel—within source organisations from senior staff through the public relations personnel, from reporters through editors with the potentially competing interests of other reporters, other sources, and the news proprietors—are dense, but they comprise another way to illuminate the social component of organisations, both independently and in relationship with other organisations.

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Considering that the majority of news organisations in Scotland are private, changes to media practice at the structural level are difficult to achieve. As noted above, the regulatory landscape of Britain is unsettled, as the ripples from the Leveson Inquiry extend and as proprietors, observers, and politicians act and react. Regulation is a devolved issue, but the Scottish Government indicated it would abide by the terms of the Royal Charter; no independent regulator for Scotland has emerged yet. The levers with which to institute, for example, some standard of representation as per the discussion of normalisation of coverage above are not yet in place. I will note that, although much of the focus of the Leveson Inquiry was on the issue of phone-hacking and the testimonies of celebrities and politicians, several Muslim groups made submissions to the inquiry concerning Islamophobic content.\textsuperscript{33} These submissions are summarised in the inquiry’s report under the title—perhaps indicative of the frame through which Muslims, Islam, and Islamophobia are often represented—“Ethnic minorities, immigrants and asylum seekers.”\textsuperscript{31} That these submissions are part of the record of the inquiry gives hope that they might be influential in guiding future thinking on the matter. A study such as this one is valuable in such a context, as it marries the reflections of members of the Muslim population with considerations from journalists about how the act of representing Muslims is accommodated in media practice. Islam Channel, a private television station with a particularly religious focus, proposed an Alternative Leveson in January 2012; its support broadened to a coalition of sympathetic scholars, journalists, politicians,


\textsuperscript{31} Leveson, Leveson Report, sections 8.34 to 8.52, 668–673.
and other parties, but the attempt—with no authorised foundation and ultimately abortive—was more of a publicity stunt than an attempt at imposing a new standard. The publicity it provided, though, prompted discussion of the compelling argument that British residents who identify as Muslim were among the victims of wanton journalistic practice.

Sociological study, like journalism itself, offers a unique window into processes that are not necessarily public but which affect public intercourse. Source strategies are not typically visible to the person scrolling through news headlines on her smartphone or, to invoke the clichés of previous generations, reading the morning newspaper with a cup of coffee nearby. Nonetheless they have a bearing on the content that is published as well as the news workers who create and publish. This is why I speak of sources as co-creators in media production. This study shows Muslim sources to be sometimes successful and other times not in their part of the work, just as other source communities negotiate their control over coverage. The insights contained herein reveal one way in which those in Glasgow who identify as Muslim are exhibiting agency concerning the socially significant question of the representation of Muslims in Britain.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Journalist/Source</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Audio</th>
<th>Snowballed</th>
<th>Male/Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdalla, Asma</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Amina (Staff)</td>
<td>29-Apr-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>30 min</td>
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<td>Akhtar, Smina</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>29-Apr-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>Amina Staff</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Amina (Staff)</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>25 min</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amina Volunteer</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>Ansari, Samina</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Amina (Staff)</td>
<td>10-Jun-13</td>
<td>Interviewer's office</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>Anwar, Aamer</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Independent Firm (Lawyer)</td>
<td>10-Oct-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>60 min</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>Beltagui, Salah</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Muslim Council of Scotland (Director)</td>
<td>19-Sep-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bradford, Eleanor</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>BBC Scotland (Correspondent)</td>
<td>07-Nov-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Braiden, Gerard</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Herald &amp; Times Group (Correspondent)</td>
<td>06-Dec-12</td>
<td>Café</td>
<td>45 min</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brown, Annie</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Daily Record (Correspondent)</td>
<td>26-Sep-13</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>35 min</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Name</td>
<td>Journalist/ Source</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
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<td>Correspondent Broadcast</td>
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<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Café</td>
<td>60 min</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Correspondent Print</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Café</td>
<td>25 min</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>Director Activist</td>
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<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>45 min</td>
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<td>Editor Print One</td>
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<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Café</td>
<td>45 min</td>
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<td>Editor Print Two</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
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<td>Eyre, David</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Oxfam (Media Officer)</td>
<td>14-Feb-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>40 min</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>Farhat, Yasmin</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Amina (Vol)</td>
<td>14-Feb-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>25 min</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Farooq, Arifa</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>BBC Scotland (Reporter)</td>
<td>29-Nov-12</td>
<td>Participant's home</td>
<td>75 min</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khan, Mazhar</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Muslim Council of Scotland (Director)</td>
<td>19-Sep-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>60 min</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>Khan, Robina</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Amina (Vol)</td>
<td>14-Feb-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>30 min</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leask, David</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Herald &amp; Times Group (Correspondent)</td>
<td>06-Dec-12</td>
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<td>Llewellyn, Magnus</td>
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<td>Herald &amp; Times Group (Editor)</td>
<td>06-Dec-12</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>30 min</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Journalist/ Source</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Interview Date</td>
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<td>Maan, Bashir</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Retired (Glasgow City Councillor)</td>
<td>01-Oct-13</td>
<td>Participant's home</td>
<td>60 min</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>MacDonald, Alison</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>BBC Scotland (Senior Journalist)</td>
<td>07-Nov-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>25 min</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Malik, Hanzala</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>10-Oct-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>35 min</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Rastall, Hannah</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>14-Feb-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
<td>30 min</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saeed, Osama</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Al Jazeera Network (Media officer)</td>
<td>15-Apr-13</td>
<td>Skype</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Stewart, Catriona</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Herald &amp; Times Group (Correspondent)</td>
<td>12-Jun-13</td>
<td>Café</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas, Fariha</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Amina (Director), Glasgow City Council (Councillor)</td>
<td>01-Oct-13</td>
<td>Participant's office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yousaf, Humza</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>Phone</td>
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APPENDIX B

DATA SHEET AND CONSENT FORM
Ethical Consent Form – Data Sheet

Title of Study: Points of Contact: An Ethnography of Journalist-Source Relationships among Muslims in Glasgow

We would like to invite you to participate in this postgraduate research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The goal of this research is to explore the dynamic relationship between Scottish Muslims and the mainstream media in Glasgow. The media have significant influence on the readers, listeners, or viewers concerning both their neighbourhood and the world at large. Questions of integration and multiculturalism are prominent in discussions in society right now, and this research hopes to probe how those questions are being addressed with regards to Muslims. As communities of Muslims grow and change, I want to know what part they are playing in telling the stories of Scotland: do they speak with reporters and offer stories about their communities? Do they train as journalists and enter staff ranks as writers, presenters, and editors? And in Scottish newsrooms, how do story assignments and story gathering reflect the changes described above? If it is the case that participation among Muslims is on the rise, what has that meant for newsroom culture?

To help answer these questions, I am seeking to recruit media professionals from all levels of the newsroom: reporters and editors. I am also seeking Muslims in Glasgow who might be considered sources for journalists – for example, religious leaders, programme directors, and think-tank researchers. Should you be willing to participate in this study, we would arrange for a convenient time to meet for an interview. This could take anywhere from half an hour to an hour, with the possibility of further interviews if there is more yet to discuss that surfaces during the interview. The interview may be recorded; if so, it will only be for the purposes of accuracy, and once the interview has been transcribed, the recording will be destroyed. Certainly, I will be taking notes during the interview.

I am happy to offer participants a copy of the report, when it is completed. Participants may be curious about how their views have helped shape the discussion. I am able to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the material of our interviews. Given the public nature of some of the people who might be involved in this study, I will ask whether you wish to be publicly identified – either the workplace as a whole or the participant in particular. This is not an essential element of the research, and your decision to remain anonymous will not in any way affect your participation in the study.

Your data will be kept securely in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Such protection is especially important in the case of this study, as it includes material considered in the research community to be “sensitive”: this includes information about ethnicity and religious beliefs or other beliefs that might inform your ethical and cosmological point of view. The data will include your name and details as well as the transcript of our interview. This data will be confidential: only myself and my supervisor will have access to both the anonymised material and the key that connects this material with your personal information.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. In addition to withdrawing yourself from the study, you may also withdraw any data/information you have already provided up until it is
transcribed for use in the final report (30 April 2014). If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

Should you have any questions, myself or my supervisor would be happy to speak with you in more detail. If this study has harmed you in any way you can contact the University of Edinburgh using the details below for further advice and information:

Researcher: Michael Munnik (m.b.munnik@sms.ed.ac.uk) 07905 219355
Supervisor: Prof. Hugh Goddard (hugh.goddard@ed.ac.uk) 0131 650 4165

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to 30 April 2014.
- I consent to my interview being recorded.
- I consent to allow the researcher to identify me and the institution for which I work in this report.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Participant’s Statement:

I ____________________________________________________________________________

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed ___________________________ Date ___________________________
APPENDIX C

MEDIA STRATEGY NOTES

from AMINA-Muslim Women’s Resource Centre media training session with David Eyre (Oxfam/Govanhill Community Trust), July 2012
Message
‘I Speak For Myself’ is a national campaign that empowers Muslim women to share personal messages with fellow Scots so that, together, we can challenge damaging stereotypes.

Audiences
1. People who hold stereotypes
2. Muslim women
3. General public
4. Politicians
5. Young people
6. Muslims
7. Journalists
8. Women’s agencies
9. Funders

Media to target

- Audiences 1 + 3: Scottish national newspapers, Guardian, Scottish national TV & radio, social media, local media for roadshow events
- Audiences 2 + 6: Social media, Sisters magazine, Islam channel, Awaz, Muslim newspaper, 15-21 magazine
- Audience 4: Holyrood magazine, BEMIS newsletter, Third Force News, social media
- Audience 5: 15-21 Magazine, TES, GLOW blog, MTV, Radio 1, social media
- Audience 7: NUJ Journalist magazine, NUJ Social Media, Scots Press Club FB page / mailing list
- Audience 8: Scottish Women’s Coalition newsletter, Amina newsletter, Engender blog
- Audience 9: Third Force News, Scottish Government newsletter, Voluntary Action Fund newsletter

Targets
During the course of the campaign to ensure that all media listed above receive media releases for each peg listed below.

Pegs
- Launch of campaign at Scottish Parliament
- Unveiling of campaign billboard
- Party leaders pledge
- Roadshow events
- Local marches / sponsored walks
- International Women’s Day
- Refugee Week
- 17 Days of Action
APPENDIX D

PUBLISHED CHAPTER: AUTHOR’S FINAL SUBMITTED EDITS

CHAPTER no.

BRITISH JOURNALISTS, BRITISH MUSLIMS: ARGUMENTS FOR “A MORE COMPLEX PICTURE” OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP

Michael Munnik

Research on Muslims and the media in Britain is not immune to what Simon Cottle has termed “orthodoxy”—tracks lain, often by groundbreaking researchers, that establish a layer of assumptions from which subsequent researchers may have a hard time departing. ¹ As I will show in this chapter, studies often focus on the question of representation, and the methodology employed typically blends qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the news text. From this analysis, authors conclude that Muslims in the British media are misrepresented, underrepresented, poorly represented, or malignly represented, a conclusion that fits into what Paul Marshall and his colleagues consider a broad pattern of religiously illiterate journalism, in which journalists “get it wrong”. ² This thesis concerning the representation of Muslims receives significant ballast from the writings of Edward Said, first in his polemic on academic discourse, Orientalism, and subsequently in his more popular critique of contemporary journalism, Covering Islam.³ These volumes critiqued a “West and the rest” approach to studying culture, politics, and society, though the effect of Said’s critique was to inhabit and reify this essentialised dichotomy. For all the controversy which has followed, Said’s thesis has had a lasting influence on scholars in a variety of fields.⁴

Current scholars examining the issue of Muslims and the media recognise the debt they owe Said and his cohort for publicising an important conversation. However, as more data are gathered and researched, and critiques of media representation feed back to subsequent reportage, some of these scholars are pointing out the insufficiency of Said’s dichotomy. As Cemil Aydin and Juliane Hammer have observed,

it seems important at this point in time to go beyond this sharp and artificial distinction and to construct a more complex picture of the ways in which Muslims and media are connected and mutually influenced.⁵

This observation informs the chapter that follows: after considering how the textualists in this field have constructed their argument, I will highlight recent examples of scholarship that, whilst remaining text-based analyses of Muslims and the media, reveal a softening of the “sharp and artificial distinction” of erroneous journalists from misrepresented Muslims. Aydin and Hammer write of connection and mutual influence, and I will conclude by pointing to studies that augment text-based
analysis with ethnographic methods as a way to understand better the dynamic relationship between British journalists and British Muslims.

The Textualist Orthodoxy

Said’s *Covering Islam* focuses not on Islam per se but on “Islam”—a mighty discursive construction absorbing and reflecting the values and desires of whoever invokes it. Moreover, Said does not mean to suggest that a ‘real’ Islam exists somewhere out there that the media, acting out of base motives, have perverted. … [T]he media’s Islam, the Western scholar’s Islam, the Western reporter’s Islam, and the Muslim’s Islam are all acts of will and interpretation that take place in history, and can only be dealt with in history as acts of will and interpretation.”

Whether those motives are base or otherwise, though, the examples Said presents of “the Western reporter’s Islam” are couched in the language of a problem. This “rhetorical totalitarianism” resurfaces in the conclusions of Said’s academic legatees. For Elizabeth Poole, the media are “an instrument of public ideology [which] demonizes Islam,” and “Muslims have a higher news value when they are a source of problems for the dominant majority.” Poole’s contemporary, John Richardson, sets his own study to show how the reporting of elite (majority white) broadsheet journalists is implicated in the production and reproduction of (racist) attitudes, beliefs, sentiments and practices and the potential effects of this reporting on the lives of Muslims.

Both scholars conducted their research in the mid- to late-1990s, contemporary with and informed by the discussion of Islamophobia fostered by the Runnymede Trust, a think tank concerned with race equality in Britain. The Trust’s 1997 report contrasted “open” and “closed” views of Islam and warned of the challenges closed views posed for British society. The report and its public reception effectively gave the neologism “Islamophobia” its imprint on the public consciousness. The report’s authors pointed to the media as a significant source of closed views, and it is in this context that Poole and Richardson separately examined what British newspapers were saying about Muslims. Richardson restricted himself to the broadsheet or quality press, and examined a narrow window of coverage over four months; Poole looked at three years’ worth of coverage in both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers. Both sets of samples drew from the full ideological spectrum of the British press, and both researchers used quantitative and qualitative methods to test their hypotheses. They screened their selected publications for stories which referred to Islam, Muslims, or some other element associated with the religion or its adherents; they then categorised these stories and looked for common issues, such as terrorism or education; the most prevalent themes became the subject of a more intensive discourse analysis to determine how the newspapers covered them—the language
used, the angles employed, the assumptions present in the articles. Poole also organised focus groups to test her interpretations.

The results are perhaps not surprising. They learnt that Muslims were seldom discussed in the news, and when they were, it was frequently in a negative light. The issues in which Muslims’ religion was noted or discussed seemed to suggest an exceptional quality to Muslims—of dress, of education, and of sympathy to the state—as well as a perceived lack of fit with mainstream British values. Islam itself was frequently mentioned in comparison to other religions (typically Christianity) rather than in its own right. Terms such as “terrorist” and “fundamentalist” featured prominently, although they would reach a higher degree of salience after the attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001. Overall, these scholars found a generally negative representation of Muslims in British reporting.

These were the first sustained examinations of the subject in a British context, and their timeliness in relation to 9/11—Poole’s monograph was going to press as the attacks occurred—provided both a high degree of interest in the research and an opportunity to build the frame through which future studies of Muslims and the media would be considered. Kerry Moore and colleagues updated the results several years on, after Britain had experienced its own eruptions of terrorism committed by people with religious and explicitly Islamic motivations. In large part, their findings supported those of Poole and Richardson and emphasised a shift in preoccupation from stories about security and terrorism, which hit a perhaps obvious peak in 2002, to stories about whether Muslims “fit in” with British culture and its values. The authors tried to avoid analysing their data through value judgements such as “positive” and “negative”. Indeed, they allowed that media language in their sample was not typically inaccurate: stories that use the words “terrorist” were usually about terrorism; likewise words such as “fundamentalist” or “Islamist” often related to groups or individuals articulating a particular and corresponding strain of Islam within the public sphere. The authors instead blamed story selection for such abrasive depictions, implicitly suggesting that a broader range of stories would associate Muslims with a broader range of terms.

Recent surveys tend to continue on the same trajectory. Julian Petley and Robin Richardson collected a volume, published in 2011, that combines theoretical contributions with text-driven case studies, one of which I discuss below as indicative of a promising new direction. In the same year, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin presented a wide-ranging survey of how media frame Muslims. More impressionistic than systematic, the authors struggled under the diversity of their material to hold to their thesis that journalists, producers, and even toy manufacturers are harmfully misrepresenting Muslims. Following the chain from Poole of 2002 back to Said of 1978, Morey and Yaqin suggested that their book “is about the origin, circulation, and utility of an epithet and the way the term has come to signify a political problem to be solved.” Meanwhile, Poole herself returned to the subject, reprising with Kim Knott and Teemu Taira a 1982 study from Leeds University. The project examined the representation of religion in general, but the authors easily demonstrated increased attention to Islam as compared with thirty years ago. The requirement to reproduce the original survey’s methods hindered the authors, though; they were bound to consider a small slice of the British media. Taira et al. wrote that they did not wish to generalise from their “limited sample”; but this must then temper their conclusion that,
As a comparative tool, the study suggests much about the changes in reporting on religion from 1982 to the present; but it lacks the methodological muscle to make definitive statements about the representation of Muslims in current British media.

Linguist Paul Baker is on firmer soil in this regard. He and his colleagues have used advanced software to produce what they call a “Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies” approach to this topic, which “give[s] analysts an initial focus for their data, lending credence to generalizations, and countering the criticism that researchers within CDA [Critical Discourse Analysis] supposedly ‘cherry-pick’ small amounts of data that support preconceived ideologies.” Though similar in form to the studies mentioned above, their database is massive and thorough, and the patterns and context of words such as “Muslim” are explored with rigorous linguistic scrutiny. Their research picks up the questions posed by Poole and Richardson and addresses them convincingly. Their conclusions generally agree with their forebears: both the quantitative and qualitative analyses “found that Muslims were frequently constructed in terms of homogeneity and connected to conflict.” This result may be due at least partially to the prevailing orthodoxy with which I opened this chapter: Baker et al. acknowledge that they did not approach their material value-free. All of these works share an orientation which lines journalists in binary opposition to Muslims. Conclusions about how deliberate or even conscious the distortions of journalists are vary from work to work; what they share is the view that journalists distort in a harmful way.

Troubling the Mix

This orthodox distinction may look unfamiliar to those who have practiced journalism. Indeed, media scholar and former journalist Barbie Zelizer notes that the portrayal of journalism she encountered in her graduate studies “failed to capture the life [she] knew.” Zelizer examines how various academic disciplines scrutinise journalism, with the intention of encouraging scholarship that better accounts for the practices and priorities of journalism. The linguists and sociologists described in the section above conform to the lines Zelizer draws about these disciplines generally: that they exhibit a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the journalistic profession and its practitioners that start to mirror the accusations those scholars levy at journalism in its treatment of Muslims. One assumption of journalistic practice is the insistence that journalists be suspicious of every community on which they do (or could) report, sometimes heroically characterised as a “watchdog” of institutions or, as Denis McQuail phrases it more modestly, a “monitorial role.” Negative reporting about Muslims is therefore not necessarily exceptional but a normalised element of a broader pattern of behaviour.

Before considering the context in which journalists prepare their coverage, I wish to highlight scholarship that uses no more than the tools of the textualists to disturb the orthodoxy of a binary opposition between journalists and Muslims in Britain. In the studies listed above, authors note examples which run counter to their thesis; this, too, has a precedent in Said’s work, when he outlines the qualities of “antithetical writers”. Poole and Taira et al. depict this counter-narrative in terms of positive and negative coverage, where positive stories or storylines are marginal to an overwhelming core of negative representations. The main focus of their analysis is on the general trend; but some scholars turn their attention to such idiosyncratic reporting, investigating whether it is a register of change.
One way to accomplish this is to count and account for instances of participation—Muslims as sources, commentators, and journalists. Tariq Modood noticed a contrast between the media representations of British Muslims from the time of the outcry over the publication of Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses* to the attacks of 9/11. In the first instance, Muslims were absent as public commentators and columnists. By the second instance, there were a few—perhaps, Modood suggested, because Muslims were regarded as problematic and therefore journalistically interesting. The development of British Muslims’ presence in the media allowed practitioners of the religion to take some agency in the public articulation of Islam. In the subsequent decade, the phenomenon has developed further still. Modood, with colleagues Nasar Meer and Claire Dwyer, surveyed reporting on the comments about women and veils from then-cabinet minister Jack Straw in 2006; they noted “an observable pattern of Muslim perspectives… [which] marks a positive contrast with the more limited range of argumentation (publicly reported at least)… at the time of the Rushdie affair.”

The authors sorted the Muslim sources appearing in these news texts into three types: “angry, ambigous, and approving of Straw’s comments. What is crucial to note is that this amounts to more than simply including Muslim voices of fundamentalist-anger.” This expansion from views typical of the Saidian dichotomy included surprising sources: Meer et al. noted that the tabloid *Sun* included “not only sensationalist Muslim voices” but also three Muslim women, quoted at a length atypical of tabloid conventions, giving “a degree of nuanced voice to Muslim women who hold broadly critical perspectives of Straw’s comments.” Considering that the *Sun* is among the few news organisations included in the Leeds group’s longitudinal study, it is difficult to square Meer et al.’s suggestion that the variety of discourses in British media has shrunk. At the least, it shows the mercurial nature of text-based content studies: depending on when you conduct them and which media you include, your range of data may be more limited or more expanded.

Timing of data collection can also produce results that might seem contradictory, were it not for the necessarily multi-faceted and collective nature of journalism. As mentioned above, the 9/11 attacks occurred as Poole was preparing her book, *Reporting Islam*, for publication. She monitored reports of the event and its aftermath over one week in the two broadsheets she had included in her study, the *Guardian* and the *Times*, applying her methods and getting at least a first draft of how Islam was reported, which she included in her preface. Notably, the “threat within” and freedom of speech storylines which she observed in her main study continued to dominate coverage and analysis, but a third trend she identified was “a seemingly genuine effort to support Muslims, with more space devoted to Muslim voices.” Although the *Times* continued to conflate Islam and Islamism, Poole noted a lexical shift from “terrorist” to “Islamist.”

This lexical shift suggests another way to register change in British journalism—by noting reflexivity of journalists through evidence in the news texts. Just over a fortnight after the attacks, the *Guardian*’s readers’ editor, Ian Mayes, acknowledged that “the paper does not always radiate great understanding of Islam” and that “the *Guardian* is re-examining the language it uses in its coverage of the international crisis to try to avoid terms which may appear to imply that the paper equates terrorism with Islam.” As Mayes portrayed it, letters from readers alerted the newspaper’s staff to the effects their language has on people’s understanding of issues. Familiarity, so the thinking goes, breeds accuracy; and in such sensitive times, *Guardian* editors and publishers deemed it important to review how they phrased things. Perhaps efforts such as this led to the greater lexical clarity that Moore et al. observed in the years following 9/11: whether story selection remains mired in the convention of Islam as a problem, the way journalists write about it has improved.

This more attentive consideration of journalistic language and approach is evident in news texts from Scotland’s *Herald* during its reporting of a missing girl from the Isle of Lewis. Anthea Irwin analysed the coverage through headlines and photo captions, from the initial suggestion that “Island Girl” Molly Campbell had been abducted by her father to subsequent suggestions that Misbah Rana
fled Scotland to join the part of her divided family now living in Pakistan. For Irwin, the choice to employ the name that either her mother uses (Molly) or her father uses (Misbah) indicated reflexive coverage from journalists who had to reassess “how they had ‘read’ the situation”. The headlines from the first week of coverage show this progression: from Tuesday’s “abducted”, used without attribution; to Thursday’s “did not abduct” in quotation marks, now attributed; to Friday’s “abducted”, with quotation marks now throwing doubt on the term; and finally Saturday’s headline, “It was my choice. I like it here and want to stay with my father”, quoting Misbah. Irwin astutely asked, “does it empower Misbah and give her the voice she has not had thus far? Or does it allow papers to avoid deciding on the wording for headlines that, at least for some of them, are in blatant contradiction to what they had been reporting just a few days earlier?” Irwin’s question is answerable, but not through a strict textualist approach to the material. Although she, like Meer et al. above, has uncovered examples that disturb the orthodoxy of an essentialising journalistic discourse, she has raised as many questions as she has answered. The question of interest for this chapter is what is the context in which journalists consider Muslim sources in their stories? To do this, we turn to Aydin and Hammer’s call for “new scholarly insights as well as more interdisciplinary approaches.”

New Approaches

Aydin and Hammer are not alone in demanding a broader palette of approaches to the question of media studies. Greg Philo, one of the architects of the Glasgow University Media Group, has questioned the sufficiency of text-based studies for deriving conclusions about the nature of media in society. He observes:

a need to develop methods which can trace the communication of messages from their inception in contested perspectives, through the structures by which they are supplied to and processed by the media, then to their eventual appearance as text and finally to their reception by audiences.

This chapter does not consider reception studies, but ethnographic analysis of source transmission and media production would allow scholars to access some of the motivation and the structural processes behind the creation of these news texts.

This is not always an easy process to reveal. Linguist and practicing journalist Allan Bell took advantage of his position to illustrate several of the steps listed above: he used physical sheets of typed text marked with pen to trace news copy from the text a journalist submitted through the editor’s scrutiny (here, the editor was Bell himself) to the final published text. He revealed what had changed, how it had changed, and, to the best of his recollection, why he made the changes he did, as well as the effect of the semantic changes. Such methods pull us back from the reification of the published news text as the essential unit of analysis. Bell noted back in 1991 that the encroachment of computers and the ease of deleting and changing text electronically would make this process increasingly tricky to document. Technology may also deliver the means to track these changes, as Daniel Perrin and colleagues experiment with “progression analysis”, but this is a dense and complicated method to employ.
Meer and Modood chose the logistically easier method of interviewing journalists and asking them to reflect on their coverage. They asked senior national journalists whether criticism of Islam in the media was racist in nature. Among their respondents was a journalist from “a leading centre-left national newspaper” who highlighted his publication’s “appointment of a young Muslim woman as its religious affairs correspondent.” The respondent saw the fruits of this appointment in her coverage of the hajj, which he called “‘terrific’”: in his words, “she was able to report pilgrim voices, and these were young British people, they were from the North of England, from London… [and they were describing] what the hajj meant to them, what their Muslim identification meant, i.e. voices you don’t normally get in a national newspaper.” This journalist recognised the exceptional nature of the inclusion of unexceptional voices—“ordinary” British Muslims who are in the news not because they have burned flags, bombed buses, or demanded separate schooling. Whilst it is not “normal” coverage, the respondent approved of it and even considered it to give the newspaper a competitive advantage.

Alaaddin Paksoy has wedded interviews with journalists to the more familiar methods of media analysis outlined in the previous section. Paksoy examines the discourse of British news media in their coverage of Turkey’s course of accession to the European Union. He is interested in how the term and the idea of “Muslim” are introduced into coverage and the effect their inclusion produces. He conducted a quantitative and qualitative survey of select news media, examining how frequently and in what ways “Muslim” appeared in relation to Turkey and the EU, and he concluded that the term was frequently employed to highlight difference, even when the tone of the article was “Turkophilic”, or in favour of Turkey’s accession. Yet he also interviewed the journalists who produced these texts, asking them why they used the term and what they understood it to mean. His respondents appealed to the general salience of the term in a post-9/11 context, to its relevance to the story, and to professional practices or media logic (Paksoy uses the phrase “journalistic tricks”, which may misdirect the reader, as the assumptions and processes described are banal rather than underhanded). Such data, coupled with a rigorous appraisal of journalistic practices, go some distance to giving a more complex picture of the relationship between journalists and Muslims.

Journalists Hugh Muir and Laura Smith joined media scholar Julian Petley in a similar exercise that blends textual analysis with interview data—this time with sources rather than journalists. They analysed four news texts published in UK newspapers between four and nine months after the 7 July 2005 attacks on the London transit system, all of which demonstrated for the authors a reaction to the “ideological shorthand” phrase “political correctness gone mad”. The articles were based on incorrect or misunderstood stories, and, taken together, they suggested to the authors a desire to label Muslims as prone to making outrageous or exceptional demands. Muir et al. revisited these stories to show not merely that they were factually wrong but how the journalists got it wrong. To do so, they turned to the institutions implicated in these stories and employed their own journalistic skills, asking questions and checking facts. There is a smirkingly pedagogical spirit to the chapter: the authors traded not so much in academic analysis as in a journalistic rewriting exercise, to show that, by doing a proper and thorough job of news gathering, these sensational stories could have been avoided. However, what gives the method value analytically is its potential to encompass not just the content but the context of news. The answers sources gave Muir et al. are not the analytical explanation for irresponsible journalism; rather, they become data that prompt different questions—what is this news story about, how did it come about, how did the sources characterise the events in question? I argue that even this is only half of the job: the context in which journalists created these stories, as Paksoy’s study demonstrates, is equally revealing.

We have a few examples of studies that attempt to do both—that interrogate journalists and sources about the production of news texts, exploring that dynamic relationship dynamically. Philip Schlesinger has critiqued studies in journalism for their “media-centrism,” viewing the subject
through the perspective of (and to some extent with the assumptions of) journalists alone. He also co-authored a case study of a more blended method in an examination of the emerging Scottish Parliament; the resulting monograph, *Open Scotland? Journalists, Spin Doctors and Lobbyists*, examined actors from the three fields included in the subtitle, considering how they related, cooperated, and competed to establish a protocol for the public disclosure of the newly devolved governing institution. Patrick Champagne and Dominique Marchetti analysed the development of coverage in France about AIDS and the contaminated blood scandal by looking at relationships between medical researchers, journalists specialising in stories from the medical field, and general journalists who caught a simpler and more political story about the scandal and pushed the broader issue of AIDS to the front page. Perhaps the most comprehensive treatment in this field comes from a trio of scholars, Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek, and Janet Chan, who over three books explored the dynamics of crime reporting in Canada, analysing the journalistic context, the source context, and the texts themselves. All of these studies help us to understand how certain kinds of coverage emerge.

**Conclusion**

To date, no such comprehensive study has been attempted concerning British Muslims or Islam in general. But as the studies cited above suggest, we have much to gain by looking beyond the text. Conclusions that made sense when journalists considered Islam a distant anachronism and Muslims an unfamiliar problem may not account for the dynamic relations of Muslims to the state or journalists to Muslims—or, for that matter, the impact of more than a decade of attentive coverage of Muslims on journalists and the general public. Whilst we must continue to analyse what news texts are saying, we must also broaden our scope to ensure that, as scholars, we account for developments that may trouble prevailing orthodoxies. A qualitative study of the relationship between sources and journalists will help us “construct a more complex picture of the ways in which Muslims and media are connected and mutually influenced”, to return to the challenge set by Aydin and Hammer. We can only guess at the complexity if we do not move our attention from text to context; and the connections and the mutual influence are absent if we consider only one side of the equation. Different methods and deeper analysis are required to satisfy these questions and advance the study of Muslims and their relationship to the media in the West.

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Ibid., 218, emphasis Meer et al.

Poole, Reporting Islam, pp. 7, 11.

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Greg Philo, “Can Discourse Analysis Successfully Explain the Content of Media and Journalistic Practice?” Journalism Studies 8, 2 (2007): 192. It is worth noting that Philo’s demand for such a comprehensive methodology comes after years of insistence from the Glasgow University Media Group that content analysis was sufficient for study. The group defended its methods in summarising its original study of television reporting on labour stories: “Since the output clearly has meaning, then the production of that meaning can as clearly be studied on the screen as it can be by interviewing either producers or audiences”, Glasgow University Media Group, More Bad News: Volume 2 of ‘Bad News’ (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 409. John Eldridge reiterated this message fifteen years later, further arguing that content analysis was advantageous: “Methodologically, it is a form of unobtrusive measure. The material, in this case news bulletins, is created quite independently of the research interest. It is then analysed in ways that do not influence what is being produced”, J. E. T. Eldridge, “Introduction: That Was the World That Was,” in Glasgow Media Group Reader, Volume 1: News Content, Language and Visuals (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 10.


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