

**VISUALISATION OF WOMEN IN MUSLIM MEDIA
AND THEIR RECEPTION:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF TWO BRITISH MUSLIM MAGAZINES**

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ABSTRACT

Within the politics of British integration, debates on media representation of Islam have shown how this focuses on Muslim homogenous identity and its uneven alignment to British values. This thesis explores aspects of visual representation discovered in Muslim media in Britain and offers a glimpse of how Islam is mediated and redefined in which Muslim cultural diversity is identified. By adopting a mainly interpretive paradigm, this research used the techniques of visual analysis of two British Muslim magazines and seven focus group interviews of Muslim and non-Muslim respondents. The analysis expands the range of visual representation by applying it specifically to images of Muslim women by drawing insights from the theory of Islamic arts and by borrowing Goffman's analytic tools in visualising gender. My thesis provides evidence that the Islamic visual representations reflect the diverse identities of Muslim communities, and the magazines under study apply a subversive approach to visualising gender. In focus groups, the blended identity of Muslims is negotiated through the combination of Islamic and western values and needs. I argue that the representation in Muslim media could challenge homogeneity of normalised images of Muslims in mainstream media that has formed a strong cultural imagination of the binary of Islam and the West. My thesis contributes towards bringing theoretical input to media representation and empirical evidence to the study of Islamic visual representations in constructing identity. The distinctive visual representation by the image producers and the counter-depictions of Muslim women in various roles provides a redefinition of Muslim female identities in the British public sphere. It thereby invites us to consider the heterogenous identities of the women and the community at large which is compatible with the notion of diversity within a multicultural society. I conclude with a discussion of Muslim media as a possible force to establish a renewed media discourse on British Muslim integration.

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND ITS EMPIRICAL FOCUS

1.0 Introduction

This thesis explores aspects of visual representation evident in Muslim media in the United Kingdom. Its purpose is to contribute to our understanding of the forms of Muslim cultural representation, and of their broader socio-cultural significance. It offers a glimpse of how Islam is mediated and the distinctive ways in which Muslim diversity is represented and identified.

Throughout the research undertakings, my goal is to provide a comparative analysis of visual representations in two British Muslim magazines and mainly focus on the depiction of Muslim women. It is expected to yield an understanding of British Islamic visual representations, the meaning of images as constructed by the image producers, and how those images are interpreted by different viewers. This thesis will therefore discuss the visual analysis of two different-oriented Muslim magazines in the UK and its audience reception.

This chapter outlines the statement of the research problem based on empirical evidence as the backdrop to my study and to support why the study is important. It starts from a brief literature on community, globalisation and migration that raises issues about Muslim integration in the West. I argue that in the UK media, Muslims have been homogenized as a religious community, which is in opposition to the majority. However, Muslim media offers a space for self-representation.

In this section, I will summarise the theoretical approaches and debates that frame this thesis, namely the generalisation of Muslim identity in the West and its representation in the media. Theoretically, Muslim arts provides the background to comment on the diversity of Muslim populations in opposition to the (mainstream) media representation of Islam. Overall, this chapter is divided into seven sections to introduce the research problem and its empirical focus.

The first section of this chapter outlines a synopsis of relevant literature on the debate on Muslim identity in the contexts of community, globalisation, and migration. Within the politics of integration (in the UK), Muslims are often perceived as different, therefore, present challenges to (conceptions of) national identity. Relatively in the reporting of Muslim identity, this centres almost solely on Islam, which is given the negative coverage, becomes alienated from the secular/Christian majorities.

Section two expands the research problem by exploring how the media (and society more generally) has homogenised Muslim diversity. Ethnic diversity and cultural plurality are not visible (in the media) and continue to be generalised in the guise of civic integration and the doctrine of muscular liberalism.¹

Section three focuses on the gaps and problems in the literature. Specifically, many theoretical and empirical studies have confirmed that we can learn about Muslims from their cultural output through their cultural artistic productions that reflect their communities at the time they were produced. Whether it is political, social, economic or personal, the ability to represent their own identities is empowering them. However, these studies have not been expanded to include current developments where Muslim identity has been homogenized and generally associated with negative connotations in the mainstream media.

In section four, the aims, research questions and hypotheses of the present research project are formulated and stated. The main argument is that Muslim identity is diverse and rooted in many forces such as religion, ethnicity, individuality, economic and social status. In the reception of texts, interpretation may depend on the viewer's socio-cultural assumptions.

Section five offers a summary of the research methodology. The analytical framework is based on a comparative analysis of two British Muslim magazines owned by female editors, who produce a rich imagery of Muslim women's lifestyle and spirituality. The research methodology combines a visual analysis of female imagery with focus group discussions. The visual

¹Muscular liberalism is "a form of liberalism that is intolerant to those that oppose the core values of British society" (Holohan, 2014, p.28). It emphasizes the values of secularism, individualism, gender equality, sexual freedom and freedom of expression that mark a supremacy over the others. In the politics of British integration, Muslims have been the targeted others who are perceived as different from the majority (see Kundnani, 2012).

representations of female imagery were examined by drawing insights from the theory of Islamic arts and by utilising Goffman's analytic tools in visualising gender. Throughout the focus groups, Muslim and non-Muslim views were examined in order to ascertain how they make sense of the images under study in a comparative perspective.

Section six explains my personal interest in this research topic and the attempt to demonstrate self-reflexivity, thus revealing my own position in the research process. Finally, in section seven, I provide an overview of the thesis structure, wherein each chapter is summarised.

1.1 Community, Globalisation and Migration

According to certain commentators, during the latter half of the 20th century, the world has seen the spread of what has been termed globalisation (Parekh, 2005; Putnam, 2007; Göle, 2013). It can be argued that diversity is a legitimate child of globalisation. As a concept, globalisation involves both an economic and social dimension. Although they are related, this thesis is concerned less with the economic foundations and direct economic dimensions of globalisation and more with certain aspects of its socio-cultural manifestations.

As Sivanandan (2007) has however argued, any discussion of 21st century, socio-cultural plurality needs to be located within an analytic framework that takes account of globalisation. Certain socio-cultural manifestations of globalisation involve moving populations who take with them their language, ethnicity, belief systems and general cultural apparatus as well as a sense of community. Due to a rapid migration of people, diversity is fast becoming a key feature in the era of globalisation, thus accommodating these immigrants into dominant societies poses challenges to host countries.

Post-World War II, the suspicion and uneasiness of post-modernism and globalisation are at the heart of contemporary discussions of integration in advanced capitalist countries (Dickens and Fontana, 1994). The flow of immigration from the eastern part of the world to the West has left a social impact in new formations of society. For instance, individualism and secularism have become central in Western culture, while the notions of community and social obligations, are often integral in the formation of non-Western cultures (Nisbet, 1967). In favour of individualism, the community aspects have been neglected (Sardar, 1998).

Thus far, community has been analytically discussed in the dichotomy of traditionalism and modernism in Western sociology. Nisbet (1967) has made the useful analytic distinction between traditionalism and modernism in which the former is made up of conceptual constituents such as community, moral authority, the sacred, hierarchy and alienation; the latter of society, legal power, secular, equality and progress whose values in the polity is individual autonomy. Culture and religion, of course, are to be found operating within community, where the influence of social process lies not in individualism but in collective consent. The consensual values, henceforth, constitute social bonding of the community where emotional cohesion grows among the people.

In a wider notion, Cohen (2000) has proposed that a community is conceived of symbolic dimensions of cultural practice, whose meanings vary among its members. They may have similarities in certain concepts, but they differ in the meaning attached to it. Such categories as justice, equality, freedom, goodness, patriotism, duty, love, and peace are subject to various meanings and manifestations. In Cohen's words, "They share the symbol, but do not necessarily share its meaning. Community is such a boundary-expressing symbol. As a symbol, it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its members' unique orientation to it" (Cohen 2000, p. 15). In a community, the freedom to attach meanings according to what resides in an individual's mind is highly valued. Rather than scrutinizing differences, community members are more concerned with feelings towards a sharing symbol as what Cohen calls as 'symbolic boundary of the community'. Recognition of difference motivates the cultivation of belongingness and the avoidance of alienation.

Historically in the 19th and 20th centuries, Europe was caught up in a conflict between three competing ideologies of conservatism, liberalism and radicalism in explaining its symbolic boundaries. Later in the 21st century, geographers have increasingly focused upon religion as a significant marker of social and cultural differences (Hopkins, 2009). The influx of Muslim migration to European lands stretches the boundaries towards ideological complexities and disruptive visibilities in the European public sphere (Göle, 2013). Likewise, Cesari (2010) and Parekh (2008) observe that the arrival of Islam in Europe reignites the polemics on religion in the public space when religion becomes the major anxiety concerning Muslim immigrants.

Developments such as these raise complex, analytic questions concerning the study of migrating populations and the possible effects on their hosts. It is a significant fact that life in the West is

now ethnically diverse (Banting, 2006), thus bringing the discussion on integration to the forefront. This leads to the insider-outsider polemics and poses challenges both to the host country and the migrating communities. One of the most critical current discussions in Western society is the accommodation of immigrant populations within the secular space. The ideology of secularism that defines post-modernism, rules in the West where it is argued, religion mostly has no share in the common interest of society (Cesari, 2004). "The implication for Muslims is that integration is conceived only through the universal norms of the hosting community, and Muslim identity can only exist, therefore, if it corresponds to the normative identity of the majority" (Scalvini, 2013, p.13). However, since Muslim community (ummah)² is already global in character, it is supposed to be unproblematic for them to live in an existing plural state with different customs and diverse practices. As far as immigration issues are concerned, any politicisation of Muslim affairs through cultural and religious attacks might further detach Muslims from the wider society.

Using a short-cut strategy of integrating the minority, diversity has been undermined to maintain western hegemony in a nation state. In the politics of integration, Muslims have been homogenized as having an identical culture of being traditional, illiberal and extreme that is contradictory to the broader society. This can be illustrated from a number of events that took place in Britain as framed by the British media. In the Rushdie Affair 1989, Muslim cultural identity has been reduced to fundamentalism and religious hysteria when the British generalized Khomeini's stern verdict to execute the author as signifying an orthodox cultural identity. Twelve years later, the series of northern riots of Muslim youth in 2001 absolved the economic disparity and underdevelopment in that area when Muslims were accused of living a parallel life due to inability to mix with the majority.

Moreover, in the politics of managing the flux of immigrants, cultural practices such as arranged marriages involving Muslims have been condemned as oppressive to women arguing that this alien culture has no place in a modern society. Differences between the minority and majority were further highlighted with the face veil being defined as the symbol of oppression, alienation

²Ummah is an Arabic term which defines a global Muslim community whose members are connected by professing Islam as religion, transcending ethnicity, cultural background and national boundary (Halim, 2014). In the rise of globalisation, its significance has become more salient between Muslim diasporas where they feel attached to one another despite distant geographical location or distinct races.

and disintegration. Following the events of violent attacks such as the 7/7 London bombings and the murder of Lee Rigby, the process of Othering the Muslim community was worsened with the notions of terrorism, extremism and radicalism. The Trojan Horse controversy is another example of an attempt to widen the gap between majority and minority where several Muslim schools in Birmingham were accused of allowing radical ideas of Islam to spread. Although *The Guardian* has reported that the investigation failed to prove the Islamist takeover of the schools (Adams, 2017), the allegation left an unfavourable impression for Muslims as imposing extremist threats and in opposition to British values. In the politics of promoting a national identity, the Trojan Horse Affair has demarcated and discriminated Muslims from the wider society by asserting Muslimness is not part of Britishness (Allen, 2015).

In recent years, several authors have focused on the multiple implications brought by cultural diversity in the West. Fukuyama (2006) proposes that the integration of immigrant minorities poses severe challenges to liberal democracy by the increasing demand for rights and recognition of ethnic, religious and cultural groups. Due to tolerance of cultural diversity and group demands, Bloemraad et al. (2008) note that migrants do not only modify the landscape of the host nation-state, but also affect the meaning and substance of citizenship. In the same vein, Gouws & Stasiulis (2013) highlight several concerns about the integration of religious groups, whether to recognize their collective rights or to accommodate them as liberal individuals, whereby forced assimilation may jeopardize autonomy and independence of individual citizens. These perceived challenges have shifted the integration approach from multiculturalism to cultural assimilation.

From a psychological aspect of integration, John W. Berry (2011) makes a clear distinction between assimilation and multiculturalism. The former is an idea that "...cultural pluralism is a problem and should be reduced, even eliminated"; the latter is a multicultural view whereby "...cultural pluralism is a resource, and inclusiveness should be nurtured with supportive policies and programmes" (Berry, 2011, p. 3). Berry (2011) suggests that when cultural diversity is a feature of the society and it includes all the various ethno-cultural groups, it is called multiculturalism. Under this banner, minorities can practise their cultural heritage while at the same time try to synchronise with mainstream values. In a broader sense, multiculturalism is close to heterogeneity, one aspect that characterizes postmodernism.

Throughout this thesis, I realise that any use of 'the West' and 'media in the West' is a simplification. As with Islam, 'the West' is a construct and often homogenised in the media too. The construction of the supremacist approach to western heritage has been made universal and 'the West' has been attached with the superiority reductionism (Cesari, 2009). There are also similarities in the political, economic and media contexts of 'the West'. Through the power of narratives, Funk and Aziz (2004) describe the relation between Islam and the West as arguably constructed within stories of cultural confrontation and compatibility. They (p.8) argue:

“As analysts of ethnic conflict recognize, members of communal groups tend to define their identity not only through the affirmation of positive qualities that are said to be manifest among their group’s members, but also through contrasting these positive qualities with the putatively inferior traits of out-group members.”

In the Oxford Dictionary, 'the West' is defined as “Europe and North America seen in contrast to other civilizations”; and historically, it is “the non-Communist states of Europe and North America, contrasted with the former Communist states of eastern Europe.” In cultural terms, 'the West' refers to North America, Europe, and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand), which emerged from European civilisation and resided by European settlement. They are the Occident (from Latin *occidens* to mean west), as contrasted to the Orient (Oxford Dictionary, 2018).

1.2 Ethnic Diversity

The definition of ethnicity is always ambiguous because it involves dynamic factors and is subject to change over time. As quoted by Hirschman (1987, p.557):

“Among the many dimensions that may serve to define or to reinforce ethnicity in a plural society are cultural characteristics such as language, dress, and cuisine. In some cases, these variations are associated with differences in skin color, stature, or other aspects of physical appearance.”

For this reason, ethnicity should be self-defined. To many British Muslims, religion is a strong element of their 'ethnicity'. But how Islam is perceived by the majority is strongly contested and this is often informed by the media.

Empirical studies show that people mainly get their knowledge of Islam from media (Rane, 2008; Allen, 2012a). Edward Said's critique (E. Said, 2003) on Orientalism provides an important

reading for understanding the representation of Muslims in the media. It often involves seeing Arab culture as exotic, backward, inferior, uncivilized and at times, dangerous. In the context of Muslims living in the West, global media has generally characterized Islam as a monolithic entity, synonymous with terrorism and religious hysteria (Said, 1997). Such characterization has led to the formation of a stereotyped image of Islam that resulted in the development of negative attitudes and behaviour against Muslims worldwide (Elgamri, 2010). Several attestations to this claim can be found in the recent literature of media representation of Muslims and Islam. Terrorism, Muslim extremism and cultural issues made up the top three dominant topics in the British media (Lewis, Mason and Moore, 2011; Poole, 2011; Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013b). Other studies on the British press (Meer, Dwyer and Modood, 2010; Sian, Law and Sayyid, 2012; Khiabany and Williamson, 2015; Poole, 2016) found Islam being depicted as a threat to national values, secularism, freedom of expression, women's rights and the security of the West.

In terms of the visual aspect, Rose (2007) argues that visual representation is constructed in multiple ways depending on the producer's motivation and their cultural demography. Any image carries a potential for dual meaning: the content and the form or style of representation (Müller, Özcan and Seizov, 2009). Two controversial events that were originated from visual illustration by media producers in two majority White countries are useful here in introducing Muslim visual culture and placing the explanation within the context of Muslim identity and integration. First, the publication of 12 Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in 2006 sparked Muslim anger and criticism in Europe. Second, in 2015, the continuous illustrations of the prophet and association of Muslims with barbarian values by a French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* led to the horrific murder of its staff. To Muslims, depicting a negative image of the prophet and Muslim values was insulting. It was created purposefully to demonize their religious leader and to further marginalise communities already suffering from economic and social deprivation. The depiction was simultaneously offensive to many Muslims because depicting God and all prophets in any form is blasphemous due to the belief that God and prophets are beyond any mediated imagination.

It appears that both publications were provocative, repeating what Salman Rushdie did almost 30 years ago, but this time in the form of visuals. Due to the anticipated Muslim response towards the images, the media instantly framed these two cases in the discourse of free speech and press freedom, which put Muslims as the antagonist of western liberal values. The media

pursued the insider-outsider dyad, that the Muslims did not uphold freedom of expression, thus different from 'Us'. In Wagner *et al.* (2012, p.1) words: "...religious minorities are forced into constructing their cultural identity in ways that exaggerate their group belonging and difference from broader society."

Due to mainstream media representation, the ethnic media has started to arise in the media culture (Georgiou, 2002; Metykova, 2010). Specifically the Muslim media, Holohan and Poole (2014, pp.3-4) argue: "Muslim media in the United Kingdom has potentially a significant role to play in the negotiation of identities for their producers, audiences and the wider public in articulating what it means to be a British Muslim". At times of crisis, Georgiou (2012) observes that: "Mediated representations of gender, ethnicity and migration play an increasingly important role in the way these categories are understood in the public sphere and the private realm" (p.798). In a study of female-oriented soap opera and its consumption by the Arab female viewers in London, Georgiou found that gender identity has become heterogenous and more visible in a culturally-diverse society. Indeed, Muslim media creates room for debates and allows opportunities for individual Muslims and communities to be seen and heard.

However, there is still little scientific understanding of Islamic visual representation that would locate them within the discussion on British Muslim identity. Literature on media representation of Muslims remains faithful to the conception of Muslims being Othered in the mainstream media by repeating the old history of Orientalism to deconstruct the narrative. Even this is one of the weaknesses in Said's critique on Orientalism, who dismissed the Orientalist account but did not propose who is the Orient and what is true about it, despite critically investigating the binary of the powerful and the powerless. By mostly applying Said's approach in analysing the textual discourse of Orientalised representation, the overwhelming research on media representation of Muslims emphasized the deconstruction of images of Muslim and ceased at that point. The expansive similar findings seem to allow and reinforce the homogenisation of Muslims, prolonging this within the discourse of Muslim presence in the West, hence, validating the difference between the West and the East, and continuing western hegemony. Although the mediation of self-representation allows for the articulation of identity, what is further missing is a conceptualisation of the discursive diversity among Muslims, particularly women, in order to consider particular identities and values they hold, whether they are incongruent with the dominant liberal order, and if not, what norms and arguments are influential for explanation.

It appears that there is still much to be investigated concerning the representation of Muslim women in mass media. Images remain particularly understudied in the literature on women in Muslim media. Utilizing qualitative content and thematic analysis methodology, the research addresses this gap by:

- 1) Combining insights from the theories of Islamic arts and gender display to examine Islamic visual representation and the visualisation of gender (will be elaborated in Chapter 3)
- 2) Discussing the visual representation of women in Muslim media in the context of British integration (will be explained in Chapter 5)
- 3) Assessing audience reception of the images under study (will be evaluated in Chapter 6)

The following paragraphs outline the brief history of Islamic arts which is considered an important guide in identifying the particular character and identity of a Muslim population. It is significant to be discussed within the British context and media representation where Muslim values and practices are deemed foreign and homogenised as not compatible with the wider society. Islamic visual representation will enlighten our understanding on the heterogeneity of Muslim ethnicity.

Previous studies show that in order to understand Muslim societies, it is helpful to study Islamic arts. Accordingly, Du Ry (1970) affirms that to understand the image in Islam is to look at the history of arts through different eyes. Religion, politics and culture are dynamically co-extensive, inseparable and sometimes overlap in the creation of Islamic arts (James, 1974). In another study, Madden (1975) suggests that not every symbol in Islamic arts gives a religious definition. It could be interpreted in terms of social, political and economic meanings of a community.

To illustrate the distinctive mechanisms of representation in Islamic history, Tabbaa (2015) observes that the forms of arts were the manifestations of political identity between two Muslim sects, Sunni and Shia. Due to the growing popularity of Sunni teachings, the Abassid dynasty (750-1258) influenced the forms of arts in the development of calligraphy to distinguish itself from Shiism. The calligraphy then became the pervasive tool for the Abassid dynasty to spread identical Sunni understandings that prohibited any projection of man and animal. This was connected to the rising prevalence of Shiism during the Buyid regime (932-1055) in southern Iran and the Fatimid rulers of Egypt and Syria (909-1171). On the contrary, the Shiite rulers were

more flexible in depicting human and animal figures, but these were limited to daily utility products (like pottery and carpet) and decorative arts. Both empires never depicted human figures in mosques and other sacred places.

Kuhnel (1970), however, argues that Islamic arts does not distinguish the religious from the profane. He claims: "The prohibition on the representation of living creatures has been exaggerated. It does not appear in the Koran, but in the Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet) and for this reason alone was not dogmatically binding on all Muslims" (p.2).

For some, they opt to negotiate the injunction on the prohibition of image. Despite a reluctance to represent any living being in the form of arts, it is permissible for the purpose of merely an allusion which is absent in shadows and perspective. In the present days, several contemporary artists never produce personal images that resemble human figures to avoid temptation to idolise the artistic representation. Alternatively, they use 'non-photorealistic human forms' and 'figurative silhouettes' (Kozak, 2014). Therefore, Islamic arts is experimental and contextual (Alin, 2014), thus implying the community is fluid and diverse.

The fluidity of Muslim ethnicity, however, is not being recognised. Instead, the legacy of diverse traditions, cultures and histories among Muslims presents challenges to the secularist-dominant white countries in the West today and poses certain threats to such multicultural countries as Britain³ (Poole, 2002), United States (Greenberg and Miazhevich, 2012), and France (Wing and Smith, 2008). Historically, the United States is a nation of immigrants. By contrast, British and French societies did not become racially diverse until the twentieth century when the colonial empires of both countries collapsed (Bertossi and Duyvendak, 2012). Because of the different political systems and social histories, the treatment of integration in the above-mentioned countries applies a different approach but results in similar consequences.

The United States takes pride in a proclaimed 'melting pot' society where the minority assimilates with the majority's culture. Later, it has been challenged by the 'salad bowl theory'

³Between 2001 and 2011 in England and Wales, the proportion of people who identified as Christian decreased and those reporting to have no religion increased (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Although Britain is not a secular state, some commentators argue that Britain is deeply secular and more secular than it was (BBC Religion & Ethics, 2013).

or 'cultural mosaic', which means the newcomers are allowed to retain their own identities while integrating into a new society. In France, Muslim inclusion has been questioned due to attempts to generate an Islamic identity within local structures of public institutions, society and culture (Wing and Smith, 2008). This is deemed unacceptable in a constitutionally laicist state like France (Karakas, 2007). After the French Revolution, a formal separation of church and state business had been established as a way to protect schools from religious interventions. Schools are believed to produce the future leaders in the spirit of the Republic, who are 'purely French'.

As far as the integration process is concerned in the UK, the British system of multiculturalism placed a normative emphasis on preserving heterogeneity (Greenberg and Miazhevich, 2012). While limited multiculturalism with regards to the Muslim minority has been revised from time to time, the stereotypes and complexities of Islam and gender have remained a major concern of all parties such as politicians, academics and journalists until today (Runnymede Trust, 2012; APPG Report, 2012). It is still debatable, however, whether UK is a multicultural state or not. For its opponents (such as Joppke, 2004), assimilation and acculturation are required to integrate the minority into the mainstream society. Former Prime Minister David Cameron reiterated British values to be adopted by all during his premiership (Gov.UK, 2014), hence, promoting national identity. To its proponents such as Modood and Parekh, the minority should be allowed to maintain their original culture in order to establish individual well-being and to foster recognition of being a British citizen. By ignoring cultural, political and social aspects of the minority or perhaps not realizing the diversity in the customary practice within Muslim communities, it could widen the gap between the minority and majority (Modood, 2005; Modood and Ahmad, 2007; Parekh, 2008; Meer and Modood, 2009).

The following section will elaborate the aims of study, the research problem, research questions and hypothesis to pursue my research undertakings.

1.3 Aims of the Study and Research Problem

The present research project proposes to examine the visual representation in Muslim media in the United Kingdom. The goal is to seek and contribute to our understanding of the forms of Muslim cultural representation and of the significance of variation in the images published, and the audience interpretation of these images. For this reason, it is crucial to acknowledge the

discursive approaches of representation which bring a mediated Islam into existence, and the distinctive ways in which Muslim diversity is identified.

Taking this as a point of departure and moving forward, there are three central sets of questions to answer which are accompanied by two hypotheses:

First, what do the images tell us about the particular culture, identity and practices of British Muslims? In what ways, do the image producers inform us of their identities and those they represent? Furthermore, in order to better understand the role of Muslim media, the question can be reformulated in this way: What values are embedded in the representation? Are they different from one another in different media, and opposite to the values espoused by the British media, or similar?

Second, to what extent can it be argued that there are some variations in the representation of gender in the selected media? How is the representation of variegated Muslim women depicted? What themes are discovered in the visualisation of gender?

Third, to test the viewers' cultural knowledge and understanding on the found images, the questions are: How do different audiences understand and interpret these images? Is the consumption consistent with the representation, why and why not?

Research Hypothesis 1 assumes that Muslim producers utilize different approaches that highlight the heterogeneity of Muslim identity in Britain. They represent Muslim women with distinctive ways to counter the mainstream representation. The representation might be conventional in form, yet subversive in content. On the other hand, the representation might be both subversive in form and content. However, it is assumed that the counter-representations seek to negotiate Muslim identities that are not necessarily oppositional to the mainstream lifestyle as known by the majority.

Research Hypothesis 2 assumes that the variation of images of Muslim women informs us of their variegated identities; and the images are interpreted differently by viewers from different backgrounds – the minority Muslims and the majority non-Muslims – based on their knowledge and understanding of Muslim visual conventions. Due to this factor, it is assumed that cultural assumptions predicate the process of making sense of the images and influence audience views, thus contribute to the consistencies/inconsistencies of views amongst them.

To summarise, this project aims to closely examine the representation and the consumption of Muslim media within the discourse of Muslim identity. It seeks to reveal the manifestations of Muslim identity using visual mechanisms of representation. I argue that the image and audience draw on discourses of national integration by identifying similarities and recognising differences of Muslim practice and values. They negotiate with the values, seeing some as compatible with the mainstream.

1.4 The Synopsis of Research Methods

The purpose of this section is to give an overview of the methodological approach, which is applied in the empirical analysis. To illustrate the research design of this project, I use Joseph Maxwell's model of integrative design of qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013). He explains (p.2):

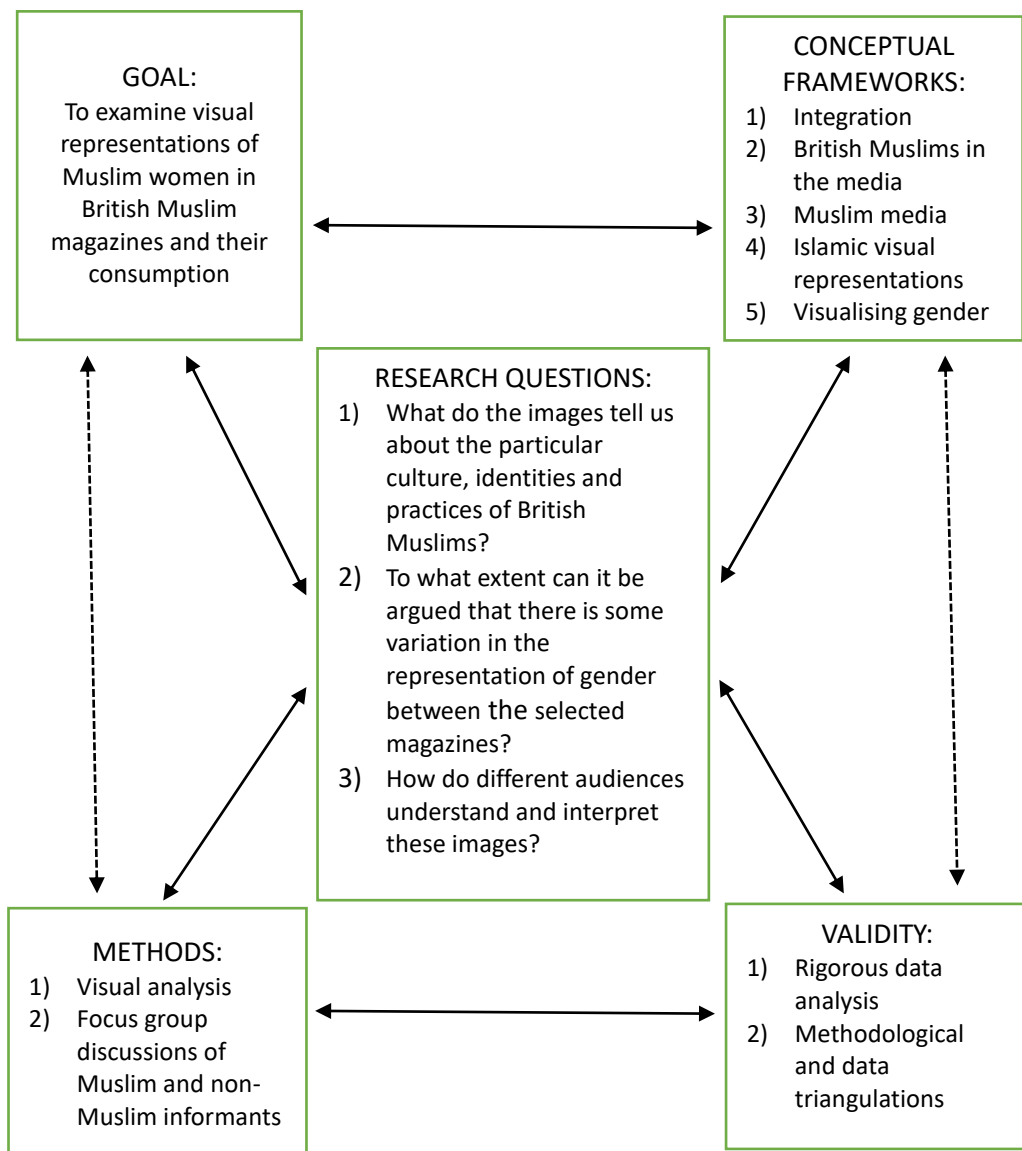
“In qualitative research, any component of the design may need to be reconsidered or modified during the study in response to new developments or to changes in some other component... The activities of collecting and analysing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating or refocusing the research questions, and identifying and addressing validity threats are usually all going on more or less simultaneously, each influencing all of the others.”

As the above quote from Maxwell indicates, the research process comprises of, research design (an interaction of method and theory), data collection, data analysis and report writing, an active and often fluid process. Within that process where appropriate, modifications are made to each of the stages / component parts including the initial research design and the theoretical and methodological directions pursued.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the actual design of my study adapted from Maxwell's model of integrative research design by depicting the key components and the interrelationships among them. The arrows indicate the workable relationship between the five components. As shown in the table, my research question is central to this flexible research design. The research questions influence the whole research undertakings in the sense that it affects and is affected by the other four components of research, particularly the goal, the conceptual framework (including the articulation of problem statement and the theories), the methods of inquiry (including the methodology and the techniques of data collection), and validity of findings. Maxwell explains: “...this model can be used to represent the “design-in-use” of a study, the actual relationships among the components of the research, as well as the intended (or reconstructed) design” (p.3).

Maxwell labels this model as a DIY design. As we can see, there is a connection between the goal and the selection of conceptual frameworks where they must work in harmony. At the bottom two, methods and validity are interrelated in the way that validity can be reached by using the right methods. Furthermore, the data that I gather could support or challenge the perceived problems of British Muslims in the mainstream media.

Figure 1.1: The research design adapted from Maxwell's Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach (2013)



As cited by Maxwell, there is no fixed design for a qualitative research. In this research, I pursue three approaches to qualitative research design – interpretive, critical and post-modern. While

in the elementary stage of research when the research design was planned, and research questions were formulated, an interpretive qualitative approach was devised to pursue my study. When data analysis develops, it expands toward a critical approach, where the interpretation includes critics on the exclusion of Muslims in the British integration agenda as represented in the media. Moreover, a feminist argument was adopted to support the interpretation of the imagery. Towards the end of the research, I found a post-modern approach was required when new findings emerged, which showed that the results disrupt the dichotomies of the insider and outsider, we and them, self and other. These types of qualitative stances have some characteristics in common and normally result into falling under the broad paradigm of qualitative research (Merriam, 2002). However, in my case, I consider the interpretive approach dominates, while the other two works as complementary.

By mainly adopting an interpretive paradigm, this research used the techniques of visual analysis and focus group interviews. Two British Muslim magazines were chosen as opportunistic sampling to enlighten our understanding of Muslim visual cultures in representing women. The discussion took place in the context of the British integration agenda and mainstream representation of Muslims. The visual representations of female imagery were examined by drawing insights from the theory of Islamic arts and by borrowing Goffman's analytic tools in visualising gender. Amid analysing images, participants from Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds were recruited for focus group interviews to investigate their views on the images under examination. Data from the focus groups were useful to illuminate findings on the process of making sense of images. Furthermore, the data provides deeper insights on the meaning of images in matters of integration and its politicisation in the media from Muslim and non-Muslim eyes. The combination of both methods and the triangulation of data from multiple sources guarantee a more complete analysis of how image producers negotiate Muslim identity in various depictions and of how the viewers use their socio-cultural assumptions to interpret images.

1.5 Personal Interest in the Topic

In post-modern cultures, people increasingly rely on visual means for defining and informing their identities (Konecki, 2011). Now, the world we live in is saturated with images – photography, advertisements, TV programmes, movies, newspaper pictures, magazine images, snapshots, selfies, paintings – in the forms of 2D, 3D and 4D. In Muslim cultures, however, visual

is peripheral. This sense of being peripheral attracted my interest and I have made it central in my investigation on the representation of Muslims in Britain.

I became interested in studying the representation of Muslim identities after reading an influential book on sociology, entitled *The Myth of the Lazy Native*. It was written by Syed Hussein al-Attas, a Malaysian sociologist who criticised the colonist's allegation that the Malay is a lazy native. It was made by Frank Swettenham, an English officer, due to ignorance that the Malay Land (now Malaysia) was an agricultural region and the native Malay people were mostly involved in agricultural work. Once they were colonised, they continued to work in the rural areas and this limited their connection with the colonial officers and their works were invisible to them (Sardar, 1999). Compared to the Chinese community who worked in tin mines and the Indian community in rubber estates which contributed to the colonial capital, the hard work of the Malays went unseen and was not recognised. Although I remembered reading Swettenham's statement in a history book during my time in primary school, it was only after I came across the book in 2010 that I subsequently developed my understanding of the concept of Orientalism and its connection with colonialism in my own country. Later, Edward Said's (2003) magisterial book, *Orientalism*, provided me with a more detailed explanation of the history of Orientalism.

Issues on Muslims on a global level also attracted my interest where Muslims have been subjected to all kinds of biased and inaccurate labels. Events such as 9/11 and its subsequent violent attacks in other countries called my attention to when Muslim culture and religion have been politicised in Western media in order to absolve military attacks by America and its allies to Muslim countries. Media discourses repeated the colonial history where the natives were labelled as lazy and backward to legitimize colonial conquer. Furthermore, the victimisation of Muslim women is so sentimental to Muslims all around the world because it is recognised that Muslims have different cultures and customs despite embracing the same religion. We already recognised the diverse cultures and traditions each community has. Every religious injunction has been practised according to one's methodology of interpretation and according to which schools or sects the community adheres to.

Being a Muslim, I developed my interest to investigate why Muslims have been the target of both the political elite and the economic bourgeoisie, and in what way I could explore the diversity of Muslim identities and practices in an intellectual way. An offer of scholarship by the Malaysian Ministry of Education to further my studies in the UK opened up an opportunity to proceed with

research on Muslim identity in the West. Being both Muslim and a woman, I feel touched when British Muslim women have been victimised by the dominant discourses on Muslims in the media. In the politicisation of Muslim culture, women have become a symbol of traditional Islam and its difference to the majority as “social constructions of gender are often central to the imagination and reproduction of nationhood” (Meer, Dwyer and Modood, 2010, p.85).

In my view, being a woman is about balancing responsibility towards self, spouse (if married), family, community and country. As an individual, I have duties to protect my body and soul in my own way and at the same time, I must protect my rights to be free from other people’s wants and desires. As a spouse, both husband and I should shield each other and work towards happiness. He is not my superior and I am not his subordinate, and vice versa. In the family and community circle, each member regardless of gender has to contribute in one’s own capacity and is bound by group consciousness which might differ from one group to another in many aspects. Culturally, my Malay origin is different from the Indian and Chinese communities, for example. Economically, my middle-class background is dissimilar to a working or upper-class family. At a national level, we are all Malaysians regardless of gender, race, class or religion, but we all participate in the country in various pursuits, whether in a private or public realm, or both.

Being a Malaysian citizen, I feel grateful to be free to decide on how I should look in public without being questioned. But unfortunately, women wearing the hijab in Britain are under scrutiny when they look different from the majority. Living in a Muslim country, we are free whether to wear or not to wear the hijab. Women can wear the niqab and they can also dye their hair with bright colours if they want to. We are individuals. Surprisingly, in the liberal West, Muslim women are not free to reveal what they feel is right for themselves, connoting liberalism is not universal and only applies if it fits with Western values. I believe this study on Islamic visual representations of Muslim media would help to explain the diversity of Muslim cultural and social identities.

1.6 The Outline of Overall Thesis’s Organisation

Chapter 1 has introduced the aims of the research project, the research problem and contextual background of the study surrounding British Muslim identity. Chapter 2 begins with relevant conceptual frameworks about British Muslims and the media, which include approaches to integration, Orientalised representation of Muslims, and Muslim media. Chapter 3 provides a

theoretical approach to explaining the analytic framework – theories of Islamic arts and Goffman's Gender Advertisements. While Islamic arts focuses on the forms of Muslim visual convention, its available symbols and signs within its visual landscape, Goffman lends analytic tools of micro processes in interactional relativity, notably gestures, postures, facial impression, eye gaze, etc. The combination of these two frameworks support each other to ground the visual analysis in an attempt to search for meanings to counter-represent British Muslims. The counter-representation offers a rich description towards an interpretive discussion of the visual representations of Muslim women in the interplay of integrative contexts as discussed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 4, the research methodology is explained. The analytical framework combines a visual analysis of two British Muslim magazines and focus group discussions among Muslim and non-Muslim participants. Chapter 5 offers a rich description of women's imagery from a comparative perspective to see how each magazine represents women, which subsequently will show particular identity of the Muslim producers. Chapter 6 presents the findings from the focus groups and discusses the consistencies and inconsistencies of data across interviewees. In Chapter 7, the conclusion is drawn to synthesise the findings from the representation and consumption of the imagery whereby the values and identities of and towards British Muslim women emerge.

In this thesis, I concentrate on the issue of Muslim identity within the politics of integration. In attempting to explain the identity, I aim to establish an understanding of the forms of Muslim cultural representation and its associated meanings. I will show that the counter-representation of women in Muslim media could reveal the diversity of Muslim cultures through its subversive images. In arguing for this position, I use the theory of Islamic arts to explain the diversity and flexibility of Muslim expression. Images of women have been analysed to represent Muslim identity relating to nationhood. Furthermore, audience reception has been sought to investigate what the viewers perceive of the images that are related to Muslim identity.

CHAPTER 2

BRITISH MUSLIMS AND THE MEDIA: CONTEXT AND CONTENT

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the conceptual frameworks of my study, examining the visual representation of women in Muslim media in the United Kingdom by selectively building upon the theories of integration, orientalism, the media's representation of Muslims, and ethnic media. Throughout the chapter, I discuss Muslim identity with respect to the issues raised by these various theoretical considerations.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, immigration has brought new challenges to Western host countries and their sense of identity. There is increasing concern that the legacy of various traditions, cultures and histories among immigrants presents problems in the Christian-dominant white majority countries in the West today and poses certain threats to such multi-ethnic countries as Britain (Abbas, 2012), the United States (Greenberg and Miazhevich, 2012), and France (Wing and Smith, 2008). At the outset, this chapter begins with introducing three different approaches to integration applied in the three countries mentioned above. The USA claims to be a land of immigrants and a 'melting pot'. France and the UK are both colonial states that colonised, amongst other parts of the world, Muslim nations. After the First World War, Britain and France carved up the Middle East into nation states. In a Post-colonial context, many Muslims moved to the lands of their colonisers. The comparative case studies of integration serve as a broad category of Muslim experience in struggling with identity amid the politics of integration.

Then, the discussion will narrow down to the Muslim presence in the United Kingdom. In responding to anxieties about social and cultural pluralism, The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (2000) through the Parekh Report (UK) concluded that disturbing phenomena such as the Rushdie Affair (1989) and unrest Northern cities (2001) are related to race, ethnicity and religious diversity, and are prompted mainly by globalisation and post-war

migration. And yet there are repeated claims by some politicians, intellectuals and journalists that specific groups or communities are themselves responsible for these threatening and unsettling events. Edward Said's Orientalism serves as the grand narrative of the discourse on the media representation of Muslim identity, which is deemed inferior to the west. The discussion on the structured hegemony of Orientalism has underlined the necessity to deconstruct these discourses and to consider its implications alongside the political economy of the media. This approach will be examined in relation to media representations of Islam and Muslims in the UK.

Postmodernism emerged along with the age of the media, where, through the reproduction of images and objects, the media have been integral in producing representation (Ahmed 1992). Sardar (1999) cites Jean Baudrillard's claim that postmodern culture blurs distinction of reality and unreality, 'between true and false representation' (p. 54). "Under postmodernism, Orientalism continues its conventional role of caricaturing and ideologically silencing the civilisations of Asia (Sardar 1999, p.106) ...Ultimately, Orientalism is a system of representations, a natural expression for postmodernists who argue representation is all we have" (p.116).

The negativity of reporting on Islam carries ideological and political implications for the Muslim population in the UK. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attack and during the War on Terror (WoT) campaign, Islam has been vividly negated by all the politically-affiliated press. In an analysis of the British press, Baker et al. (2013a) highlight the newspapers' position on religion. It was found that generally, the right-wing newspapers are pro-Christian, and the left-wing press are secularist whereas all newspapers appear to be opposed to (their perception of) Muslim culture and ideology.

In analysing media representations, the study focuses on how Muslim identity has been questioned in terms of religion and values, which are deemed to be different from the majority. Because of the difference, the Muslim population is considered as foreign and not part of the society. Multiculturalism is perceived to be useless in bringing a uniformity of national identity; thus, assimilation is promoted to integrate Muslims into the wider society. This integration agenda has been pursued by the right-wing and left-wing, bringing Muslim identity into question and under scrutiny as if the success or failure of integration lies on Muslim's ability to integrate.

To discuss the Muslim presence in the UK, I use two case studies that shaped Muslim identity as foreign and different from the West. In the first event, Muslims were perceived as religiously orthodox when opposing Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*. Khomeini's verdict to execute the author was generalized to represent all Muslim views. Religiosity was associated with all Muslim affairs. In the second, the full-faced veil has become a symbol of isolation and difference. In the politics of integration, the Muslim population was perceived as isolating themselves from the society and embracing alien values. The Salman Rushdie Affair (1989) and Jack Straw's Veil Affair (2006) marks the shift of Muslim identity from (political) religiosity to alienation but revolves around the same issue of foreignness and exclusion. While the first event connected Muslims with religious fanatics (in its construction), the second event shifted Muslims further away from the mainstream culture and liberal values. These events will be discussed in the later section on Muslims in the media.

In the context of how the media operates in a multicultural society, ethnic media potentially provide an alternative (self-)representation of minority groups. Georgiou (2005) examines the capacity of ethnic media across Europe and observes that universalism and particularism have been embraced by the media practitioners. In other words, the diasporic media operationalise under the global political economy of media and at the same time maintain specific ideological identities. Muslim media, for instance, often have a global reach and highlight Muslim lifestyles that occupy a fusion of Islamic tradition and the normative culture of the host country.

The following section will discuss approaches to integration given that the presence of the Muslim population has presented challenges for the placement of Muslim practices and values within the secular space of western societies. This provides the contextual background for my thesis which argues that the Muslim population is generalised in the West. The next section will illustrate evidence from the media representation of Islam where Muslim identities have been depicted on the basis of Orientalism which constructs a binary between Muslims and the rest. The last section highlights the emergence of Muslim media that could provide counter representations to the mainstream images of Muslims to project more nuanced identities.

2.1 Approaches to Integration

Theories of cultural contact and multiculturalism could inform how the host nation accommodates its newcomers in the building of a nation state. Modood (2005) argues that any

approach to integration should include socio-cultural mixing; and civic participation and belonging. These two dimensions might operate differently according to the integrative approach that one country upholds. Aziz (2012) remarks that multiculturalism on one hand has been adopted as a response to cultural and religious diversity that characterized Western Europe after World War II, largely due to the recruitment of unskilled workers from overseas for economic reconstruction. On the other hand, multiculturalism has prevailed to consolidate the emergence of various political movements ranging from race, gender, sexuality and a host of characteristics as understood in a nation-of-immigrants *doxa*⁴, notably in the United States. In other words, multiculturalism in Europe deals specifically with the cultures of immigrant communities, whereas the US broadly engages with the politics of variegated identity.

Over the last five decades, integrationism has become a discernible subject in liberal European countries when minority groups began to question their rights in the dominant society. The 1991 Iraq War was a point of global conflict that opened up ways for asylum seekers and refugees (Bates, 2012), especially Muslims, to settle in western countries which they believed to be safe. Subsequently throughout the last decade, the discussions on Muslims' needs to integrate into the liberal-secular order have increasingly centred on Muslim norms and practices in general (Amir-Moazami, Jacobsen and Malik, 2011). Muslims are now prompting a reformulation of the characterization and secularization of an egalitarian society that underpins the European definition of modernity (Cesari, 2004; Göle, 2013).

Because of the different political systems and social histories, the treatment of integration in Europe and the United States apply a different approach but arguably result in similar consequences. For my research backdrop, the three countries of the USA, France and Britain have been selected to demonstrate three different approaches of integration from a comparative perspective. As secularism takes different forms of practice depending on historical and cultural trajectories (Göle, 2010), what follows is a description of the approach to integration adopted by each country whilst taking its historical and secular ideology into account.

⁴ A French term that denotes a society's taken-for-granted, non-questioned truth. It was introduced by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu in his book, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and has been widely used by contemporary sociologist, Nilufer Gole mostly in her writings on secularism in Europe.

2.1.1 American 'Melting Pot' Integrationism

With respect to American integrationism, the United States takes pride in a proclaimed 'melting pot' society where the newcomers assimilate with the majority's culture. Later, the assimilation approach has been challenged by the 'salad bowl theory' or 'cultural mosaic', where new residents are allowed to retain their own identities while integrating into a new society. Thus, it permits a considerable range of diversity and cultural differences.

The US Constitution on citizen rights is said to be an example of a democratic ideal as underlined in the popular book of Robert's Rules of Order (1876) by Brig. Gen. Henry Martyn Robert. In the opening page, he states: *"American Parliamentary Law is built upon the principle that rights must be respected: the rights of the majority, of the minority, of individuals, of absentees, and rights of all of these together."*

Through a melting pot integration approach, the people are held together by the Constitution and are not bound under a strictly nation-state uniformity as is the case in France and Britain, especially in the relationship between Church and State (Cesari, 2004). In the US, religious affairs are managed within the boundary of civil society, where the affairs operate not through state interference or domination but by religious pluralism and freedom.

One of the founding fathers of the Constitution, James Madison, believed that the more heterogeneous the society, the less divisive it would be (America's Founders, 2014). According to Madison, a society tends to form a faction amongst its members when the majority is keen to promote their own interest at the expense of oppressing and denying the minority's rights. Within the spirit of founding a sovereignty of America, a large republic that comprises many different groups and distinctive interests economically, socially and religiously, was the belief it could provide a defensive mechanism against majority tyranny. In the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, Madison drafted the Bill of Rights that guarantee basic individual liberties no matter how singular or alienated a citizen is from society.

Theoretically, this is the democracy that is conceived by today's Melting Pot America. Practically, some scholars (Greenberg and Miazhevich, 2012; Shome, 2012) nonetheless, argue that the melting pot idea is a superficially rhetorical fiction with negative undertones. Racial problems do occur and grow in separate forms of discrimination among ethnic and religious groups, including the Black and Muslim communities.

Black people continue to suffer from economic deprivation and racial stereotyping. Residential segregation remains a salient feature among African-American communities, where many live in ghettos. Instead of having a socioeconomic upgrade in recent decades, their wages are far lacking behind Whites and they are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to their White counterparts (Pager and Shepherd, 2008). The black community tends to be associated with crime and racism. The death of an unarmed young black man, Michael Brown after being shot several times by a White police officer in Missouri is one of a series of racially dominated attacks which has sparked sharp international criticism (Ware 2014a). Steinberg (2014) argues that the USA is gradually maintaining a dual melting pot – one for the black African descendants, the other for the rest - white, brown and light-skinned lineage. Based on the rising exogamy rates amongst Asians and Latinos, Steinberg suggests the American melting pot has generally been inclusive of everybody except blacks, who are still inherently enduring social and economic disparities.

As for Muslim communities, most of them are economically stable and are not residentially segregated (Parekh, 2008). Even though they are scattered everywhere, many are concentrated in metropolitan areas. The 10 states with the largest Muslim populations are California, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Indiana, Michigan, Virginia, Texas, Ohio, and Maryland (<http://www.pewresearch.org> 2014). In 2011, The Pew Research Centre in their survey on Nativity and Immigration, reports that 63% of Muslim Americans are first-generation immigrants to the US, 45% of who have arrived since 1990. The majority originate from the Middle East or North Africa (41%), and South Asian regions (26%), with the rest from sub-Saharan Africa (11%), Europe (7%), Iran (5%) and other countries (9%).

Since American society and culture are not as strictly structured as they are in Europe, American Muslims feel greater freedom and less anxiety to publicly express their religion and cultural identity (Parekh, 2008). However, the attack of 9/11 in 2001 brought a drastic change to their lives. Anti-Muslim hate crimes and stereotyped portrayals as perpetrators of terrorism increased sharply in the months and years after the destructive event, and it prolonged until nearly the 10th anniversary of post-9/11 (Disha, Cavendish and King, 2011). Women also became an easy target of malicious attacks, being regarded as oppressed, traditional and backward.

A critical view by Cesari (2004, pp. 80-86) found that the 9/11 event disturbed the “public status of American Islam” and since then, the question of Islam has been overtly divisive. What was

initially an internal conflict in the Muslim world between “liberals/progressives” and “conservatives/fundamentalists” has now become a polemic among American Muslims concerning the legitimacy of Islam in America, whether to accept or reject American civil society. Upon the exclusion of “other” Muslims, the United States asserts its national identity and creates an enemy threat (Eid and Karim, 2011; Greenberg and Miazhevich, 2012).

Based on the above evidence, minority groups have neither been assimilated nor integrated, yet discriminated against. Essentially identified by skin colour, Black people remain stagnant with the status of being underprivileged and the stereotypical image of low achievers. Conversely, Muslims appear to be a new enemy to the national history due to cultural and religious differences. The ‘salad bowl’ ideal may be more appropriate than the ‘melting pot’ to explain American multicultural society, whereby the diversity is celebrated to show its heterogeneity and at the same time to identify the exclusive ‘others’ from the mainstream.

While the United States remain outstanding as a heterogeneous nation, European countries advocate strict regulation of immigration and blame its new look of hyper-diversity for the drawbacks of the integration process (Lassalle, 2011). To extend the discussion on integration in Europe, two countries have been selected where unlike America, both share a common history of colonial imperialism and allegiance with secularism – France and Britain.

2.1.2 French Civic Universalism

Integration in France applies the Republican model that strongly upholds a rigid separation of state and religion. The Republican approach of civic universalism considers public symbols of ethnic, religious or cultural identity as antithetical to the French national identity. France does not even include ethnic or religious identity in its census. Hence, multiculturalism is deemed unacceptable and the formation of ethnic communities with their distinct identities is considered as a major threat to a fiercely secular republic such as France (Karakas, 2007).

As opposed to a multiculturalist country such as Britain, France is perceived as being an assimilationist country. French civic universalism lies in its notion of a republican country whose national identity is based on universalistic civic philosophy. The power of French republicanism is integral in all its institutional arrangements encompassing individual behaviours and social movements (Bertossi and Duyvendak, 2012). This philosophy governs the separation between

public and private realms, expressively through its colour-blind policy to ethnicity and race. Furthermore, the philosophy of French secularism or *laicism*⁵ organizes the separation between the state and the church.

In the context of political debate in France, Republicanism reflects both the conservative and liberal standpoints (Scalvini, 2013). While the former considers the practise of certain cultural values as the private affair of its citizens, the latter allows more room for diverse cultures to coexist in the state. But as far as Muslims are concerned, the liberal seems illiberal in not recognising Muslim's visibly practise in public, such as wearing a veil, by claiming that the veil oppresses women and it is a religious symbol to the Muslim community. By the same token, the conservative breaches its secular stance to impede its citizen's right to choose their own individual dress. Muslims are the victim of both political streams and as such have no place in either the conservative or liberal plane.

It is important to realize that secularism first appeared in France during the French Revolution of 1789 and 1799. This historical event put an end to centuries of aristocratic Catholic Church domination over the country. It was a direct result of the oppressive attitudes of the Church towards 'nonreligious' theories on scientific and rational thoughts. French Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, Diderot and Montesquieu regarded religion as divisive, benighted and intolerant (Astier, 2004). The disappearance of religious privileges accelerated the advancement of secularism and liberalism that enlarged its spectrum of human right protection to include women and slaves. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) guarantees no intervention on individual rights under the principle of *liberte, egalite* and *fraternite* (liberty, equality and fraternity).

While political secularism plainly underscores that religious authority is no longer the dominating political authority and vice versa, current practice concerning Muslim affairs and their individual choices, I would argue, witness otherwise. Issues concerning Muslim women have been politicized with relation to their public appearance. The ban on wearing the hijab in school for example, was imposed in September 2004 because of its ostentatious practice that

⁵ A French term derived from the root word *laicite*. It denotes the meaning of secularism that characterizes the strict separation of religion and politics. There is a growing concern on the plurality of secularisms that is rooted from different historical and cultural trajectories, for example French, Turkish, Indian and American laicism or secularism (see Cady & Hurd 2010; Göle 2010).

exhibits religious expression. Back to history, the 1905 French Law that separates the Church and State, granted educational privilege previously enjoyed by the Catholic Church to civil bodies. The practices of Christianity, notwithstanding, remains unaffected so long it does not influence the curriculum. According to an article in QNews (2004), ban the hijab is nothing to do with defending secularism, but demonstrating secular fundamentalism simply by denying an individual's right to wear her chosen garment. Concerning the ban of headscarves, Wiles (2007, p. 699) writes:

“An assessment of the legitimacy of a law that restricts minority groups' cultural practices in this way in any society should be based on a substantive interpretation of equality and should necessarily involve an active endeavour to understand the meanings of those cultural practices for those groups within their distinct context.”

In the name of defending the principle of secularism, Wiles concludes the ban implies that modern French society has closed the door on the reconciliation of an open, plural and modern society.

In April 2011, the ban of the full-face veil in public took effect. It might sound irrational for the liberal government to speak on behalf of Muslim women without examining the real intention and underlying principle of covering one's face. The autonomy of an individual and freedom of belief are denied. It goes against the liberal doctrine of universal values of freedom and equality. The ban is discernibly racist and sexist (Navarro 2010). The Eurocentric attitude towards immigrants totally rejects a meaningful life of a modern society, which is inevitably heterogeneous and culturally diverse.

In addition, discriminatory practices are not limited to affairs concerning Muslim women only. The social and urban exclusion of Muslims is particularly apparent in suburban areas or *banlieu*. Similar to British Muslims in Northern towns of Britain, French Muslims are isolated in the suburban communities with economic deprivation and low rates of employment in spite having the same level of education as non-Muslims (Lassalle, 2011). A violent confrontation between the young *banlieusards* (*banlieue* residents) and police in 2005 was the manifestation of their frustration over discrimination. Sarkozy, the then Minister of the Interior labelled the protesters as *racaille* – the French term that characterises an entire group of people as subhuman, inherently evil and criminal, and in effect, useless (Scalvini, 2013) – thus allowing Sarkozy to militarise the *banlieu* as his crime and terrorism preventive measure.

Since then, young men have become synonymous with criminal and potential terrorists. Facts, however, tell something else. A study of the French labour market (Adida, Laitin and Valfort, 2010) reveals that anti-Muslim discrimination exists where a Muslim candidate is 2.5 times less likely to receive a job interview return call than a Christian applicant. Moreover, second-generation Muslim households in France have a lower income compared with the same group of Christian households.

As a consequence of racial and religious bias, the Muslim population continues to be alienated from the rest of French society. Wiles (2007) posits a relationship between tolerance and class where intolerance tends to occur among the economically deprived minority. He observes: "It is no coincidence that the French attack on the headscarf commenced at a time when its Muslim minorities were being relegated without employment to the suburbs" (Wiles 2007, p. 729). This scenario highlights an actual narrative of Muslim settlement whereby, it is not the Muslims who refuse to integrate with French society, but the republican secularism has abandoned them and their rights (Ware, 2014b).

2.1.3 British Multiculturalism and Muscular Liberalism

A large volume of published studies describe multiculturalism in Britain as the result of post-war immigration (for examples, Turner, 2007; Abbas, 2012; Aziz, 2012). Historically, after the Second World War, people from the post-colonial countries were encouraged to migrate to England to fulfil work demands in the pottery and textile industries. Immigrants from the formerly colonized countries such as India and Pakistan arrived in the UK rightly after the countries gained independence in 1947. The number of immigrants dramatically increased between 1965 and 1972 when a flux of East African immigrants, particularly from Uganda and Kenya entered the UK unskilled-labour market. Gradually, the community of immigrants grew larger when families from the original countries joined in British settlement.

It has been suggested that the politics of racism in Britain has now moved from biological descendants to cultural inheritance (Abbas, 2004). The shift takes several developments into account. From the 1960s to 1970s, some people in the black community were dominant in raising their rights and wanted to maintain the categorisation of race for political struggle. This Race Equality Movement was inspired by the Black Civil Rights Movement in the United States to fight for full civil rights and equality under the law to all citizens, including minorities. In the

first instance, the first Race Relations Acts in 1965 and 1968 provided the minority the legal right to voice their dissent against discrimination in housing and work opportunities. The Acts allowed room for some discussions on the possibility of the migrants to integrate into mainstream society.

Until the 1980s, however, Holohan (2006) notes that there were several protests by black activists that challenged Thatcher's policy on a law and order state. Throughout this period, Black community members were prone to be stopped and searched on streets as suspected criminals. Yasmin Ali (cited in Allen 2010) points out that at the beginning of the 1980s, 'black community' was a normalised concept of anti-racism that precluded other non-black communities. At that time, early Muslim communities who came from the Indian subcontinent were known as the 'Asian community' (Allen, 2010b). The campaign of War on Terror, nonetheless, has ignited the new racism of Islamophobia, which Meer & Modood (2010) maintain is a form of 'cultural racism'. This new racism modifies the British discourse on racialized minorities. It has been transformed from the racism of colour in the 1950s and 1960s; to race in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s; to ethnicity in the 1990s; and to religion in the new millennium (Abbas, 2004; Kundnani, 2012).

While the black community struggle for their rights on the basis of race, immigrants from the Indian subcontinents who are majority Muslims, have to defend their cultural and religious rights in the politicisation of integration. Kundnani (2007) affirms that the discussion on integrationism in the UK began after the riots in northern towns of England in 2001 and the event of 9/11 that followed. The protests in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford were a prelude to the community cohesion agenda (Bourne 2007). Previously, those areas were the home of textile industries, for which Asian immigrant labours were recruited in the 1950s. When the industries were moved to the Global South without being replaced with alternative investment, the young generations of the original immigrants became unemployed.

Even though the disturbances took place in an underprivileged neighbourhood amid economic decline and were a reaction to provocation by far-right groups, ironically the residents were blamed for their isolation. And as the protests were rallied by the young Asian Muslims, all Muslims were accused as practising self-segregation and excluding themselves from mainstream society (Bourne, 2007). Muslims were associated with an alien culture and were accused of being incompatible with western society. Due to this event, British politics and their associated media

propagated the threat of cultural diversity to undermine the economic and social exclusions (Ratcliffe, 2012).

Instead of upgrading the economic condition of the affected areas, opening job opportunities to unemployed citizens and tackling racial discrimination, a not-so-proactive step was taken under immigration and nationality policies by introducing a citizenship ceremony, oaths of allegiance and an English language test for new settlers. Kundnani (2007) asserts that self-segregation and immigration have been misdiagnosed by the assimilationists by excessive isolation of distinct cultures. Consequently, multiculturalism has been blamed for segregation, which, it is suggested, has resulted in extremism. Young people who were born and raised in Britain are considered alien and, it is argued, need to be integrated into British society as a preventive measure to stop extremist behaviour. Racialising Muslims has been normalised and self-segregating 'Others' absolved 'Us' from institutional racism (Phillips 2006), thus granting full licence to liberalise the exotic culture.

Following the disturbances, several reports were produced. Cattle Report (2001), the influential one, prevailed the failure of minorities to integrate into broader society as the root cause. In the report, the concept of community cohesion was introduced to enable all peripheral groups to involve in the mainstream society socially, economically and politically. It was said to promote inclusion for all, without denying diversity of different background. Although the recommendation was addressed to South Asian communities in general, the media were quick to frame it as the racial and cultural problems of Muslim communities who lead a parallel live and self-segregation (Holohan, 2014). As a response to the professed failure of multiculturalism, community cohesion denies cultural differences instead it offers another two-pronged strategy to integrate, namely the assimilation of social capital and the introduction to shared values (Rietveld, 2013). In the first strategy, the emphasis on interaction and mixing together regardless of cultural differences is presumed to build new ties among all citizens and develop a new cohesive society. Following this, all citizens would have a same self-understanding of who they are and where they are from (Uberoi and Modood, 2013b). This idea has been criticised as interaction does not occur in vacuum (Aziz, 2012). People are not merely the carriers of their culture but are also identified along with other attributes for instance, gender, class, religion and race. Both Modood (2008) and Phillips (2010) affirm that inherited identities are not freely chosen or simply aborted because once in existence, they become part of our social reality.

Since then, Kundnani (2007) argues that the concept of racism has been turned on its head. It was no longer a question of the ways in which society systematically excluded particular groups. It was supposed instead that non-White groups themselves refused to integrate and thus made them strange to the White. Moreover, racism was to be misunderstood as an outcome of segregation, not its cause. As a matter of fact, extremism has no basis in relation to self-segregation. Interviews and focus group discussions with British Muslims in Bradford also rejected the myth of isolationism of Muslims (Phillips 2006). This research shows how Muslims generally wished to live beyond their areas and mix with other communities, as long as they did not feel threatened. Recent evidence provided by Heath & Demireva (2014) proves that the second generation of South Asian communities do not lead parallel lives.

Discourse on Muslims unified conservatives and liberals to reach the same conclusion. After the protests in 2001 and the event of 9/11, many in the Liberal and Centre-Left jumped on the integrationist bandwagon to attack cultural diversity, an ideal that has been long contended by the Right. To them, Britishness should offer the same sense of self-understanding and belonging to reduce the appeal of extremist identities while encouraging mutual loyalty among citizens (Uberoi & Modood, 2013).

In his famous speech at the Munich Security Conference 2011, David Cameron addressed terrorism and home-grown radicalisation of Muslim youths as a result of failure to adopt British values. "...So I believe we need to be far more muscular in promoting British values and the institutions that uphold them. That's what a genuinely liberal country does: it believes in certain values and actively promotes them." Due to too much room for tolerance, he insisted, "We must build stronger societies and stronger identities at home. Frankly, we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and a much more active, muscular liberalism" (Gov.UK, 2011).

Evidently, David Cameron's speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2011 denounced the failure of multiculturalism and officially marked the road to muscular liberalism. The failure of multiculturalism is key to the right's agenda of attacking diversity policies. The New Right assumes that solidarity and diversity cannot co-exist. Consequently, the challenge faced by Muslims has shifted from the accusation of self-segregation to an attack on incompatible values (Kundnani, 2012). Despite allowing all citizens to participate democratically in a debate about values, acceptance of Muslims as fellow citizens is taken to be conditional on their prior acceptance of British values. This civic integration has been promoted through a set of shared

values that constitute Britishness, marked by citizenship ceremony for immigrants. Along with strict new asylum and immigration rules, these measures were deemed necessary to address public fears about multiculturalism (Kundnani, 2007).

To be specific, the hegemonic discourse on Muslim communities reinforces the current form of muscular liberalism (Holohan, 2014). Rather than protecting its citizens from violence, the integration agenda has been formulated with a perceived need to reassert Western values against radicalism (Mills, Griffin and Miller, 2011). With the shift from multiculturalism to liberal integrationism, cultural diversity is stifled, in fact diversity is regarded as a threat to integration, ethnic division must be eliminated, and a definition of one-for-all British values is embarked upon.

For those on the right of British politics, it has long been the contention that cultural diversity is a threat to national cohesion and security. By examining David Cameron's speeches, he repeatedly promotes British civic integration from 2011 to 2014. Similar to the previous speech he made at the Munich Security Conference in 2011, he echoed the same theme three years later to mark the 799th anniversary of the Magna Carta by proclaiming his doctrine of muscular liberalism (Gov.UK, 2014). Cameron again reasserts national values and urges every citizen to uphold British values. It is "the core of what it is to live in Britain." He said that everyone, "from ministers to ordinary voters should actively confront those who hold extremist views."

To summarize, the journey to integration in Britain elaborated on in the preceding paragraphs has indicated different routes. It was initially marked by Race Relations during the Thatcher era in the 1980's; followed by the Community Cohesion of Tony Blair's premiership after the opening of the new millennium; and the present Muscular Liberalism, a year after David Cameron took office to lead a coalition government in 2010. Looking into British multicultural society, integration discourses are widely discussed on the various platforms of the political stage, ranging from the Left, Centre to the Right. For the last 15 years, government policy has been subject to change and revision, from the racism of colour to 'the racialization of Muslimness' (Kundnani, 2012). It is now appropriate to focus on how Muslims have been politicized in the process of integration and the search for national identity.

2.2 The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion

While the multiculturalists believe in diversity, integrationists believe in assimilation. Kundnani (2014) identifies integrationists as supporters of conservatism or the culturalists on one hand, and adherents of liberalism or the reformists on the other. While the culturalists think Islamic culture is backward and fails to adapt to modernity, the reformists believe Islamist ideology is totalitarian and incompatible with liberal values. These two camps claim that the root cause of terrorism is Islamic culture and Islamist ideology respectively. Kundnani contends that both approaches are institutionalized in the strategy of community cohesion and have normalised anti-Muslim racism. Indeed, Muslims suffer from double racism – cultural and ideological.

In the search for national identity, Burnett (2007) raises a concern on the strategy of community cohesion, which through its proclaimed shared values, aims to instil superior values. In another study, Moosavi (2013) considers how Tony Blair's New Labour government represented Islam and Muslims in speeches given between 2001 and 2007 arguing that the representations were often Islamophobic. Later under the doctrine of muscular liberalism, Kundnani (2012) emphasises that it implies a forced assimilation with the dominant society. Through a multiculturalism of fear, Kundnani (2007) observes that British civic integration is about to accommodate the Muslim community into a liberal state in the form of hegemonic liberalism, which reflects an imperialist political culture and orientalism. The integrationist Islamophobia is the manifestation of the Orientalist fear of what it considers different and strange.

Even the term multiculturalism itself 'is a boo word' according to one former MP (Uberoi and Modood, 2013a). As a result, Allen (2010a, p. 231) states that "this cultural racism became largely rooted in frames of inclusion and exclusion, specifying who and what may legitimately belong to a particular national, ethnic or other population as well as determining what that population's norms might be."

In a global society, citizenship entails a tension between inclusion and exclusion. This is realized through the grant of citizenship that encompasses legal status, rights, participation and sense of belonging (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2008). Stemming from the immigrants' status as citizens, the issues of rights and participation have become polemics and have inflamed a series of heated debates among political elites as well as academicians. Does multiculturalism hinder engagement with a wider society? Or rather, foster inclusivity and a sense of belonging?

Proponents of British multiculturalism defend the inclusion of the minority to cultivate a sense of belonging. A seminal study on this area is the work of Tariq Modood. Modood (2005) defines multiculturalism as a two-way interaction between the members of majority and ethnic minorities, where both parties should initiate ways to integrate. All members of society must recognize the distinctiveness of each group and that the process of integration works differently for different groups. In this regard, Modood (2011) identifies two relative reasons that hinder healthy integration. Firstly, the difference associated with negative attributes such as alien, inferior, stereotyped and excluded. Secondly, the difference that stems from identity and conscience. The former is labelled by the majority, while the latter is sensed by the minority. These two processes are the key elements of data for multiculturalism and they always interact in conflict.

Conflicting views may occur over private affairs. For instance, arranged marriage does not necessarily mean forced marriage as defined by Joppke (2004). Arranged marriage is an agreed union of bride and groom to keep a relationship between two families connected. The union will not be materialized until agreement is sought from both parties. The marriage is carefully arranged and sometimes even takes years. It is a tradition particularly among south Asian families who normally live in a large, extended family. This is in contrast to forced marriage as understood by many. Sardar in his newspaper column in *The Guardian* (2008) made it clear on this: "That (forced marriage) is quite another phenomenon related to tribal customs. Some of these tribal customs are alive and well in places such as Bradford and Manchester. It is for the honour of the tribe that Asian girls are kidnapped, brow-beaten, tortured into marriages. It is due to obnoxious tribal customs that honour killings have come to be part of the British Asian experience. But tribal customs have nothing to do with Asian tradition."

For the minority, their cultural norms and practises could bind them together and contribute to their well-being as British citizens. A sense of belonging is something emotional (Rietveld, 2013) and related to the affective component of integration (Berry, 2011). Berry stresses that in a process of integration, all acculturating people will encounter a relative preference for both recognition and inclusion. They are prone to a desire to maintain the group's culture and identity, which is sought through a demand for recognition. Simultaneously, they are keen to interact with other ethnic groups within the wider society, including the dominant one. Hence, claim-makings for recognition and inclusion constitutes a multicultural society.

In the light of majority-minority relations, Uberoi and Modood (2013b) argue it is about mutual recognition. Recognising diversity is about reducing fear of cultural difference and exclusion suffered by the minority (Uberoi and Modood, 2013a). Similarly, Kivisto (2012) suggests that the politics of inclusion constitutes an effort to confront the burdens of stigmatization. For instance, when school children only learn in the history or religion of the majority culture, they will feel excluded from the citizenry. In the formation of Britishness, Uberoi & Modood (2013b) propose recognising diversity and making Britishness more inclusive. To be inclusive is to be recognisable, henceforth a sense of belonging will emerge.

Based on a large-scale survey of cross-national and single countries, Wright & Bloemraad (2012) showed that multiculturalism in many cases fosters engagement with society and government. They rebut claims that multiculturalism hinders immigrants' socio-political integration. Moreover, social bonding among the minority does not have inimical consequences (Heath and Demireva, 2014). Heath and Demireva's work shows that even though those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descendants do practice endogamy and exhibit friendship within their circles, they mix well with other people in residential areas and in the workplace where segregation is rather low. They are willing to integrate into majority society and associate with British identity. In this respect, cultural identities are not essentially fixed over time (Hall 2006). Through the process of colonialism, immigration and globalization, they undergo constant transformation and are open to the interplay of history, culture and power. Therefore, to multiculturalists, labelling a group as separated, homogeneous, and static is not realistic. The minorities are capable of integrating and sharing national values whilst their cultural differences are being recognized.

As globalisation and diversity is the current feature of today's world, multiculturalism cannot remain as merely a description for a heterogeneous society. The difference must be recognized as each group has different norms and sensibilities towards certain concepts. For example, freedom of speech and equality of gender which have been defined as British values and are universally accepted by all kinds of people. At this point, Kundnani (2007, p.38) however argues that values have always been mediated by political, cultural and class factors. Talking from the view of a liberal democratic state, he reminds us: "there will always be significant disagreement about social norms and there cannot be one national story in a democracy".

To conclude, a review of the debate on multiculturalism involves a dynamic interrogation within the secular hemisphere since Muslim settlement in the West become visible. While the US

Constitution protects freedom of religion and encompasses the freedom preserved for Muslims, the US campaign of WoT affects Muslims in practising their religious norms and defending their values. In Europe, French secularism and its colour-blind racism does not guarantee protection on individual rights when dealing with Muslim affairs even though the separation of Church and State is rooted in the antagonistic approach of the Catholic Church towards the public. It is less to do with the religion of Islam and privilege for Muslims in institutional arrangements and policy. As for the UK, despite being more tolerant to visible Muslim practices than France, some of Muslim cultural values have been alienated from the majority. Muslim norms and practices have been labelled as intolerant and blamed on the failure of integration. Indeed, Muslims have become the scapegoats in the policy of integration and the search for national identities.

Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that the politicisation of Muslims takes different form across countries but results in similar consequences – the victimisation of Muslim communities and their religious practices. Nevertheless, some supporters of multiculturalism still believe that the components of multiculturalism converge with civic integration (Banting and Kymlicka, 2012; Uberoi and Modood, 2013b). In this respect, the spirit of multiculturalism remains lively for Western democracies through its guarantee of rights of citizens regardless of race, colour, gender or religion. At the same time, the requirement to adhere with the host's existing values is deemed unproblematic by granting the freedom of conscience. Unfortunately, as proven in the preceding case studies of multiculturalism, this freedom of conscience is lacking in the integration process, minorities are still being excluded in the nation-building and being deprived economically. In brief, community cohesion and its idea of shared values carry an Orientalist bias of modern-backward dichotomy (Kundnani, 2012; Holohan, 2014; Uberoi & Modood, 2013) that may prolong the debate of multiculturalism.

It can be argued that multiculturalism is more fitting to postmodernism where everyone is different but equal. Although postmodernism embraces both Orientalism and cultural pluralism where diversity and equality are much appreciated, Orientalism lends a globalized power to the West to exercise that power over a perceived threat it itself created (Sardar, 1999). A binary of superiority and inferiority remains in the agenda of community cohesion and later muscular liberalism, thus leading to a unipolar hegemony which contradicts with postmodern ideals. The following section will discuss Orientalism and how it operates as a grand narrative in the relationship of Muslim minority and the wider society.

2.3 Orientalism

In his seminal work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said's critique (E. W. Said, 2003) provides a foundation for discussing the representation of Muslims in the media. Said maintains that Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and "the Occident" (p.2). It often involves seeing Eastern culture as exotic, backward, inferior, uncivilized, and at times dangerous. Resultantly, Orientalism has become "a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient" (p.3).

Rooted in the history of western imperialism, Said claims Orientalism is a body of knowledge and power institutionalised by European colonialism towards its colonized territories following Napoleon's conquest of Egypt in 1798. Orientalism is artificially constructed and is epistemologically divorced from the East. By referring to the Middle East as the Orient, Said wrote (1978, pp.1-2):

"The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience...The Orient is an integral part of European material civilisation and culture."

Ziauddin Sardar (1999) further explained Orientalism and extended Said's arguments. He even traced the idea of Orientalism as early as 1704 when Antoine Gallard published a translation called *Persian and Turkish Tales or 1001 Nights*. Better known as *The Arabian Nights* after the English translation appeared in 1714, the story served as an imaginative sense of an exotic Orient that fed an imaginative sense of a mighty Europe. Furthermore, the fiction of *Arabian Nights* presented all the ideas about "sensuality, licentiousness, cruelty, fanaticism, treachery, despotism and barbarism" (Sardar 1999, p.43). This imaginary was consistently injected through migratory literary, travel books, and literature, providing a valid reason for the West to conquer the Orient geographically. In fact, Orientalism is defined not by itself, but as depending on the constructive image of the other self. The Other is an ontological necessity for the Self within the framework in which it is only through Other constitution that the Self becomes a meaningful subject (Hansen, 2007). Orientalism henceforth projected a relative dichotomy of West and East, hence a division of superiority and inferiority.

In his last lecture in The Hague, Netherlands, Said (2004) mentioned that: "Twenty-five years after *Orientalism* was published, questions remain about whether modern imperialism ever ended or whether it has continued in the Orient since Napoleon's entry into Egypt two centuries ago." The answer is yes, and no. Orientalism continues to propagate western hegemony in order to control the destiny of others. Notwithstanding, it is no longer the White conquest of the Orient lands, but now it operates in the West. Commenting on this, Sardar (1999, p.110) quotes, "Orientalism is transformed into an expression of globalized power and becomes both an instrument for exercising that power and containing perceived threats to that power." In this regard, Sardar draws attention to the iconic symbols of veiled women and radical men as general representations of Islam. The symbols emerge as marks of difference and exclusion, thus a direct product of the threats that the West perceives from Islam. In the context of a globalized world where diversity is an inevitable phenomenon, hegemonic liberalism was perpetually endorsed in mass media to strengthen the cultural difference of the superior 'Us' and the inferior 'Them'.

In *Orientalism*, Said described the relationship between the West and the East as an asymmetrical one, from which the construction of the East has been made possible (Clarke, 1993). It is a "relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said 1978, p. 133). This relationship gives presence and reality of the Orient through the vision of the West and further develops the dichotomy of strong and weak, modern and traditional. In explaining this dual presence, Said, however, limits the discussion mainly to the constructed "idea (of the Orient) that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that has given it reality and presence for the West" (p. 132).

This shortcoming opens his work to some criticisms. Firstly, Said failed to define what is true about the Orient. Turner (1989) disputes the anti-foundationalist epistemology used by Said, which does not offer 'the real' Orient (if this is possible). Similarly, Halliday (2009) argues that *Orientalism* did not provide a thorough analysis of the reality of the Oriental society and politics specifically, instead it generalized them from the regional outlook, in this case the Middle East. Therefore, Halliday (2006) insists that any discourse of a population should consider its distinct history that forms various political and social conditions.

However, Samiei (2010, p.2) observes the limit and holds the view that, "Said's main thesis in *Orientalism* is not to suggest that there is such a thing as a real or true Orient which has been misrepresented by Westerners; nor is it to make an assertion about the necessary privilege of

an 'insider' perspective over an 'outsider one'." In other words, Said's work is only to deconstruct the western history about a specific form of activity – representation, by which a product of postmodernism. As put by Viswanathan (2004, p. xviii), "...his work is only to correct the historical record in the West and not to facilitate the restitution of those who have been wronged by that history."

Secondly, Said overlooks the fact that deconstruction of the discourse of the West and the East draws on a notion of difference and implies conflict and adversary. It is worth noting that Said's *Orientalism* is secular and postmodern in character. He admitted that any discourse on western history revolves around the secular versus the religious. In an interview with a socialist and feminist journal, *Radical Philosophy* (1993, in Viswanathan 2004), Said stressed his stance on Islam. "...I'm read by many people as a champion of Islam, which is complete nonsense. I wasn't trying to defend Islam" (p. 220). He further reiterated that intellectual planetary "...is the space of history as opposed to the space of the sacred or the divine" (p. 222).

Sardar is critical of the west-east duality that Said draws from his Orientalism discourse. Sardar takes issue with the contention that:

"Said's construction of Orientalism takes the project of secular and Eurocentric discourse towards a new trajectory...Indeed, in direct parallel to 'the Orient' and 'the Occident', Said posits a new binary duality, 'secular world' and 'religious world' – echoing Salman Rushdie's construction of 'the light of secularism' versus 'the darkness of religion'" (1999, p. 75).

In the Rushdie case, Said loudly condemned the call for banning *Satanic Verses*, which he considered an obsessive outcry of Muslims to preserve their authenticity in an emigrated country. Said showed an unsympathetic attitude towards Muslim immigrants in this polemic and regarded the intention to return to the ideal of community, as a road to perdition. By ignoring the essence of religiosity, Sardar argues that it is not possible for Said to provide an alternative to Orientalism.

The study on the East would have been more relevant if a much more systematic approach had been explored. Turner (1989) expands Said's *Orientalism* by forwarding the advancement of cultural globalism that characterizes the world today where diverse cultural traditions are likely to merge. Cultural globalism, according to Turner, undermines "cognitive relativism because the idea of separate and different cultural traditions cannot be maintained" (Turner 1989, p. 629).

Turner henceforth suggests that global sociology has to replace a social-centred perspective in examining single populations. The binary of Orientalism and Occidentalism should be abolished and supplanted with the recognition of diversity. Global cultural plurality is promisingly achievable in peace if one society is able to cope with its own internal diversity without prejudice (Samiei, 2010). The current climate of globalised world in general and Europe in particular has provided a platform to test the extent of cultural plurality.

To locate Orientalism in the context of Muslims in the West, I would argue that there is no single version of Orient because any discussion on the Orient is contextual and should be located in spatial and temporal aspects. Islam, for example, is shared by different sects such as Sunni, Shia, Sufi and Wahhabi. Equally important, Muslims in Saudi Arabia or other Arab states are different from Muslims in South-east Asian regions, Indian subcontinents and certain other African countries. Each embrace a diverse history, culture, norm and biology. Correspondingly, Muslims in the West assert a distinctive identity over their counterparts from other continents by the emergence of hybrid and hyphenated identities such as British Muslims, American Muslims or French *Musulman*. But regrettably, Orientalists generalise Islam as a static and monolithic entity and see Muslims solely through the prism of Orientalised religion.

There is a collection of critiques of Said's concept of Orientalism ranging from the systematic and analytic to the palpably ideological, critiques that incorporate the perspectives of neo liberalism through to those of post colonialism and Marxism. The works of Warraq (2007) and Dabashi (2017) are indicative of the range and the Taylor and Francis Journal of Post-colonial Writing and a collection of other related journals are indicative of a location for certain relevant academic debates. These debates have amongst other matters, commented on contemporary socio-political developments within Islamic societies including Islamic fundamentalism and its implications. One theme to have emerged from these debates is that of 'reverse Orientalism.' 'Reverse Orientalism' is critical of 'the west's' stereotyping of the orient and emphasises the orient's diversity and complexity and espouses its traditional values whilst in turn stereotyping 'the west' (Achcar, 2013). That said, I have elected to consider the work of Sadik Jalal al-'Azm (1981) a more or less sympathetic critique of Said's work.

In his writing, al-'Azm (1981) observes that some Muslim thinkers and leftists have been trapped in reproducing a classical doctrine of Orientalism that marks an essential contradiction between Islam and the West. Similar to the classical Orientalists, the Orientalised thinkers project the

distinction of Islam from the West as 'We' are superior to 'Them'. Al-'Azm illustrates how the Arabs self-congratulate their nationalism through texts and literature and in defining Arab superiority, exactly imitating the way the Orientalists define the essential quality of the superior West. He wrote (p.11):

"It simply imitates the great Orientalist masters – a poor imitation at that – when it seeks to unravel the secrets of the primordial Arab 'mind', 'psyche' or 'character' in and through words. In other terms, it has obediently and uncritically adopted what Said pejoratively called the Orientalists' 'textual' attitude to reality."

In a second instance, al-'Azm drew an example from the Islamic revival movement, particularly the Iranian Revolution in 1979. The revolution was used as evidence that the Muslim glory can be materialised with a return to the authenticity of Islam regardless of such factors as politics, economics and social conditions. This idea has been popularised by political Islamists. All the western ideas of secularism, liberalism, capitalism, and nationalism are deemed as not compatible with Islam.

Furthermore, Orientalism in reverse also works among other eastern nations such as the Malay people who were once labelled by the English colonial as lazy and unproductive (Taib, 2015). The same iteration has been uttered by some Malay elites themselves in their writings when they tried to improve the social and economic conditions. After all, "orientalism in reverse shares a common core with traditional Orientalism: the essentialist view according to which religiosity is a permanent and essential phenomenon for Muslim peoples" (Achcar, 2008). This is an ahistorical and monolithic proposition that excludes social, political and economic factors only prolonging the division of the East and the West and repeating the traditional Orientalism as al-'Azm puts it: "Ontological Orientalism in Reverse is, in the end, no less reactionary, mystifying, ahistorical and anti-human than Ontological Orientalism proper" (al-'Azm, 1981, p.23).

To extend Said's critique on Orientalism, my research will show how Islam is characterised as exhibiting diversity. Through visual representations, Muslim identity is not constructed solely through the lens of religion, but from other social factors. The emergence of hybrid or hyphenated identity from the visual representations suggest that the West and Islam are not seen to be diametrically opposed and that they are not in opposition. Representation in Muslim media could diminish the homogeneity of normalised images of Muslims in mainstream media that has formed a strong cultural imagination of the binary of Islam and the West for several

decades. The projection of Orientalism has been successfully reinforced in the media through representation. The following section will discuss the media representation of Muslims and in what forms they have been homogenized and Orientalised in the name of integration and social cohesion, particularly in Britain.

2.4. Muslims in the Media: The Orientalised Representation

The US-led campaign of War on Terror (WoT) was perhaps the most successful Western propaganda in history to demonize Islam and Muslims globally and domestically. The 9/11 attack developed a degree of suspicion towards Muslim minorities where their difference has become apparent and has led to considerable debates about their exclusion from mainstream society (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Culcasi and Gokmen, 2011). Moreover, the implications of the attack increased feelings of fear and insecurity and simultaneously has limited the view of inclusive and collective belonging (Eid and Karim, 2011). Post-9/11, negative representations of Muslims have been overwhelmingly depicted and have created a climate which enabled war in Afghanistan and later on Iraq to be justified at the level of global conflict. Mainstream media in many non-Muslim countries carries and constructs dominant discourses on terror where 'We' are threatened by barbaric enemies, 'Their' women are being oppressed with traditional culture, and 'We' need to save the women and fight the men (Maira, 2009).

The media coverage of Muslims in the West reflects local approaches to integration. Domestically, two issues were widely covered – Islamic terrorism, radicalism and totalitarianism on the one hand; and Muslim alien culture on the other (Meer and Modood, 2009; Kundnani, 2012, 2014). These 'threats within' emerged as popular narratives in the press. Several attestations to this claim can be found in the recent literature of media representation of Muslims and Islam. Terrorism, Muslim extremism and cultural issues made up the top three dominant topics in the British media (Lewis, Mason and Moore, 2011; Poole, 2011; Allen, 2012b). Similarly, media in the United States (Khalid, 2011; Sides and Gross, 2013), Canada (Hirji, 2011; Jiwani, 2011), France (Rigoni, 2007; Navarro, 2010), Germany (Richter, 2009) and Belgium (Zemni, 2011) depict Muslims as a threat to the law of the republic (particularly French), secularism, freedom of expression, women's rights and security of the West.

One major theoretical issue that has dominated the media representations of Islam and Muslims for many years concerns the narratives and depictions of Muslims as being a threat to integration

within British society. Islam in the media or 'mass media Islam', a term used by Rane (2008) to describe the media construction of Islam, is a restricted representation of the real Islam. Petley & Richardson (2011) present a comprehensive review of how Islam and Muslims have been targeted as scape goats in the British media to explain all the unease between Muslims and the wider society. They observe that most of the media coverage framed Muslims as a major obstacle in the realisation of integration policies and programmes. Moreover, the negative coverage is likely to hinder multiculturalism and a multi-faith spirit and cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Despite some claims that the UK print media seems to recognize diversity and respect sensitivity (Petley & Richardson, 2011) and shows the evolution of a limited multiculturalism (Featherstone, Holohan and Poole, 2010), that Muslim cultural differences remain a threat to integration dominates the coverage of British Muslims. The 'threat within' had dominated British press even before the 9/11 attack. Poole (2002, p.84) in her influential work of *Reporting Islam* demonstrates four critical themes that emerged from the press coverage analysis:

- i. Muslims' involvements in deviant activities threaten security and have no place in British society.
- ii. Muslims are a threat to British values.
- iii. There are inherent cultural differences between Muslims and British, which create tensions.
- iv. Muslims are increasingly making their presence felt in public.

The above themes formulate the concept of a political and media-manufactured Islamophobia (Abbas, 2004). Islamophobia later classifies Muslims as a stereotypical community (Allen, 2010a) as evidenced in British media reporting.

Many researchers have argued that there is homogeneity in the media representation of Muslims. For example, in a study highlighting the degree of Muslim visibility in British print media before and after the 9/11 attack, Poole (2011) observed that issues concerning British Muslims exhibited continuation of certain dominant discourses, which link Muslims with terrorism, extremism and cultural difference over 15 years (1994-2008). Likewise, Elgamri (2010) indicates that the coverage of world important events in four decades – the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Salman Rushdie Affair (1989), the massacre of foreign tourists in Egypt (1997), and the 9/11

attack (2001) – cumulatively universalise Islam as a monolithic entity and synonymous with religious hysteria. A recent study by Baker et al. (2013) shows that the British press present Muslims as a homogenous community closely related to conflict by viewing Islam as problematic and associated with aggression. The prolonged homogenization of Muslims, combined with negative coverage, by the press therefore has a tendency to shape the reality of this population to the public.

Other studies suggest that coverage shows Muslims as failing to integrate, making unreasonable demands and holding incompatible values and interests (see Lewis et al. 2011). In the following paragraphs, a number of media constructions on the ‘Muslim threat’ will be critically examined and also the ideological and political implications that each construction carries with it will be considered. It will be argued that British mainstream media negatively generate ideas relating to Muslims in a two-pronged portrayal, namely biological and cultural racism; and a gendered politics of representation.

One significant way that the media has constructed the reality of Muslims in the UK is by their focus on social tensions between Muslims and the majority ethnic group through references to Muslim biological and cultural inheritance. For example, while Baker et al. (2013b) maintain that the media tend to highlight the cultural membership and ethnic heritage of Muslims as the main factor of clashes, Morey & Yaqin (2011) also bring the same stigmatization faced by Muslims with regards honour killings, which gain a significant political impact on cultural differences of ‘Others’. Even though the domestic violence could happen to anybody else and for several reasons, the background of the criminals is highlighted, such as a ‘Pakistani father’, ‘an asylum dad’ and ‘a Kurdish mother’ to associate the problem with Islamic culture.

Additionally, Poole's research (2011) comes to the same conclusion. The UK media has placed Islamic belief as the central explanation for terrorism and extremism. The association between religion and violence was highlighted and other motives were dismissed. Also, the defendants were othered by mentioning their backgrounds of origin (for example, Iraqi or Saudi-born). Such Muslim clerics as Omar Bakri Mohammed and Abu Hamza were labelled as preachers of hate due to their speeches that contained anti-Western messages. Conversely, according to Poole, the hate speech label did not apply to Geert Wilders, the anti-Islam Dutch MP who produced the film *Fitna*. The media generally assert freedom of speech to the liberal European ‘Us’, while hate speech represents the Muslim ‘Others’.

Under those circumstances, media representations of British Muslims connote their social and political exclusion from the mainstream society. Their Islamic traditions are blamed and attributed for the crime and Islam was the only attribute concerning reported negative events. Instead of reporting the news fairly, the stories became a short-cut evidence in projecting the key clash between an enlightened 'Self' and uncivilized 'Others'.

To illustrate, there are some notable events taking place in Britain in the 1980's and the new millennium that are claimed to form the central narrative about the Muslim population. I outline two key issues that sparked debates on the alienation of the Muslim community whose religion has been perpetuated as the only explanation for action and excludes them from the mainstream. The Rushdie Affair and the Veil Affair will be discussed to investigate how British media Orientalise Muslims from a western secular perspective. These two events questioned Muslim values and practices as being an alien to the UK, that is incompatible with the dominant society. All Muslims were homogenised through a generalisation of orthodoxy and segregation. In this research, the claim of homogenised Muslims will be tested by looking at the two selected British Muslim magazines and it is expected that the images represented in the two chosen texts counter the mainstream representation. Rushdie's novels are illustrative of the literary genre of 'magical realism', a genre with its roots in the works of Jonathon Swift's satirical writing and directions from within classical Greek theatre. It uses supernatural elements in mundane settings. While the Rushdie Affair propagated the idea that Islamic beliefs are alien through a focus on freedom of expression, the Veil Affair drew attention to the idea of the disintegration of British society due to Islamic values, symbolised by the wearing of niqab.

2.4.1 Rushdie Affair: The alienated Muslim culture

Perhaps the most well-known example of cultural racism in the media could be traced back to the Salman Rushdie Affair in 1989. Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses* narrates his imaginative interpretation on the history of the Prophet Muhammad and the Quranic revelation in the name of fictional literature. His imaginary characters and the plot of the story insult the divinity of the prophet and the Quran, which symbolises (to many Muslims) an offensive gesture aimed at the Muslim population in the West. As prevailed in the media representation, it was a major turning point in the assertion of identity politics, notably from the struggle of race and class towards the war of culture (Anthony, 2009).

Following some Muslims' condemnation of the controversial book, British broadsheets assigned Islam with problematic cultural attributes such as being monolithic, extreme, violent, anti-western and irrational (Elgamri, 2010). Television channels aired numerous opinions by experts to discuss the protests, but most were non-Muslims. This irony could explain the impaired views on Muslim affairs when it was enthusiastically clarified by non-Muslims. It was recorded that the ratio of appearance between non-Muslim and Muslim experts was ten to one (Sardar & Davies, 1990). Muslim voices had been side-lined. Their series of protests were mainly framed by non-Muslims and there should be a diversity in sources commenting on this matter that includes more Muslim voices.

It is worthy to note that Muslim protests did not receive special media coverage until the book was burned in Bradford. Demonstrations in Islamabad and Kashmir also caught media attention which was dubbed as being irrational and fanatical. Then the polemic gained its momentum when Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran issued his personal juristic opinion that Rushdie should be executed. Despite recognizing that not all Muslims agreed with the verdict, the western media repeatedly played out Khomeini's statement (Sardar & Davies, 1990).

Parekh (1990) accused the mainstream media of dismissing the root cause of Muslim anger. The protest was about cultural identity and survival (Sardar & Davies, 1990). It was more than a response to a blasphemy against Muslim culture. Mocking the established facts on the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad is strictly forbidden under Islamic law. Freedom of speech is part of Islamic culture, but it must be bound within an agenda of social responsibility. Common sense dictates that it was unacceptable to dishonour the beloved person or collective asset of a minority group by means of abuse or mockery even in the name of creativity. Despite its offensive content to Muslims, the novel won the prestigious Whitbread Literary Awards (currently known as The Costa Book Awards). The burning of the book and the anti-Rushdie demonstrations should be seen not as a manifestation of defending a religion but perhaps more of a reaction to the western ignorance and insensitivity to economic and social circumstances rather than an alien culture of immigrants.

Sardar (1999) also argued that the novel is another Orientalist strategy to secularize the Orient by using a parody and ridicule, an approach which was popular among Enlightenment thinkers. Sardar (p. 91) points out that:

“Rushdie attempts this (secularizing Islam) by rewriting the Seerah, the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the paradigm of Muslim behaviour and identity, and seals it in his own, dogmatic secularist, image. The Satanic Verses is thus an exercise in undermining both the sacred history of Islam and the very personality that defines Muslims as Muslims and thus to erase the entire cultural and religious identity of Muslim people.”

This deliberate attempt frustrated Muslims from all segments of the world against Rushdie but was ignored by the political elites and media organizations.

2.4.2 Veil Affair: A gendered representation

Another long-standing social construction perpetuated by the media centres on the representation of gender to reformulate an idea of nationhood. The ‘veil affair’ sparked a national debate in October 2006 when Jack Straw, the former Labour British Foreign Secretary and the Leader of the Commons at that time, wrote an article in the Lancashire Evening Telegraph about face-veiled Muslim women or niqabi women in his Blackburn constituency. In his weekly column, he shared his feeling of discomfort when meeting Muslim women wearing the niqab in his office. To him, the niqab hinders effective interpersonal communication and he described it as ‘a visible statement of difference and separation’. The issue received massive media reaction that came up with such notions as a symbol of separation, mark of difference, failure to integrate and threat to the British way of life.

For the most part, the veil of Muslim women has become a contested signifier of being different and excluded from the rest of society (Meer, Dwyer and Modood, 2010; Williamson and Khiabany, 2011). This is evident in the way the British media covered the debates of the veil. Williamson (2014) examines the debates on the veil in the British press from 2001 to 2011 where it has been vividly politicised in a way to discriminate against the Muslim population. Further research by Khiabany & Williamson (2008) also shows that veiled women symbolize difference and have been projected as a threat to British integration. In a study of veiled identity, Chakraborti & Zempi (2012) emphasize that there is a sharp disparity between the chosen identity of Muslim women and the constructed identity by the majority. Although the concept of Islamophobia is always perceived as gender-neutral, they argue that veiled Muslim women have been victimized and targeted to represent difference and intolerance, which further reinforces stigmatization and alienation.

In a more recent study, Allen (2014a, p.140) concludes that all visible manifestations of Islamic attire including hijab, niqab, abaya, or jilbab has been perceived as 'wrong, problematic and threatening.' Henceforth, every devoted Muslim woman has now become a construction of 'otherness.' "The veil has become an image of otherness, of a refusal to integrate and an example of the 'failings' of multiculturalism" (Williamson & Khiabany 2010, p. 85). Indeed, Muslim women have been politicised in a gendered representation to reinforce the centrality of white culture in the discourse of integration.

In the coverage of Islam and Muslims, the media contents are manipulative as they are delivered "in the interests of one party, and against the best interests of the recipients" (van Dijk 2006, p. 363). In the context of British integration, the veil, instead of demonstrating the limited number of wearers, has been used to symbolize Muslims as different and alien to the majority group, thus unable to integrate. This alien community is constructed by the media and consequently blamed for the failure of integration, and not government policy. Instead of integrating people, media, by its discursive power, cultivate suspicions and prejudice between the majority and minority groups (Allen, 2012b).

The symbolical veil has led to the stigmatisation of Muslims through a repetitively narrow framing of Muslims in the media (Morey and Yaqin, 2010). Whereas the male has been represented as a threat to security, the female has been depicted as a threat to nationhood. Indeed, gendered politics or what Elgamri (2010) coins as 'sexual imageries' has dominated media discourse. The image of Muslim women in Britain has now moved from being the victim of extremism that needs liberation towards suppression of freedom, symbols of difference, refusal to integrate, resistance of western values and a threat to national culture.

It can be argued that both the Rushdie and veil affairs have essentialised Muslims as one single community, with religion as the only attribute to explain all Muslim affairs. Based on the above evidence, media narratives on Muslims tend to repeat the idea of an older conflict between Orientals and the West through recurring stereotypes of inferior Muslims and superior West, other-self and outsider-insider dyads (Baderoon, 2003; Richardson, 2011). Muslims suffer from biological and cultural racism and have been dragged into gendered politics in relation to British integration. The ideas that Muslims are a visible threat to integration, totally Other to non-Muslims, and religiously motivated in all activities have become commonplace in the UK media regardless of the political affiliation of the newspapers. As far as Muslims are concerned, there

is now a blurred distinction between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, as well as between the right and liberal press (Williamson, 2014). In fact, British muscular liberalism and its Orientalist bias penetrates much of the British media's reporting on Muslims in the UK (Holoan, 2014).

Despite the volume of coverage of homogeneous Muslims, one of the counter arguments maintains that the history of Islam proves otherwise. They are socially, culturally, politically, economically and geographically diverse. In the context of media and communication development, this actuality should be addressed wisely within the spirit of an equitable and democratic society (Wasko, 2005; Wasko, Murdock and Sousa, 2011). The misrepresentation of minority Muslims not only impedes solidarity, but also cultivates alienation in a diverse society. The higher the degree of threat felt by the majority, the greater the belief that British Muslims are unable to assimilate (Croucher, 2013). Here, Britishness has come to be constructed by the media not in a favourable manner to support and include the ethnic minority, but as distinct from a Muslim values and practices.

Instead of stating a clear self-definition of what Britishness is, *Otherness* remains the most significant component to deny what Britishness is not. In other words, the inferior Others were politicised in the nation-building project of Britishness in the same fashion it was designed in the history of western colonialism. In fact, there are connections between the colonial history of the East and the West with the 'Oriental stereotypes and gender' that shape the discourse on Muslims in the media. "Things like newspapers, news, and opinions do not occur naturally. They are made as the result of human will, history, social circumstances, institutions, and the conventions of one's profession" (Said 1997, p. 49).

However, in spite of the negativity of reporting on Muslims in the media, several mainstream outlets such as BBC have started to include a more diverse representation of Muslims that counter the dominant images and also includes them in non-religious programming such as *Eastenders* and *The British Bake Off* (Poole, 2016b). Additionally, Muslims also receive favourable representation in alternative and local media such as British Christian print media (namely *Church Times* and *The Tablet*) concerning their integration into British society (Faimau, 2016).

For the purpose of this research, the major concern lies in the diversity and complexity of Muslims living in the West, which is misrepresented in the western media as a frozen, static

population, fixed in time and space. There must be a more critical approach to evaluating the Orient and this could be achieved through self-representation. So far, however, there is not much evidence of the diversity of Muslim population coming from within the mainstream western media. The research will focus on self-representation of Muslim media in order to inform how Muslims represent themselves, their culture and history (Sardar, 1999). What follows is a brief discussion on Muslim media in the UK and the rationale behind its existence.

2.5 Muslim Media

This section emphasizes the significance of the Muslim media for providing self-representation of Muslims. 'Muslim media' is a term used for those outlets that are produced by and predominantly targeted at Muslims (Poole, 2012). The operation and role of Muslim media organisations are still under-researched yet potentially constitute an integral part of accommodating the minority population within the wider society by providing more Muslim voices and alternative sources. In the flux of global immigrations from countries of origin to the new host country, minority media organisations exist in between international media networks and mainstream channels of communication for certain communities. They operate in a way that adheres with prevailing media regulations on one hand and fulfils the needs and self-interest of their own groups on the other.

Some claim that Muslim media can further segregate the multi-ethnic society and widen social tensions by fulfilling only the self-interests of their community. One of the claims has arisen due to the anxiety of the negative implications on social cohesion when the minority is allowed to retain their own values for news and information, and maintain links with their native homeland (Metykova, 2010), thus potentially inhibit integration into their new residence. Evidence in Britain however proves otherwise. In the UK, minority media often emerge after a crisis, as a medium to seek justice and raise concern over their rights. For example, a publication aimed at Black Britons, *The Voice*, was first published due to the unfair treatment of the police against Black immigrants, following riots that took place in the 1980s. Likewise, Muslim publications grew in substantial numbers after the 9/11 attack when they were negatively focused on in the mainstream media.

This growth, as suggested by Holohan & Poole (2011), could offer some alternative views from variegated sources. It has been proven that in reports on Muslims in the UK mainstream

newspapers, those mostly quoted are White British politicians (Lewis, Mason and Moore, 2011). In an examination of the word *Muslim* used in the British press from 1998 to 2009, Baker et al. (2013b) found that the most frequent reference of Muslims were *Muslim community* and *Muslim world*. Both corpuses denote homogeneity of Muslims and alienation to the West. Following that, it enlarges the capacity of British conventional media to shape and propagate Islamophobia that hinders social tolerance of a multi-ethnic population (Allen, 2012).

Moreover, Muslim media could challenge the dominant narratives of Muslims in the mainstream media and provide alternatives for media consumers. Concerning this, Holohan & Poole (2014, pp. 3-4) propose that “Muslim media in the United Kingdom has potentially a significant role to play in the negotiation of identities for their producers and audiences and the wider public in articulating what it means to be a British Muslim”. Since media have always been influential in shaping public opinion of cultural and gender issues, especially in the midst of national crisis (Georgiou, 2012), it is argued that Muslim media could provide a counter-balance for Muslim narratives and offer different perspectives on the issues at hand.

In this respect, Cottle (2000) suggests that through representations, the members of the media audience are open to construct who ‘we’ are in relation to who ‘we’ are not, whether as ‘us’ and ‘them’. In the context of a multicultural society, the media can also perform the ‘play of cultural power that affirms social and cultural diversity.’ Correspondingly, Zick & Heeren (2014) suggest that specialized readers consume both mainstream media and specialist media to fulfil their needs and interests. From this it can be deduced that self-representation of groups is vital not only to crystallize their diversity for the sake of majority understanding, but also to provide knowledge and self-realisation of being minority citizens with rights and duties.

In the context of Muslims in Britain, research findings by Ahmed (2003) concludes that Muslim media helps to build a hybrid culture that is both British and Muslim, as well as to integrate Muslims within the wider society. Previous analysis of Muslim media support this claim. Lewis (2010) studies how minority media play a role in marketing a Muslim lifestyle through a fashion segment in five Muslim magazines in the US and the UK. These seek to be balanced with the readers’ demands of various understanding of modesty. While the hijab gives religious meaning and is perceived as an obligation by the majority of Muslim women, the veil is depicted as a choice in fitting with consumer culture in secular society. In another study, Moll (2007) examines

the construction of Muslim identity in the West, and found that Muslim media negotiate the hybrid identity of being both Muslim and Western.

Based on the above literature, Muslim media could serve as a vehicle for Muslims to voice their positions and actuality in the context of integration in a White-dominant, non-Muslim society. Henceforth, it is argued that the growth of Muslim media could fill a gap by supplying audiences with a more balanced reporting which they could obtain both from mainstream and minority media. As put by Cottle (2000, p. 3), “...they (minority media organisations) contribute an important...dimension to the communication environment of ethnic minorities and their struggles for ‘authentic’ and/or pluralistic representations.”

2.6 Conclusion

In the postmodern period, the world is saturated with images – photography, advertisements, TV programmes, movies, newspaper pictures, magazine images, snapshots, selfies, paintings – in the forms of 2D, 3D and 4D. In contemporary cultures, sociologists observe that people progressively count on visual means to define and inform their identities and social worlds (Konecki, 2011). In Muslim culture, visual is peripheral, a concept which has fascinated me and has become central in this investigation on Muslim identity in Britain. This thesis will seek to contribute to our understanding of the forms of Muslim cultural representation and of the significance of variation in the images published, and the audience interpretation of these images.

In their critiques of Orientalism, both Said and Sardar did not provide a tangible answer to the question of ‘Who is the Orient?’ and ‘How to analyse the Orient?’ This research, therefore, will analyse one aspect of the Muslimness – British Muslim women – as depicted in Muslim media. The study will examine Muslim visual representations to discuss the visual conventions of women in British Muslim magazines. Concerning this, Ahmed (1992) suggests that Muslims may employ some of the conceptual tool of postmodernists for analysis, in this case a study of images, to understand how Muslims are represented.

Methodologically, Alexander (1994) proposes some rules for analysing visual data to ensure research is systematically undertaken. In the process of interpreting data, all visual media depend on conventions of representation to produce meaning. Because of the ambiguity of

meaning that visual images may produce, it is important first, to establish an understanding on the conventions of representation, and second, to compare the data with contemporary discourse that could inform the features of particular societies.

The next chapter will examine two theoretical frameworks that could reveal a deeper understanding of the images, which refer to, firstly, the tradition of Islamic art and Muslim attitudes towards pictorial arts; and secondly, Goffman's conceptualisation of gender display. The second would complement the first in the work of visual analysis of imagery of Muslim women in the context of the self-representation of British Muslims.

CHAPTER 3

ISLAMIC ARTS AND VISUALISING GENDER

3.0 Introduction

The current chapter fashions an account of Islamic approaches to visual representation and aesthetics alongside a consideration of the belief system(s) that informs it. It introduces significant developments in practices of representation as outlined in the scholarship of art historians. An overview is offered of Persian, Ottoman and Mughal visual directions. Attention is then turned to the cultural practices of the visual representation of gender. Goffman's conceptual framework (Goffman, 1979) is employed as an analytic tool to explore a corpus of images from two distinct British Muslim magazines. It is notable that the two Muslim magazines vary significantly in terms of the style of visual representation that they respectively employ. The corpus of images serves as data for the exploration of the research problem. At a later stage in the thesis, by employing the research method of focus groups, the corpus of images is presented to an audience in order to obtain their reactions to the images.

In the theory of gender and nation, man and woman symbolize the nation (Lombardo and Meier, 2014). While masculinity has symbolized power and defence, femininity has symbolized nurture and care. In the vast literature on Muslim representation, images of Muslims in mainstream media are gendered. The visualisation of Muslim women in mainstream media suggests or evokes meanings and values of their community in Britain. This was highlighted in the previous chapter's discussion of debates around women wearing versions of the veil in Britain. Therefore, the visual representation of Muslim women is central and instrumental in constructing identity and demonstrating subjectivities of the Muslim community in minority media.

It is expected that the two magazines in the study demonstrate a distinguished 'semiotic landscape' or what Gillian Rose (2007) coined a 'scopic regime'. The term semiotic landscape was introduced by Gunther Kress & Theo van Leeuwen (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006) in their book

'Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design'. They suggest that different societies may value different forms of representation. It is stated that:

"The place of visual communication in a given society can only be understood in the context of, on the one hand, the range or forms or modes of public communication available in that society and, on the other hand, their uses and valuations. We refer to this as 'the semiotic landscape'" (p. 35).

It is the aim of this chapter to discuss the semiotic landscape available to the Muslim community in Britain. As art is the cultural product of a community or society, it is expected that the producers of content for Muslim audiences in the UK will be informed by traditions of Muslim art, which are diverse in form and representation.

Furthermore, the diversity will be investigated by examining the social meanings of images. Both sociology and art history are interested in explaining how individuals and society make sense of cultural products and how, reservedly, the visuals shape belief systems at a particular time (Müller, 2011). Therefore, I needed a framework of analysis that would enable me to study the way in which visual materials are constructed as a cultural and social product. I have borrowed Erving Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* (1979) as an analytical framework to assist in the examination of female imagery.

The following section will explain the place of graphic and plastic arts in Islam from the history of Islamic arts and how the arts could be a tangible explanation to the diversity of Muslim identity. It will be followed by the next section on Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* to situate the roles of Muslim women in Britain as depicted in the magazines, in order to identify the significant values embraced by the image producers. Using these frameworks will enable me to analyse how Muslim identity is constructed in the UK, on the basis of the values of the producers of these Muslims magazines.

3.1 Islamic Arts

This section will discuss the place of plastic and graphic artistic representations in Islam. It begins with a brief overview of the history of Islamic arts to show its diversity and how Muslims have been constructed through art and how the values reflect Muslims at different points historically and at the present time. The distinction between Islamic and western art is also discussed to demonstrate why Islam has a particular stance regarding images. Knowledge on images in Islam

provides a fundamental understanding to and sheds light on the socio-political aspects of Muslim communities in Britain, as represented in the magazines under study.

There is consensus among art historians that Islamic art is a representation of Muslim societies. However, the definition of what is Islamic has not been finalised and theorists are unable to provide a satisfactorily unified meaning. In grounding the personality of Islamic art, Oleg Grabar in his famous book, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (1973), understands the term 'Islamic' as "a culture or civilization in which the majority of the population or at least the ruling element profess the faith of Islam" (Grabar 1973, p.2). In a more complex explanation, Stewart (1972) describes Islamic art as a three-fold entity of religion, politics and culture, where each is dynamically co-extensive, inseparable and sometimes overlaps in the creation of Islamic arts. Due to its complexity, Blair & Bloom (2003) claim that it is almost impossible to define Islamic art in a single attribute. They henceforth underline several approaches to studying the field, ranging from the contexts of universalism, regions, dynasties, rulers, objects, museum collections to individual monuments. Recent studies by Shaw (2012) and Choudrey & Bobrowicz (2014) show that the term 'Islam' has been divorced from its theological origin and Islamic art has been categorized according to its location, period and specific Muslim culture.

The problem with these definitions, however, is that they limit an examination of the art from an Orientalist outlook. Even the general definition of the root word 'art' is conceived from a western idea. Art in the Oxford Dictionary is defined as: "The expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power."

A growing discourse of Orientalism in Europe and later in the United States has largely contributed to studies of Islamic art yet has mainly applied a Western epistemology. It is common among the Orientalists to locate the discussion of Islam within the Judaeo-Christian heritage (Sardar, 1999). Historically, when western imperialism discovered the Near East between the late 18th and early 19th century, Orientalist discourse constructed Islamic art as a blend of Byzantine and Sassanian elements which had transformed into an exotic non-western tradition, with particularly aniconism and decorative impulses (Necipoglu, 2012).

Long contended by Faruqi (1973), the historians of Islamic art have unanimously judged that art by standards of Western aesthetics. James (1974) considered Islamic art to be non-representational, simply because Muslims were forbidden to paint anything. Likewise, Ettinghausen (1974) recommended that despite changes of rulers, Islamic arts present uniformity that confine to such decorative arts as ceramics, calligraphy, glass and rock-crystal carvings. When Western historians look into the forms of Islamic arts that differ from sculpture and painting, they tend to see the difference as shortcomings and less in values (Blair and Bloom, 2003; Blair, 2012). By making comparisons between sculpture and painting with Islamic arts, western historians arrange the hierarchy of media by labelling them as minor, decorative and portable, implying that these forms are secondary, less important, less permanent and less stable than painting and sculpture. In fact, the aesthetic appreciation has been reduced to technical and epigraphic apprehension (Choudrey and Bobrowicz, 2014).

The application of a Western outlook is consequential to the artistic apprehension of Islamic art. Subsequently, the legacy of Orientalism is extended through imposing unity over the diversity of Islamic visual cultures. The variety that counts is limited to restrictive geographic locations or ethno-national divisions. As stressed by Shaw (2012, p.27), “modern efforts to correct Eurocentric shortcomings have often been limited by Eurocentric epistemologies.” The dichotomy of western and non-western art is rooted in European long distorting power, colonialism and eurocentrism (Hillenbrand, 2003). In this regard, Necipoglu (2012) credits Edward Said’s seminal *Orientalism* whose critiques on Orientalist discourse largely contributed to dismantling the Eurocentric Orientalist perspective from the constitution of the field of Islamic art.

In the same way, Shalem (2012) suggests a critical revision of the history of the arts of Islam by removing or at least reassessing the Eurocentric view when mapping Islamic art. Unless the historians manage to learn the grid of Islamic artistic process and its complexities, and to remove western glasses from their analytic eyes, any attempt to define Islamic art will remain unwieldy.

In order to settle the problematic nomenclature of ‘Islamic art’, it is suggested that new studies should avoid the Orientalist dichotomous analysis. By resisting the classification of major and minor arts, religious and secular, it only prolongs making ‘Others’ art inferior and ‘Ours’ superior. One way to achieve clarity on Islamic art is to acknowledge its epistemological difference from Christianity. As ethics is central in Islamic art that bind creativity, this literature is trying to clarify

both its main thrust and its aesthetic appreciation. The next section provides an explanation of Islamic arts that can be viewed from the origin of aesthetics. It is this fundamental view that could help us to understand the difference between Islamic and western arts.

3.1.1 Islamic art and the theological origin of Islamic aesthetics

In this section, we commence with a consideration of how the theological directions adopted by significant Islamic sects are relevant for shaping Islam's visual aesthetic. It is important to note the different origins of art between Islam and the West from a theological perspective. To compare western and Islamic art, both emerged from the same root – Roman and Byzantine art – but were significantly fertilized with a different ethos (Alin, 2014). According to Alin, while Christianity was responsible for the new direction and definition of Western art for centuries, the Quran that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad formed an ethical expression of Islamic art.

The genesis of Western art is naturalism. The visual art has placed human nature at the highest place and has relied on its capability to represent nature and to visualize man. Hence, human sculpture is regarded as the noblest art. Concerning this, Faruqi (1973, p.84) explains:

“The idea of man is nature's richest, highest and most complex entelechy. Its depth and inner diversity constitute an infinite mine for the artist to probe, to explore and to represent. For this reason, man was "the measure of all things"; he was the crown of creation, the carrier and concretizer of all values, the highest and the lowest. For this reason, divinity itself was conceived in his image, religion was humanism, and worship of divinity became a contemplation of the infinite depth and diversity of man's inmost nature.”

Islamic visual art, on the contrary, is more interested in divine nature and does not aesthetically discuss the human figure or artistically express human nature. Unlike Christianity, Hinduism or Buddhism, Islam is not a religion based on the manifestation of a divinity. Divinity does not visualise itself and cannot descend in a world of forms (Nasr, 2011). Islamic art is synonymous with un-iconic art that refuses to depict the divine as well as animate object in a direct form. Whenever animal and human figures are depicted, it involves stylization to impersonalize a character and represent a generic personality. Nature becomes unnatured to avoid idolatry. In fact, Islamic art is consistent with its aim to glorify the absoluteness of Divine Being without associating Him with other beings through imaginary representation.

Faruqi (1973) argues that aesthetic theory of Islam can be found in the Quran. He stresses that Islamic art is Quranic art. The messy definition of the term 'Islamic' that relates to the problematic terminology pointed out by art historians and scholars could be reconciled from the provision of the tangible nature of the Quran. Faruqi (2013) and Haleem (2010) affirm that the stylistic features of the Quran provide a clear explanation of what constitutes Islamic culture encompassing its definitions, structures, goals and methods for reaching those goals. The unique characteristics of Islamic visual arts are inspired by the presentation of Quranic messages, throughout twenty-three years of Muhammad's prophethood in the seventh century.

It has been noted that Western art is both visual and aesthetic. By contrast, Islamic art intertwines between faith and intellect (Sajoo, 2011) that can be traced from its form of aesthetic expression and artistic design. Faith is central in all aspects of Muslim thought and life as well as art. Art is a reflection of God's power in His diverse creation, and yet united in faith. Therefore, this literature is trying to reveal the main thrust of Islamic art and its aesthetic appreciation. To begin with, the characteristics of Islam and Christian traditions will be examined to aid Westerners in an understanding of the harmonious relationship between the academic field of Islamic art and the religion of Islam, thereby shedding light on the symbiosis of faith and intellect. Madden (1975) distinguished Islam from Christianity through five characteristics that is, Islam, unlike Christianity, is nonhistorical, nondirectional, nondevelopmental, nondramatic and nonpersonal. Since these claims were made from a Christian point of view where Jesus' Incarnation is the focal point, some of them are refutable. Here, I would argue that Islam is historical, directional, developmental, and personal. It however remains nondramatic. These characteristics of Islam could explain the use of Islamic artistic representation that is embedded with the theological consideration.

Islam is historical: Islam makes a clear distinction between Divine Being and human being. Although it is firmly believed that God is timeless, infinite, has no beginning and no end, it does not mean Islam is nonhistorical. Islam teaches that God sent selected human beings as His Messengers to teach the doctrine of *tawhid* (the Unity of God) to certain groups of people. The concept of *tawhid* began with the history of the first man created in this world, Adam. Since then, the history of Islam began. From Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus until Muhammad, all prophets bring the same doctrine – submission to One God. The history of Islam as a religion currently embraced by more than 1 billion Muslims all over the world marked by the revelation

of the Quran from the year 610 to 632. The Quran was sent to the last Prophet Muhammad for all mankind to confirm the earlier messages brought by other prophets before him.

Islam is developmental and directional: The migration from Mecca to Medina was a significant period in the history of Islam and marked the direction and development of Islam as a faith and a civilisation. Before the migration and within the first thirteen years of preaching, Islamic teachings were mainly focused on the very foundation of belief, that is *tawhid* or unity of God, the prophethood of Muhammad, the resurrection and the final judgement. Another ten years following the migration to Medina, the teachings were extended to rules and regulations in legislations and human affairs. After over twenty-three years of gradual revelation in Mecca and Medina, the Quran contains 6236 verses. Out of these, only one hundred deal with ritual practices, while seventy verses on personal laws, seventy verses discuss civil laws, thirty verses bring penal laws and twenty on judiciary matters and testimonials (Haleem, 2010). The teaching of the Quran and the Sunnah (the Prophetic tradition) are the truthful resources for Muslims in their ultimate belief and commitment.

Islam is nondramatic: Islam has its own story but compared to the events of Jesus' Incarnation, it takes much longer, and involves more people from the first generation of Adam until the generation of Muhammad. However, its history is nondramatic and has no climax. All the complex stories have been recorded in a non-narrative development as evidenced in the Quran. Events are not chronologically arranged but are treated segmentally and repeatedly. The main purpose is not narrative, but didactic and moral (Faruqi, 2013). Stories of previous prophets such as Noah, Moses, Joseph, Abraham and Jesus and how their nations were destroyed are repeatedly mentioned to warn opponents that they will be punished. To emphasize its belief and moral contents, the Quran is composed of stylistic contrast. Scholars have found remarkable patterns of contrast – between this world and hereafter, believers and disbelievers, paradise and hell, angels and devils, life and death, and so on, which each occurs exactly the same number of repetition (Haleem, 2010). Without evoking specific moods to the readers/listeners, the linear, repetitive and didactic composition leaves some emotional arousal.

Islam is non-personal and personal: It is worth noting that Islam is essentially a religion without intermediaries between God and His servants, therefore it is non-personal in character. There is no concept of personal saviour as there is in Christianity. Like a theatre, the Christian story has its own stage and brings several players into play. However, after the demise of the Prophet

Muhammad, Islam became divided into several sects and some appear to have intermediaries between God and humanity.

The similarities and differences of four major schisms in the Muslim world will be analysed in the following paragraphs. The division of four sects will shed light on the different views Muslims hold concerning Islam, which subsequently is influential in shaping their worldview in general and artistic expression in particular. They are Sunni, Shia, Sufi, and Wahhabi.

For Sunnis, there are no intermediaries between God and man. Man can ask forgiveness or seek help from God directly. The communication occurs vertically where God can hear and see His servants, even though they cannot see Him. He is everywhere, and man can talk to God anytime or anywhere he needs. It is stated in the Quran when Moses asked to see God, then God says: *“You will never see Me...”* It is also reported in the authentic narration of the Prophet: *“That you worship Allah as if you were seeing Him, for if you don't see Him, He sees you”*. Since Sunni belief is austere in the distinction between the Divinity of God and human nature and there is no association between the two, God remains non-personal and transcendent, while man in contrast, is naturally personal. Sunnism too believes in a messiah or saviour as other sects and religions do. They are waiting for two saviours. But the saviours are men whom the Sunnis believe will fight evil on this world until Islam prevails at the end of the day. The first man will come from the Prophet's descendants and will be known as Imam Mahdi, but he will not hold a title of a saint or spiritual leader. The second saviour is Jesus. To Sunnis, Jesus was one of God's messengers, whom God raised to heaven when he was crucified and who will be sent down to earth by God to strengthen Imam Mahdi in a war between good and evil.

Shia is a split group from the Sunni. Being a follower of *ahl al-bayt* marked a clear difference between the Sunni identity. *Ahl al-bayt* means the family of the Prophet Muhammad. They believe Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law was the right person to be elected as Caliph after the demise of the Prophet. Shia Islam is further divided into several sects. The largest sect of Shiism is the Twelvers, a group who believe in the 12 Imams, who are the descendants of the Prophet beginning with Ali. The twelve Imams have taken on a spiritual significance and act as mediators between God and man, which according to Sunnism are against the true teaching of Islam because attributing divine qualities to the Imams is a form of association with God. The Shiites believe the twelfth^h Imam is currently hidden in occultation and will appear when the day comes to revive the true message of Islam. The Imam is a saviour or messiah, the same way

Christians regard Jesus and the Jews who anticipate an awaited redeemer. Another prominent sect of Shia is Ismaili. This group believe in Reincarnation where Ali is God and Fatimah is Goddess. In fact, Ismaili Shiite is a kind of messianic faith.

Sufi is another sect that emerged from the majority Sunni. Somehow, the followers are either embracing both Sunni and Sufism or Shia and Sufism. It was only centuries after the Prophet's death that the movement gained its spiritual significance and spread its mystical Islamic ideology. Sufis believe that man is gifted with the divine qualities of God, namely life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, seeing and speech. In this regard, it shares a common basis with Christianity and Shiism, notably the theomorphic character of man (Burckhardt, 1967). The divine character is merely actualized in perfect men, Messengers, Prophets and Saints. Some of the Sufi followers claim Saints or Sufi Masters are purified people and could mediate communication between God and man. Due to this belief, they frequently hold ritual ceremonies to commemorate their Saints and regularly worship their shrines.

Wahhabi is considered as a reformist movement, derived from Sunnism. It was initiated by Muhammad ibn `Abdul Wahhab in the 18th century. His doctrine aimed to purify the belief and practice of Muslims in his time that were corrupted by idolatry, especially those who were embracing Sufism. He called for abolishing graves, stones or trees worshipped by the people as that kind of practise clearly associated God with other creations. Moreover, he strongly condemned devotion to saints and shrine visitation. The Wahhabi teachings strictly uphold the Quran and the Sunnah. Compared to the majority Sunnis, the Wahhabi followers interpret the texts literally instead of contextually. They reject the concept of messiah including the coming of Imam Mahdi. Its political-religious alliance with the Su'ud Family of the Saudi Kingdom saw its growing influence worldwide in the 1970s with the help of funding from petroleum exports plus strong support from the United States as an international political ally. Today Wahhabism is state-sponsored and has become the dominant minority in Saudi Arabia.

Despite having differences especially in personal-non-personal characterization, all sects worship the same God. The message of the Oneness of God shared by all sects is aesthetically expressed in the Quran. He is described as a unique Being that has no semblance with any other creations and incapable of being represented by any natural or cultural image. As Faruqi (2013) points out that *"Allah is described in the Qur'an as a transcendent Being of Whom no visual or sensory experience is possible."* Stemming from this contemplation, all Islamic traditions never

visualize their God. The outlaw is based on an understanding that the Quran prohibits idolatry which involves all visual representations of God in any form because the nature of God is beyond all descriptions.

While no physical Being of God is depicted, the Quran solely expresses the transcendent aspects of God that He is infinite in attributes, justice, mercy, knowledge, power and love. Nonetheless, His infinity can be translated in the form of geometricized vegetal patterns, namely arabesque. Arabesque, the pattern which has no beginning and no end, reflects the transcendence and infinity of God's attributes. Faruqi (2013, p.6) asserts that "Islamic art then has a goal similar to that of the Qur'an – to teach and reinforce in mankind the perception of divine transcendence."

Furthermore, all Islamic sects read the same Quran. Faruqi (2013) describes the Quran as 'the first work of art in Islam' which exemplifies the infinite artistic expression in the most perfect form. The Quran conceived of an outstanding characteristic of Islamic art that distinguishes it from western art and gives meaning to the term 'Islamic'. Unlike other literary works, the Quranic stories reject narrative development and abstains from dramatic moods. Certain events have no clear beginning, no ends, but are segmentally arranged and repeatedly mentioned as if the characters and events were already familiar to the readers. Linear, stylized-plant ornamentation and vegetal patterns that constitute to the arabesque is reflected from this artistic feature. A certain theme in the Qur'an is reiterated many times, likewise, the arabesque, usually consists of a single design which can be repeated as much as desired to be appreciated by its viewer.

In the same vein, Haleem (2010) notes that the Quran was the starting point for the art of calligraphy. It was cultivated through writing down the Scripture. In the pre-Islamic era, Mesopotamian cultures used writing as a component of the visual arts. When Islam came, writing and calligraphy combined the discursive symbols with aesthetic and iconographic materials. Calligraphy gains a high value in the work of Islamic art especially in the architecture of mosques which has an extensive decoration incorporating Quranic quotations. Moreover, when reading the Qur'an, the reader should not expect the contents to be arranged chronologically or by subject matter. In one chapter, he/she may find histories of earlier prophets and nations, regulations and law, and the grace of God. Each verse can stand alone and can be quoted singly in the form of calligraphy, therefore meeting the aim of art toward contemplation and remembrance of God. Calligraphy as an artistic iconography gains its eminence in Islamic art and the quotes of the Qur'anic verses can be found everywhere.

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that belief in the Infinity of God and the supreme authority of the Quran are the constituent elements of the classical Sunni, Shia, Sufi and Wahhabi. Following that, arabesque and calligraphy are the manifestation of faith largely articulated by all Islamic traditions. Faruqi (2013, p.18) concludes that “Through continued and prolific use of Qur’anic expressions and passages, the art objects of the Muslim peoples were to be constant reminders of tawhid.”

Thus far, Faruqi’s thesis has been mostly restricted to theological meaning and implication. His analysis, however, does not take account of pictorial art and its use in a profane environment. The following section will discuss the place of Islamic visual representation in British Muslim community in general which guides my research endeavour, and in particular, in the visual analysis of women imagery in British Muslim magazines.

3.1.2 Islamic art and pictorial representation

The following paragraphs will deal with Islamic conception of pictorial arts, elaborating the influence of Persian and Western arts in miniature painting in order to shed light on the analytic account of visual representations in Muslim media. To sketch a sort of profile of Muslim attitudes towards art and figurative representation, two documents will be utilized: the divine resource relating to imagery; and Islamic miniature paintings.

Sadria (1984) remarks that there is no explicit prohibition in the Quran relating to figurative arts other than numerous reminders against idolatry. This view is supported by Elias (2007) who affirms that aniconism in Islam takes historical and socio-political context into consideration. Elias (2012) corrects the misconceived view of image prohibition by presenting Muslim attitudes towards figurative arts in a contemporary context which were inspired by prophetic tradition.

In the use of pictorial art within a profane environment, the Prophet Muhammad has demonstrated exemplary attitudes towards the representation of human and animal figures on several occasions. In his outstanding book, *Aisha’s Cushion*, Elias (2012) draws attention to one

hadith⁶ and proposes it as a point of reference in the status of image in Islam. The book (p. 1) cites:

“A famous hadith account describes how Muhammad’s wife, Aisha, acquired a tapestry with images on it which she hung on a wall in their home while the Prophet was out of the house. When he protested to the tapestry on his return, Aisha cut up the fabric and used it to make cushions, which subsequently were used in their home without any objection from him.”

It is not stated in the hadith the reason why the Prophet Muhammad treated the image in that way. According to Elias, the narration demonstrates that the status of image, whether it is permissible or prohibited, is determined by its content and a specific context. Regarding the above hadith, it can be inferred that it is prohibited to merely display an animate image at an elevated position to avoid idolatry and adornment, or accusations of pretentiousness. But it is allowed when the image is accompanied by useful objects and can be utilized, such as a cushion cover, carpet or pillow case. In addition, the following hadith addresses the creator of imagery in Islam:

Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim relate that a man came to Ibn Abbas (Allah be well pleased with him and his father) and said, “My livelihood comes solely from my hands, and I make these pictures. Can you give me a legal opinion about them?” Ibn Abbas told him, “Come closer” and the man did. “Closer,” he said, and the man did, until he put his hand on the man’s head and said: “Shall I tell you what I heard from the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (Allah blesses him and gives him peace)? I heard the Messenger of Allah says, *“Every maker of pictures will go to the fire, where a being will be set upon him to torment him in hell for each picture he made. So if you must, draw trees and things without animate life in them.”*

⁶ It is an Arabic word which literally means the prophetic tradition. Technically, it is defined as any deeds, words and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad that were memorized, cited and reported by his Companions and their followers (see Khan 2009; Al-Mundhiri 2000). In Islamic jurisprudence, hadith is the second resource for Muslims after the Quran. In his classic book *The Life of Muhammad*, Siddiqui (1999) highlights the prophet as a model of all actions of and responses to humankind. In the foreword of the book, Khurshid Ahmad (p. xiii) reiterates that “The Quran and the-life example of Muhammad are the eternal guides of man in his unceasing efforts to strive for fulfilment in moral, spiritual and social fields of existence.”

And in another hadith:

Bukhari, Tirmidhi, and Imam Nasa'i relate the prophetic hadith from Ibn Abbas, *"Whoever makes a picture, Allah shall torture him with it on the Day of Judgement until he can breathe life into it, and he will never be able to."*

To comprehend both hadiths mentioned above, Tariq Ramadan (in London ReForum, 2014) asserts that Muslims have different ways of understanding this. They may take literal meaning of the hadith where people are prohibited to produce images of men. On the other hand, they may take technical meaning of the prophetic sayings as it is a projection onto a word to avoid idolatry. Ways of understanding are normally related to the four Muslim sects mentioned in the previous section. Wahhabi may strictly opt for a literal meaning, while the other sects, Sunni for instance, may interpret it contextually.

Ramadan further enumerates three positions in understanding of the hadith. Firstly, it could be literal; secondly, it could be contextual; or thirdly, it could be subjective to motive. People should respect this diversity in interpretation when there is no clear-cut evidence of permission or prohibition. Following this, most contemporary scholars agree that photography and computer-mediated images, whether 2D or 3D, are permissible for didactic reasons and as long as they are not tainted with the motive of idolatry or worship. Furthermore, photography does not involve man's interference as compared to painting (Bazin and Gray, 1960).

Generally, the vision of culture is always accompanied by an ethical stance. By taking the side of open interpretation and by considering the motives of making arts, Ramadan (2014) in his lecture on Rethinking Art and Culture, mentions four things to consider when producing art works. They are intention, substance, environment and product. This suggests that the four elements stand for a formula to regulate the approach of artists, writers and professionals, where Islam only approves work from "...those who believe, do good work, and engage much in the remembrance of Allah"(Quran, 26:227).

It can be seen that Islamic religious law does not prescribe any particular forms of visual, but there are boundaries in using images. Ramadan suggests that every product from any culture that does not contradict with Islam is Islamic. As ethics abound, Islamic art has its own rule in the whole idea of the relationship between man and god (Wijdan Ali, 2014). This explanation accounts for the relationship between Islam and image within its ethical prescription. At the same time, it must be adaptable to the culture of the people and fit in the current environment.

To summarise, Islamic art places great emphasis on ethics in the visualisation of representations. Equally, other fields such as economics, finance and management for example, rely on ethics to characterize each of them as Islamic economics, Islamic finance or Islamic management. It is Islamic ethics that give them an Islamic attribute. The same goes for Islamic art. Despite having clear-cut evidence of what is permitted and what is prohibited in visualising image, the religion provides an ethical guideline to produce creativity in arts. It is open to interpretation and subjective in the motivation of doing art.

In the section that follows, it will be argued that behind the forms and mediums, there are distinctive Islamic perspectives, largely in terms of how faith and intellect intertwine in specific expressions of an artistic sensibility (Sajoo, 2011). The style of miniature painting is a remarkable synthesis of faith and aesthetic apprehension. Evidence from figural representations in miniature paintings also serve as a significant background for analytic discussion on the diversity of visual representation in Islam.

In contrast to Islamic art in general, miniature paintings are highly figurative, not abstract. This is mostly due to the Islamic world having absorbed artistic influences from Europe which came into closer contact from the 16th century (Hagedorn, 2009). James (1974) observed that representational imagery portrayed power themes including the submission of enemies, battles, enthroned monarch, the hunt, the figure of a prince/princess. Some studies find portrayals of princes, courtiers, holy men and women, and also ordinary people in royal manuscripts (Grube, 1963; Arnold, 1965; Adly, 2007). What is more, Sadria (1984) notes that the ruling monarchs commissioned high-profile artists to produce miniatures and also portraits, “which they kept hidden from critical eyes in separate rooms or in their closely guarded harem” (p.101).

Instead of depicting specific individuals, some of these portrayals are idealized types, and consequently not realistic portraits. Miniature painting represented non-specific appearance, and in many instances, the physical aspects are misleading – the eyes appear to be Far Eastern, but in fact they are characteristic of Tatars or Mongoloid Turks in the Middle East (Ettinghausen, 1974). The literature will focus on the imperial visuality during the Golden Age of Islamic miniatures from the 15th to 18th centuries, which assembles a fusion of both faith and taste.

3.1.3 Figural representation in miniature painting

Central to the entire discipline of Islamic art is the concept of figural representation. Since Islam forbids visual representation of animate objects, the existence of human and animal figures in Islamic artworks raise questions as to whether Islamic dimension in arts is only about an ethos rather than any normative form, style or content. The literature focuses on the imperial visuality of three dynasties during the Golden Age of Islamic miniature paintings in the 15th and 16th centuries - the Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal paintings. It is assumed that the distinctive features of the figurative arts from these empires could inform the diversity of Islamic traditions and its fusion with other cultures.

(a) Miniature painting under the Safavids

The Safavids were a Shiite dynasty that ruled Tabriz, Qazvin and Isfahan from 1501 to 1722. Besides being renowned for their exquisite art and manufacturing, the Safavids have had a significant influence on the history of Iran for their imposition of Shiism as its official religion (Khalili, 2008). Safavid miniatures utilized a synthesis of Timurid and Turkmen painting. According to Khalili in his analysis of miniature painting in Iran under the Safavids, "Safavid miniatures are characterized by their brilliant colours, densely packed ornament and meticulous detail" (Khalili, 2008, p.70).

During the 16th century, Mashhad became one of the thriving centres of miniature painting. The works produced by the court artists are associated with a degree of mannerism. Some of the paintings portrayed religious-related events that involved the rulers or even the Prophets. This is evident in the painting of Shah Isma'il I, who was portrayed in the forest with a sword given to him by the Twelfth Imam (Allen, 1988). Another example is from a manuscript of *Nizami's Khamsah* which illustrates the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad through the heavens by riding a *buraq*, a hybrid creature with the head of man and the body of a horse (Arnold, 1965). Joseph was also depicted in several paintings including the one which shows him giving a royal reception in honour of his marriage (Grube, 1963). In this sense, it is worth mentioning the particular nature of Shiism. Fundamental to their belief are the Holy Imams of the Twelvers and that the twelfth Imam is not dead but is currently hidden in a special locality while remaining in spiritual contact with his adherents. This belief leads inevitably to a certain "mythologization" and this is what mainly characterises Shiite imamology (Burckhardt, 2009).

(b) Ottoman painting

The Ottoman Empire was a powerful Sunni dynasty dating back to 1281 until it was defeated in 1924. The royal studio of Suleyman the Magnificent marked a glorious era for Ottoman art. Particularly notable in Ottoman painting is the degree of realism (Khalili, 2008). The artists were instructed to illustrate histories of the reigns of sultans, military campaigns, royal ceremonies, trades and even scenes from daily Ottoman life. As an example, the illustrated manuscript of 137 single-page miniatures visualised the fifteen-day circumcision ceremony of Sultan Ahmed III's sons. Such manuscripts required a high degree of accuracy, a quality which distinguished them from the idealised Persian miniatures (Grube, 1963) and humanised, poetic-styled Mughal paintings (Dadi, 2006; Truschke, 2011).

Besides miniatures, Ottoman painting established another genre, namely portraiture. The portrait of Sultan Ahmed III is an exceptional example of royal portraiture. Firat (2008) proposes that the miniature is not heavily intended to highlight the core issues of referentiality and likeness but to visualise the imperial portraiture in generic form. The ornamentation is exaggerated to divert the viewers' attention to the sultan, thus distancing them from the image seen and simultaneously filtering their gaze from access to the sultan's inner qualities. It presents the sultan conceptually, not individually. In other words, the viewers are not provided with a sultan, but are shown the idea of sultan-ness. As opposed to the realism in most royal events, the generic representation of the sultan expresses a distinctive personality of Islamic art that avoids naturalism and characterization.

(c) Mughal painting

The Mughals conquered Kabul, Delhi, Lahore and Agra from 1526 to 1858. In the 16th century, many painters moved to India, an area with a long-established three-dimensional tradition. The Timurid kitabkhana (royal bookmaking workshop) had functioned as a royal design studio that produced artwork to serve the Empire. Poetry, literature, painting, and calligraphy, which increased in intensity during the Mughal period from the sixteenth century, all closely followed Persian models (Dadi, 2006). They were influenced by the attitudes of the influential rulers of the Mughal Empire such as Akbar (1556-1605), Jahangir (1605-1627) and Shah Jahan (1627-1659). When Akbar took the crown from his father, Humayun, the arts received numerous changes in style, mainly through Akbar's openness to Hinduism and European influence (Khalili,

2008). As part of his general policy of accommodating the Hindu majority of the state, he encouraged the fusion of Persian and Indian artistic traditions in painting, thereby encouraging the best humanistic and realistic aspects of the classical Persian style and playing down the impersonal images and purely decorative colour schemes. The best example could be the scene from *Akbar-Nama* (James 1974), which illustrates Akbar and his people on the Fort of Ranthambor. There is an individualisation in the details of the people, animals and landscape.

Hindu-Muslim collaboration in the visual arts continued until the next successor, Jahangir. Akbar's policy on religious toleration of diverse ethnic and religious groups, notably the Sunnis, the Hindus and the Shias, is reflected in illustrated manuscripts of the Hindu epics, *Mahabharata* (Truschke, 2011). One of the paintings depicts Krishna mediating between the Pandavas and Kauravaz using opaque water colour. By highlighting commonalities between different sects, the *Mahabharata* was intended to connect Hindus and Muslims. In the late 1570s, Akbar built a network with the Sufi Master (Alam, 2009). He later proclaimed the Empire as the state of 'God-ism' that is a combination of Islamic, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist teaching.

As art is a cultural matter, it is expected from this research that the cultural products of British Muslims will provide preliminary evidence of the diversity of Muslims. Historically, the visual arts portrayed the faith, taste and power of the Sultans. In modern times, images in Muslim media represent the faith, taste and power of a wider range of people including women. The range of diversity and empowerment of Muslim women is further explored through a visual analysis of Muslim women depicted in two British Muslim magazines. The following section will briefly explain the concepts of signs and symbols that are useful in interpreting the construction of Muslim reality in Britain.

3.2 Symbol and Sign in the Graphic and Plastic Arts

Both the graphic and plastic arts fashion forms of symbolic representation, matters that have been outlined and provided an empirical dimension in our preceding discussion of figural representation in miniature painting within Islamic art (3.1.3). The graphic and plastic arts comprise cultural products that operate through the manipulation of systems of symbols that frequently represent both the concrete and imagined. Symbols are commonly made sense of by reference to other symbols and systems of symbols. For example, letters in an alphabet or for Saussure, words within a sentence or utterance such as 'The cat sat on the mat.' (Saussure,

1959). For Saussure, the basic symbolic unit of language is the sign. Language comprises a system of signs in which words are 'arbitrarily' tied to meanings. There is no necessary link between a 'sound image' such as cat (the signifier) and the concept of meaning (the signified) (Saussure 1959, p.16). Meaning however arises in context, as in the sentence 'The cat sat on the mat'. Similarly, visual images are made sense of in context. The Islamic symbolism inherent within the images presented in the magazines, *Sisters* and *Emel* are made contextual sense of. Within our consideration of the images presented in the magazines, there is a clear distinction between the realistic or naturalistic representations in *Emel* and the Islamic symbolism evident within the images in *Sisters*.

Within the history of the study of visual communication, semiotics or semiology have been influential. In general terms:

...semiology offers a very full box of analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to broader systems of meaning (...) The most important tool in any semiological box (...) is the 'sign': semiology means 'the study of signs'

(Rose, 2007, pp.74-75)

A Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and an American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) are regarded as the founders of semiology, where the main concern of these studies is the concept of sign. While Peirce's formulation contributes towards three types of signs: iconic, indexical, and symbolic, de Saussure introduced sign as a dual relation between signifier and signified. In Saussurean tradition, sign is the structure for a relational system of the 'sound pattern' (for example, the word 'book') and the concept (a bound papers of written information). The concept remains as psychological, not a material thing. In other words, the signified 'is a concept in the mind – not a thing but the notion of a thing' (Chandler, 2007, p.16).

Contemporary semioticians have developed the study of sign and the importance of signs in our life lies in its function to both reflect and construct a reality (Oczan, 2008). Consequently, signs and symbols are always ideological (Chandler, 2002) Chandler (2007, pp.10-11) quotes:

"...semiotics can assist us to become more aware of the mediating role of signs and of the roles played by ourselves and others in constructing social realities...In defining realities signs serve ideological functions. Deconstructing and contesting the realities of signs can reveal whose realities are privileged and

whose are suppressed. Such a study involves investigating the construction and maintenance of reality by particular social groups. To decline the study of signs is to leave to others the control of the world of meanings which we inhabit.”

3.3 Visualising Gender

Gender differentiation is a result of a socialisation process received by an individual and a group of individuals within a society. It develops within the corpus of values in that society. From the interactions that occur, gender differentiation can be traced and through repetition, it becomes normalized and perceived as natural.

As gender is a social phenomenon, prominent studies indicate that gender issues can be contested from the pursuits of daily interaction (West and Zimmerman, 1987), labour market (Hartman 1976), the institution of marriage (Bernard 2002), and practice in private and public spaces (Imray & Middleton, 2002). These studies conclude that all the gendered practices are rooted in and influenced by the socialisation process that a person receives which eventually becomes social practice in a community. In short, gender behaviour is a learnt process where men and women behave per social customs (Connell, 1987).

Judith Butler popularised the concept of performativity within recent feminism and gender studies. Butler fashions the concept of performativity from the works of the philosopher J.L. Austin, most notably from his book *How To Do Things with Words* (1962). Butler follows Austin in that spoken language is treated as comprising of speech acts. ‘Speech acts’ alongside other modes of communication comprise socially performed acts, that are social constructions, acts that form the basis of identity formation and self-presentation.

Butler is one of the prominent feminist thinkers that professes the idea that gender is constructed and reproduced by repetitive acts that eventually assign a person with specific gender identity (Butler, 2006). In her theory of gender performativity, Butler proposes that gender is constructed in the form of behaviour enacted by a person where the deeds are acceptable norms in the society where the act takes place. Gender is not determined by the biological sex, rather it emerges and constitutes within the cultural practices in the scene of relations with other people. It is the normalised practice within a society that determine the person as man and woman by referring to established norms. Therefore, sexual identity does not precede the behaviour, but it is the behaviour that informs the sexual role and identity.

Gender differentiation continues to prevail in the media as extending existing social practice in a society with different motives. In modern days and in line with capitalist ideology, women are predominantly being objectified especially in advertisements where they are most often associated with domestic chores and decorative function (Skorek, 2009). The image of an ideal woman has been also politicised to support a ruling party agenda in positioning women's roles in society (for example, Lombardo and Meier, 2014; Özcan, 2015). Currently in the flux of social media usage, self-representation of gender identity has become excessively depicted via selfie with a degree of self-empowerment (Barry *et al.*, 2015; Busetta and Coladonato, 2015). These studies develop and renew the dimension of mediated gender in many aspects.

Gender Advertisements by Erving Goffman (1979) reveals the ways in which women's lives are restricted and delineated in the media. Goffman believes that gender is socially defined and constructed. Despite being biologically distinct, the differences between the sexes are produced and reinforced in social interaction. In modern societies, Goffman (1977) argued that sex classification is fundamental to social interaction and indicative to social structures. "The expression constitutes the hierarchy – they are the shadow and the substance" (p. 6). "What gender expresses is the capacity and inclination of individuals to portray a version of themselves and their relationships" (p. 7). Furthermore, Goffman (1979) claimed that a distinctive range of behaviour and appearance exists and becomes specialized in every culture. Most modern writers (for example, Hopkins 2009) agree that gender difference is not a universal social design but the product of social and cultural differences.

In theoretical terms, Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* provides an approach in understanding visual images from the perspective of symbolic interactionism. The key question of symbolic interactionism as underlined by Ball & Smith (2011, p. 395) is "how are meanings created and sustained in social interaction." According to Goffman, an individual performs an act resulting from how others treat him/her. In other words, the returning act is appropriately displayed to fulfil the expectation of other interactants. Goffman brilliantly translates symbolic interactionism in his seminal work on visual studies by examining the behavioural style of men and women in printed advertisements. It is "a consistent social constructionist approach to portray gender differentiation" (Smith 1996, p.1).

Although Goffman made considerable use of the term 'our society' to relate the advertisements to American society, his typology of gender behaviours in commercial realism has been applied

in examining cross-cultural advertisements in print and electronic media across different regions. This has been attested in several studies involving gender portrayal in mass media in such countries as the United States (Hovland *et al.*, 2005), Czech Republic (Manasova, 2010), Australia (Bell and Milic, 2002), Korea (Nam, Lee and Hwang, 2011) and Iran (Soltani-Gordfaramarzi & Kazemi, 2010). It has been proven that Goffman's propositions of gender display are testable and comparable in contemporaneous studies across culture (see Riggins, 2011) and time (Fine and Manning, 2000).

Furthermore, Cavan (1981) identifies two strengths of Goffman's commercial realism, which prove it as a reliable theory in understanding visual images of sex and gender. Firstly, his stylistic convention in print advertisements has been extended to a number of other medias with mixed results. This claim can be illustrated by several examples. Brekne (2009) replicates Goffman's research design in an analysis of women's self-portrayal in family photographs and finds that women were pictured as confident and self-controlled. In the analysis of self-representation in social media, Lawton (2009) and Tortajada *et al.* (2013) conclude that women and adolescent girls are likely to perform Goffman's thesis of hyper-ritualization. Goffman's gender classifications also inspired Hochschild (2011) to analyse codes of femininity in women's guide books from traditional and egalitarian outlooks. In another study, Chhabra *et al.* (2011) utilize Goffman's typology to investigate gender equity in tourism advertising, which resulted in implications for social marketing. Lastly, Sassatelli (2011) highlights Laura Mulvey's thoughts on the representation of male figures in narrative cinema, which was largely driven by Goffman's genderism.

Secondly, some researchers have inferred Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* to examine behavioural changes and trends overtime in different historic settings. For instance, derived from Goffman's parent-child relationship, Alexander (1994) has content-analysed the portrayals of children in American publications from 1905 to 1990. Klassen *et al.* (1993) examine 3550 advertisements from 1972 to 1989 to identify how men and women were portrayed when they were pictured together in American popular magazines. Additionally, Lindner (2004) studies the portrayal of women in *Time* and *Vogue* magazines to examine the stereotypical gender roles over 50 years. Indeed, his approach to visual objects has been influential in media studies at a macro-level perspective.

His outstanding theory in gender differentiation has been applauded in numerous disciplinary canons including literature, history, political science, and media studies. Goffman's contribution in various disciplines of study has been recognized by prominent scholars in sociology (Smith 2006; Chriss 1995; Jacobsen 2010; Lemert & Branaman 1997; Sallaz 2006; Strong 2014), as well as commentators in social psychology (Menand, 2009) and feminism (West, 1996), among others. Goffman was an outstanding theorist and a legendary self-ethnographer (Deegan, 2014). Menand (2009) cites, "Goffman was what Foucault called the author of discourse" (p. 296). Next section will explain Goffman's analytic framework that is employed to investigate the images.

3.4 Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* as an Analytic Tool

In this study, visual representations of women, found in two British Muslim magazines that have a target audience of Muslim women - *Sisters* and *Emel*, are examined by employing analytic tools from Erving Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* (1979). To Goffman, gender display does not have a hidden structural meaning, instead it offers a schedule of interaction between men and women that is conceived of logical relations and reciprocal expressions.

As the main concern of my research is with Muslim women's identity, his insightful analysis and categorization of behaviour portrayal bring a tangible perspective to the visual analysis. I found Goffman's analytic tools useful in describing photographic and artistic images of Muslim women, particularly in interpreting the social meanings of various types of depiction.

In order to make sense of a range of gender-depicted images, Goffman sampled approximately 500 print advertisements and arranged his findings into six taxonomies of gender rituals:

Relative size: In advertisements, social weight is displayed through the relative size especially in terms of physical height. Men are shown relatively higher than women or choreographed in front of the others to signify greater status and superior position. Women were mostly portrayed as being smaller in size and subordinate to men, while men were bigger and higher in ranking. Conversely, Goffman proved this assumption to be true when he picked three images in advertisements that showed women with high status were physically taller than their male subordinates.

The feminine touch: Goffman observed that female hands are pictured as weak, delicate and cradling. On the contrary, male hands are depicted as assertive, bold and controlling. The feminine touch is illustrated in a depiction of barely touching, holding or caressing without having any significance, unless for the motive of attraction. In most advertisements, women are pictured using their fingers and hands to caress and touch an object or a product. This kind of ritual is distinguished from the male utilitarian gestures such as grasping or holding which indicate seriousness, firmness and strength. All these rituals were utilized as an analytic tool to discuss the single depictions of women in the continuum of femininity and masculinity.

Function ranking: When men and women were pictured in a collaborative task, men are likely to take an executive role while women tend to be the assistant or the recipient. Under this category, Goffman collected 47 pictures and divided them into several situations in which women were pictured in a lower rank. The hierarchy of functions could be seen in the occupational frame, the learning activity, the social function, the outdoor occasion or the scene at home.

The family: The advertisements indicate family as a basic social organization which consists of a father, a mother, and at least a son and/or a daughter. Their positions are well-choreographed to suggest the role of each member of the family unit as well as a special bond of mother-daughter and father-son. Goffman also highlighted 10 pictures that showed the father standing a little outside and behind the family circle to indicate his protectiveness over the family.

The ritualization of subordination: Goffman found many advertisements fell into this category. The gestures of prostration or lowering oneself physically demonstrate inferiority. Women were mostly portrayed in a lower position, for instance on beds and floors, signalling sexual objectification and powerlessness. The postures of knee bending, and body canting suggest that women are not deeply committed in a situation where they exist, and somehow implies a submissive attitude and in need of another's support. Moreover, Goffman identified symmetrical and asymmetrical characters in a man-woman relationship. When men and women were pictured together, the physical expression exhibits a superior-inferior configuration. Most of the pictures portrayed women under a man's protection and direction in the scenes of "arm lock," "shoulder hold" and hand-holding.

Licensed withdrawal: Goffman goes into greater details here. Women more often than men were pictured being in activities that remove them psychologically from the present situation and were more concerned with their inward feelings. Therefore, they become the object to be looked at, not the active actors who are engaged with the surroundings. The submissiveness is traced by the absence of eye gaze, head and eye aversion. This kind of withdrawal was symbolised through gazing in a disoriented way, hiding behind objects, biting fingers, covering the face, snuggling into, or nuzzling others, and engaging in a telephone call.

Table 3.1: Checklist for Goffman’s analytic tools

GOFFMAN’S ANALYTIC TOOLS
Feminine Touch Barely touching Self-touching Non-utilitarian gesture Caressing Using fingers to hold object
Relative Size Height
Function Ranking Executive role Domestic role
The Family Special bond Protectiveness
Licensed withdrawal Absence of eye gaze Head and eye aversion Emotive expression Snuggling Nuzzling
Ritualization of subordination Body and head canting Asymmetrical level Elevation Arm lock Hand holding Extended arm

Goffman’s work has been used in many studies to show the traditional roles of women. By using Goffman’s classification system, I will identify the traditional as well as the reverse-sex roles in the British Muslim magazines as choreographed by the image producers. "Advertisements depict for us not necessarily how we actually behave as men and women but how we think men and

women behave" (Gornick 1979, p. vii). Hence, they are useful for identifying the values embraced by the image producers and showing their diverse views as they select the portraiture according to what they believe and practice. This is expected to counter the Orientalist view of Muslim women and provide a new perspective in describing and defining Muslim women in a British context.

How can *Gender Advertisements* serve as an analytic framework to make sense of my collection of data? Goffman's theorization provides two levels of viewing – the surface and the underlying structures. The methodology developed by Goffman is useful for me to classify my corpus of data into several frames and themes, where the former is informed by the surface details and the latter is revealed from the underlying pattern of depictions. These two levels of meaning making eventually generate my findings on Muslim identity and what values they embrace within the British context.

I am interested in analysing the images of Muslim women as a symbolic representation of the Muslim community in Britain. Goffman's analytic categories of gender display could serve as an instrument to identifying how Muslim women are depicted, thus indicating the represented values of sections of the Muslim community in Britain. Of particular interest is the construction of values and its diverse expressions through the graphic and plastic arts. I would like to see how the construction of the female reflects the Muslim values and Muslim community at large. "...a central rationale for this study is that the pictures are part of the society they describe" (Ball & Smith 1992, p.15).

Gender Advertisements is Goffman's major contribution to visual sociology from a non-essentialist perspective (Smith, 2010). Smith (1996) claims that *Gender Advertisement* should be appraised as it shows consistent use of 'social constructionist approach to gender differentiation' (p.1). It provides a constructive framework for me to proceed with the visual analysis on representation of Muslim women in their diversity. Studying diversity requires a non-essentialist view and Goffman provides the right methodology.

"What the human nature of males and females really consists of ... is a capacity to learn to provide and to read depictions of masculinity and femininity and a willingness to adhere to a schedule for presenting these pictures, and this capacity they have by virtue of being persons, not females or males. ...There is only a schedule for the portrayal of gender. There is no relationship between the sexes that can so far be characterized in any satisfactory fashion. There is only

evidence of the practice between the sexes of choreographing behaviorally a portrait of relationship. And what these portraits most directly tell us about is not gender, or the overall relationship between the sexes, but about the special character and functioning of portraiture.”

(Goffman, 1979, p.5)

Although Goffman’s stereotyped depiction of male and female has been revisited by many researchers, his method of data collection is poorly selected (Alexander, 1994). Despite the strengths and popularity of his gender ritualization, the unobtrusive measures he used do have some limitations. Smith (2006) acknowledges that Goffman’s work is lacking systematic procedures for data analysis. After all, Goffman did not elaborate his methods whether to his admirers or opponents, and not even to his students (Deegan, 2014).

Gornick (1987) argued that Goffman’s analysis lacked adequate proof to support the meaning of the examined pictures. He did not contextualize clearly the ‘meanings’ of the gender displays he found in the American advertisements. Also, when situating Goffman’s theory in a current situation, it seems quite outdated. My research will counter these limitations by supporting the findings with theoretical argument of postfeminist media culture. This is useful to support Goffman’s framework to address the diversity of Muslim culture through the images of Muslim women.

As a variant within feminist scholarship, the consideration of post-feminism arose in the later part of the twentieth century, at approximately the same time as postmodern and poststructuralist feminist developments were occurring (Genz and Brabon, 2009). Post-feminism tends towards an emphasis on substantive/ empirical areas of focus including popular and media cultural representations, as outlined in the work of Faludi (1991) and McRobbie (2004). In contrast, post-modern and post-structuralist feminism tends to be more epistemological in its focus, as evidenced in the work of Kristeva and Herman (2010), Cixous and Sellers, (1994), Irigaray (2008), Butler (2006), and Haraway (1991).

Gill (2007) argues postfeminism should be conceived of as a sensibility. From this perspective, postfeminist media culture should be our critical object -- a phenomenon into which scholars of culture should inquire -- rather than an analytic perspective. This approach does not require a static notion of one single authentic feminism as a comparison point, but instead is informed by postmodernist and constructionist perspectives and seeks to examine what is distinctive about contemporary articulations of gender in the media. In Gill’s words (2007, p.163):

“It is precisely in the apparent contradictoriness of the postfeminist sensibility that the entanglement of feminist and antifeminist discourses can be seen. The patterned nature of the contradictions is what constitutes the sensibility, a sensibility in which notions of autonomy, choice and self-improvement sit side-by-side with surveillance, discipline and the vilification of those who make the 'wrong' 'choices' (e.g. become too fat, too thin, or have the audacity or bad judgment to grow older).”

Furthermore, Orgad and De Benedictis (2015) discuss the concept of motherhood and analyse the construction of ‘the stay-at-home mother’ in the UK media during the global recession and its aftermath from 1 August 2008 to 1 August 2013. They argue that the mothers were depicted as corporate postfeminist subjects whose confidence and self-esteem could encounter gender injustice.

In the same vein, Coleman, (2009) proposes postfeminism as the third wave feminism that emphasizes on self-empowerment and free choice. Based on the United States experience, four major perspectives have been identified as contributing to the new discourse of third wave feminism: intersectionality theory as developed by women of colour; postmodernist and poststructuralist feminist approaches; feminist post- colonial theory (often referred to as global feminism); and the agenda of the new generation of younger feminists (Mann & Huffman, 2005). The first two of these perspectives, intersectionality theory and postmodern and poststructuralist feminist approaches, shared a focus on difference; but whereas feminists of colour embraced identity politics as a key to liberation, postmodern and poststructuralist feminists critically questioned the notion of coherent identities and viewed freedom as resistance to categorisation and identity. In this context, there have been feminist inspired critiques of Goffman’s book *Gender Advertisements* such as West (1994).

Perhaps the most serious disadvantage of Goffman’s gender display is that the categories are difficult to adopt in content analysis, the most systematic and popular method of investigating data in social sciences (Ball and Smith, 1992). This is because the categories developed by Goffman are not mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. This limitation is quite obvious. An image may have characteristics of the categories of ritualization of subordination and licensed withdrawal. Another image may depict relative size and denote function ranking at the same time. To manage this limitation, I chose the dominant category that appears in an image. In addition, the verbal content of headlines and page sections of the magazines help to operationalize the images. The headlines and sections, however, only play their limited part to give context to the images and are not included as data.

In spite of the weaknesses, Goffman's basic method still provides a fundamentally conceptual framework to understand social interaction (Scheff, 2014), and also supplies an analytic framework for visual communication (Ytreberg, 2002). Therefore, I would agree with Smith's (1996) observation that Goffman's work is "stronger on conceptual inspiration than methodological guidance" (p. 8). In my research, the feminism concept in Goffman's work has inspired my visual analysis of Muslim women in the process of investigating the different values held by the image producers. The assigned behavioural roles of women in *Gender Advertisements* have been employed to detect the structural patterns of the images of Muslim women in two different magazines.

In the process of interpreting the thematic images, it is useful to supplement Goffman's framework with social semiotics. The social semiotic approaches aim to distinguish themselves from the mainstream theories of semiotics. Instead of discussing signs and symbols, social semioticians emphasise the practices and social uses of semiotics. Prominent contemporary theorists of social semiotics are Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006). In constructing images and their social meaning, they propose two types of representation. Firstly, narrative representations that design social action and involve a structure of actor and goal. This is mostly applied in naturalistic photographs. Secondly, conceptual representation which emphasise conventional, conceptual or stylized photographs. These two types of representation can be found in both magazines under study, thus potentially contributing to the social meaning of Muslim communities in Britain as constructed by the image producers. Interestingly, the distinctive types of representations are to be found in both magazines, where *Emel* mainly construct women in narrative representations, while *Sisters* emphasises on conceptual or stylized representations. This would lead to fascinating findings to show the extent of diversity of Muslim populations in Britain.

Another influential work that could supplement the visual analysis is the work by David Machin (2004). In studying stock images from the online image banks, he identifies three categories of photographic images, namely, genericity, generic people, and naturality. In elaborating genericity, photographers decontextualise the background, provide generic settings, use attributes, show timelessness, and offer meaning potential. The idea of genericity is applicable to support the visual analysis in Chapter 5 as it is rarely found in Goffman's methodology. The alliance between Goffman's typology of gender display, Kress and van Leeuwen's social

semiotics, and Machin's genericity have shared similar methodologies and conceptual frameworks to analyse the nuanced representation of Muslim women in British Muslim media.

Concerns have been expressed about the homogenized representation of Muslim culture that have prompted debates on social cohesion. Although many studies have highlighted an Orientalist bias in how Muslims are represented in the media when Muslims are diverse, previous work has not specifically addressed Muslim heterogeneity from a visual aspect. In addition, no research has taken into account the visualisation of female images with reference to Islamic artistic representation. As a woman's body is integral to the establishment, preservation and performance of British Muslim identity, the representation of Muslim women could inform us of various Muslim identities in Britain.

The next chapter will explain the research methodology that I employed for the examination of visual representations. By utilizing a qualitative approach within a social constructive paradigm, two methods have been applied to investigate the visual representations of Muslim women. First, a visual analysis was conducted to analyse a corpus of images using a thematic approach. Second, focus group discussions were held to obtain audience receptions of the images.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

The current chapter will discuss the methods that have been undertaken to complete this research project. I will explain the approaches and techniques that I used to collect and analyse my data. This chapter follows on from Chapter 3 by extending the consideration of visual data and its analysis. The images for analysis were collected from the Muslim magazines, *Emel* and *Sisters*. It involves a process that comprises a variant of the method of unobtrusive measures, the collection of data that is already in the public domain. The corpus of collected images and visual representations, are later provided to participants in focus groups to interpret. The times and locations of data collection are introduced, and the techniques and strategies applied for data collection, sampling and analysis will also be discussed. Following Maxwell's (2013) integrative model of research design, the methods are closely integrated with the research questions and the validity of the findings. Therefore, it is important to recap the central research questions of my thesis which highlight the problems I seek to address.

Since the Muslim presence in Britain has raised questions relating to multiculturalism and integration, particularly through their so-called alien practices and the invisibility of women as represented in the mainstream media, this thesis seeks to study how Muslim image producers in the UK represent Muslim women as revealed by images presented in two British Muslim magazines. Images from both magazines stem from different socio-cultural trajectories which demonstrate the diversity in representations. The research centres around three primary research questions:

- 1) What do the images tell us about the particular identities and practices of these British Muslims?
- 2) To what extent can it be argued that there is some variation in the representations of gender between the selected magazines?

3) How do different audiences understand and interpret these images?

In answering the research questions, I used the methodological triangulation of visual research methods and focus group interviews. Methodological triangulation is a combination of multiple methods to investigate a single problem to increase validity (Merriam, 2002). In other words, it uses different data sources to study a qualitative inquiry by mixing distinct types of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015). In my study, I combined a thematic content analysis of imagery of women with focus group interviews of Muslim and non-Muslim participants to analyse responses to Islamic visual conventions in representing Muslim women. Regarding this, Patton (2015, p.316) quotes:

“A rich variety of methodological combinations can be employed to illuminate an inquiry question. Some studies mix interviewing, observation, and document analysis. Others rely more on interviews than observations, and vice versa. Studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method (e.g., loaded interview questions, biased or untrue responses), unlike studies that use multiple methods, in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks.”

With regards to methodology, the empirical analysis evaluates the meaning of the images of Muslim women, its variety of depictions, and its audience reception. In order to address the research inquiry, I employed two types of qualitative triangulation: visual documents with interviews; and interviews from multiple sources. To be specific, this thesis undertook methodological and data triangulation by combining both visual analysis and focus group discussions and mixing different types of purposeful samples – opportunity sampling of British Muslim magazines, and intensity sampling of Muslim and non-Muslim participants in focus groups.

What follows is a description of the research methods that I undertook; firstly, the visual research method and secondly, the focus group interviews. The process of data collection and the approach to data analysis of each method will also be explained.

4.1 Visual Method: A thematic analysis

Gillian Rose (2014) defines visual research methods as using “visual materials of some kind as part of the process of generating evidence in order to explore research questions” (p.26). The use of visual methodology in academia is gaining importance as proven in the publication of

special edition journals, handbooks, and numerous reviews. Rose observes that all these works are dominated by qualitative research methods.

By examining the visual representations depicted in the magazines that use different visual conventions, it fulfils several purposes. Firstly, the visual analysis will enable us to identify the Islamic visual convention used by the image producers. Secondly, as the visual is (socio)-cultural and images are a form of cultural production, the conventions can tell us something about the cultural identities of the image producers. Are the images similar or different? How do they represent Muslim women in Britain? What values are embedded in the visual representation? To what extent are Muslim values attached to the images? Are they compatible with British 'liberal values'? Why or why not?

According to Rose (2007), an image can be seen through its technological, compositional or social modality. Which modality we want to use in our investigation depends on our research objective. For my research purpose, I sought to explore the visual meanings, and therefore Rose suggests viewing it under social modality. This modality refers to "...the range of economic, social and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used" (Rose, 2007, p.13) In searching for visual meanings Rose proposed three methods of investigation – semiology, discourse analysis and content analysis. In this research project, I applied content analysis using a qualitative thematic approach. I didn't choose semiotics and discourse analysis because the ideological and political mechanisms that underpin the meaning process, may lead to manipulative interpretation of image. My major concern lies in the construction of sociocultural identity of the minority through their self-representation. To be specific, it investigates the counter-representation of Muslim women that empowers them. Moreover, Islamic culture and gender visualisation are fundamental to make sense of the images and to establish meanings. Therefore, by combining insights from the tradition of Islamic arts and Goffman's symbolic interactionism, I used a qualitative thematic content analytic approach to examine the visual properties of the images in question.

4.1.1 Data Collection

This section will discuss the data collection process of the visual methods. The research focused on front covers, editorial content and advertisements in two selected magazines published in the UK in examining visual representations with reference to gender display depicted in British

Muslim magazines. Images were selected based on purposive sampling. Since this is an explorative research, this data collection method will provide sufficient, relevant data to answer the research questions (Patton, 2002, 2015; Pauwels, 2011; Bryman, 2012). As a result, two magazines were located as data sources, namely *Emel* and *Sisters*, each demonstrating distinct approaches in visualising images. These two monthly magazines offer rich imagery with different orientations that will trigger fascinating discussions and findings from the perspective of a culturally diverse religion.

It is important for me to outline the process of data collection and to state the reasons why I chose *Emel* and *Sisters* magazines as my data sources. While developing my research proposal, I selected *Emel* due to its uplifting contents on Muslim lifestyle, focusing almost entirely on British Muslims. It launched its first issue in September 2003 following the 9/11 attack, when Muslims were becoming increasingly stigmatised with stereotypes and negativity. It was released to counter the misrepresentation of Muslim communities in the UK and beyond. Through its multiple sections such as current affairs, outstanding personalities, finance, health, converts, fashion, arts, and food, *Emel* promotes positive aspects of Islam and its values. On its website, it is stated that: “The magazine has had an outstanding reception, by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and has extensive media interest with features in Time Magazine, The Times, the Sunday Times, the Wall Street Journal, The London Evening Standard, and Turkish, Malaysian, Dutch, Swiss, Iranian and Japanese newspapers. In addition, programmes have been broadcast about *Emel* by the BBC, CNN and other international media” (<http://www.emel.com>, 5th Jul. 2013). Sarah Joseph, the editor was the recipient of an OBE award from the Queen in 2004 for her outstanding contribution to interfaith activities.

The editor, when celebrating 100 editions of *Emel* in its special issue, once mentioned that the magazine offers narrative space about people in the same way the Quran tells the story about many kinds of people and communities: “Islam does not exist in abstract however. It is lived and expressed through people” (Sarah Joseph, 2013, p.11). By highlighting Muslim personalities, *Emel* sought to visualise the identity of British Muslims and exert their inclusiveness within the wider society.

This magazine applies a conventional process in its production. By utilizing natural photos and stylised images from the creative works of photographers and graphic artists in articulating the identities of Muslims, the magazine shows the nuanced identities of Muslims. In some sections,

personal photographs were contributed by the subjects to reveal stories from Muslim families or couples.

Although there were no Muslim magazines available in any major bookshops, I managed to find a collection of back issues of *Emel* from 2003 to 2010 from an eBay seller residing in Manchester. These old copies enabled me to view the magazine's contents closely and in particular, observe how Muslims were depicted, particularly women. Then I subscribed to later issues from 2011 until its last copy of January 2013 from an authorised distributor. I was shocked to learn that since then *Emel* had ceased publication and efforts to find the reason for its discontinuation have not been successful. However, I found its inspiring stories and images empowering for Muslims, and as such, worthy of investigation. In my opinion, *Emel* offered a valuable and positive representation of British Muslims during a crucial time in British history.

I found the second magazine, *Sisters*, online. I first purchased the magazine's jumbo pack promotion which offered three back issues plus one current issue at a cost of £1 for a preview. During my investigation, this was found to be the only available English magazine tailored to Muslim women. It was a surprise to see that the images were depicted in an unconventional way where the women were headless and faceless. Neither do they represent personalities which I considered innovative and had not seen in my own country (Malaysia). This magazine motivated me to examine its images thoroughly and to include them in my visual investigation. I placed an online subscription to receive issues published between 2010 and 2013.

Sisters started with an online publication and began publishing four printed issues in 2007 by a convert, Na'ima Robert. This was done after her first book, *From My Sister's Lips*, became a best-seller in 2005 and was translated into Arabic. The book "systematically describes the process of reversion from first impression through conversion, hijab, and the manner of marriage in Islam. It opens the doors to the private thought processes and struggles that confront new Muslims and makes the difficult understandable and even funny" (<http://www.sisters-magazine.com>, 5th Jul. 2013). The book's success inspired the birth of the magazine to continue publicising Muslim women's thoughts, feelings and actions that might be hidden and unknown to many, and even misapprehended Muslim women themselves. The editor also actively writes in mainstream newspapers including *The Times* and *The Observer*. She has also appeared on several radio and television programmes to talk about Muslim-related affairs including the *BBC's Sunday Morning*

Live, Woman's Hour, Radio London, Channel 5, News Night, BBC Asian Network, GMT with Lorraine Kelly, and BBC Radio 4's The Moral Maze.

As a UK-based international media outlet, the editor, the writers, section editors and the graphic artist are scattered around the world in London, New York, Johannesburg, Khartoum and Cairo. They utilize online technology to facilitate their working network. The London-based graphic artist is responsible for creating and reproducing images for a cover page and editorial contents after receiving articles from writers and section editors. All the contents and the magazine's lay out are finalised with the editor's consent.

Sisters' approach to how it represents people through imagery is one of the many things I appreciate about the publication. A conversation with *Sisters'* World and Voices Editor, Brooke Benoit, led to further clarification regarding its choice of images. As a former student of fine art and being an artist for several years, Benoit found the use of human depiction, especially the female form in art, media and advertising is nearly always problematic. *Sisters'* production comfortably and sympathetically follows the traditional Islamic jurisdiction on the rejection of depicting living beings as viewed by Benoit: *"It relieved a lot of the stress I had around abusing and exploiting people with imagery – whether as a subject, a maker or a viewer. It is certainly not popular in contemporary media, and especially difficult in non-Muslim majority environments to maintain this directive but it is not a directive that I would compromise."*

Notably, it is not only women who are shown in genericity, but all living beings are represented this way in *Sisters*. The production team decided to visually represent women based around the two factors of hijab and hegemony. As far as hijab is concerned, the production team selects illustrations of women in private environments where they would likely be hijab free, such as a spread of women in their homes or at a women-only party. These images are still presented without any facial features on them, by taking advice from some scholars into consideration when making illustrations of people.

The second issue that they also discussed is hegemony; the intention was to include a variety of people with varying skin tones and body types. Benoit explains, *"Although uncommonly thin white women are one of the smallest demographics in the ummah, they are the most commonly depicted women in most media and media sources, such as those we buy our images from for*

the magazine.” *Sisters’* designers are diligent to not bring the hegemony explicitly into the magazine, but rather to source diverse images and alter some when possible.

In my view, the production strategy to avoid hegemony and the stereotyping of ethnicity in Muslim communities is plausible. It can be related to the educational pedagogy of using dolls for young children. In both Muslim and non-Muslim traditions, dolls and fabricated animals are often simply created by not having facial features or minimally have a stitch for eyes and a mouth. The concept behind these dolls is to introduce an open-ended play. Simpler toys can invite the children to create their own story or game. The less detailed the toy is, the more creatively the children can engage with it. In conjunction with the approach of depicting people in *Sisters*, the images offer an open-ended view among the reader when looking at the images.

For its editorial pages, *Sisters* focuses on women’s well-being and evokes a social transformation in a range of sections including Inspiration, Self, Family, Community, World, Voices, Homes, Looks and Tastes. It addresses women’s issues which might be considered taboo to some Muslim communities, such as forced marriage, family planning, child abuse, domestic violence, depression and self-esteem, as well as traditional subjects aimed at women such as fashion and beauty. The images are carefully crafted to present Muslim women’s affairs by adhering the fundamental ethos of Islamic art.

There is a unique practice in the production process of these two British Muslim magazines. The contents are not directly influenced by advertisers. In the case of *Sisters*, all images in the advertisements must abide with the magazine’s house style in depicting people. Other media depict people from the front in adverts while in *Sisters*, the same advertisement appears differently, where people are viewed from a back angle and sometimes with the head cut off. This is not an uncommon practice among Muslim media operations elsewhere where the images are constrained by editorial and managerial regulations. In a similar vein, an Islamic television station in Malaysia, namely *TV Alhijrah* applies the same rule where every woman who appears on screen, whether in a drama production or tv commercial, must wear hijab. Since Islamic contents are in high demand, Muslim media steadily receive a wider reception and gain high profits from advertisement revenue. People seek them for self-transformation as well as social change and they feel Muslim media could help them to educate them in family and professional issues, for examples, and provide alternative views on important issues surrounding their private and public matters.

As for *Emel*, we do not find advertisements on beauty or home products, but mostly on property, Islamic service and Muslim events. They do not evoke an element of traditional femininity as can be found in other women's lifestyle magazines, including *Sisters*. In contrast with *Sisters*, *Emel* strictly emphasises the political identity of Muslims without associating them with the commercialisation of traditional values of femininity for instance, that might attract advertisers as other publications often do. This factor possibly informs why it was hard to find this magazine elsewhere in the market. Its marketability and eventually its closure might be due to financial constraints as they did not operate in a conventional way that relies mostly on advertisement revenue. Several attempts have been made to contact the editor to ask further about this matter but received no response. The editor continues expressing her views on Muslim matters online via her blog.

The following table (Table 4.1) shows the purposeful sampling of images according to magazines and years of publication. A deductive theoretical sampling has been applied in this purposeful sampling strategy, where the images were selected according to Goffman's six categories of gender depictions. I picked the selected images as I found them to be representative of the magazine imagery in general. As outlined by Patton (2015, p.269), the purpose of this theory-focused sampling is to "find case manifestations of a theoretical construct of interest so as to examine and elaborate the construct and its variations and implication. Theoretical constructs are based in, are derived from, and contribute to scholarly literature. This involves deepening or verifying theory." I treated this stage as a pre-analytical process or preliminary analysis before undergoing an inductive process of thematic analysis which will be explained in the next section.

Table 4.1 Purposeful sampling of images

PURPOSEFUL SAMPLING													
MAGAZINES	YEARS OF PUBLICATION	OPPORTUNISTIC / AD HOC SAMPLES	METHODOLOGICAL & DATA TRIANGULATIONS										
			Visual Analysis						Focus Group Discussions				
			Relative size	Feminine touch	Function ranking	The Family	Licensed withdrawal	Ritualization of subordination	Muslim Group 1	Muslim Group 2	Muslim Group 3	Muslim Group 4	Non-Muslim Group 5
Emel	2010	21	-	2	2	4	6	7	5				
	2011	15	-	2	2	3	2	6					
	2012	14	2	1	1	-	2	8					
	2013	1	-	-	-	-	1	-					
Subtotal images (A)		51	2	5	5	7	11	21	5				
Sisters	2010	5	-	-	-	-	4	1	6				
	2011	10	1	1	-	-	3	5					
	2012	16	-	5	1	-	7	3					
	2013	23	-	8	-	2	7	6					
Subtotal images (B)		54	1	14	1	2	21	15	6				
TOTAL IMAGES (A) + (B)		105	105						11				

A total of 105 images were selected for visual analysis, and 11 of them were presented during focus group discussions to analyse audience reception. All the 11 images encompassed:

1. Artistic graphic art
2. Plastic art
3. Cropped photo
4. Symbolic interaction of hands
5. Private and public domains
6. Racial attributes
7. Single, couple, and group/pair images
8. Veiled and unveiled women

The first four criteria were included to represent the distinctive forms of Islamic visual representation, while the bottom four were expected to stimulate discussion on issues concerning the media representation of Muslim women within a British context. For image examination, I selected images covering a four-year period from 2010 to 2013, as this period marks a turn to a policy of 'community cohesion' where Muslims were the target population to integrate within the dominant values of British society. It is expected that these two magazines counter the stereotypical images of Muslims in the mainstream media.

4.1.2 Visual Analysis and Interpretation Technique

In a qualitative inquiry, coding is a process that takes place after data collection and precedes explanation of meaning (Saldaña, 2013). It is a process where a portion of data will be assigned with a word or short phrase to give initial attribution to the data before reaching a conclusive meaning. The process involves rigorous types of coding that requires careful decision making before selecting appropriate coding methods. In this research, coding is helpful in identifying emergent themes from the visual data, which subsequently leads to an elaboration of the meaning of images under study.

The first cycle coding began with the attribute coding that classified all imagery into three types of depiction, notably single, couple and group/pair depictions. According to Saldaña (2013), attribute coding is intended as a coding grammar, a way of documenting descriptive cover information about participants, the site and other related components of the study. This is what has been termed by Kress & Leeuwen (2006) as 'covert taxonomy'. This initial stage of coding provides basic information of the visuals under study by labelling the name of publication, issue of publication, related article, type of depiction whether single, couple or group/pair, and finally frame of depiction that includes private, public, professional, wedding, marriage, domestic and community frames. To accomplish this task, I electronically scanned all the selected images and then transferred them to software for qualitative data analysis, ATLAS.ti. This software was very helpful in labelling, relabelling, classifying and reclassifying the images. Moreover, it allowed me to remove or retrieve any image effortlessly from any assigned category and keep the records of the images safe.

Once coding grammar was established, the coding process moved towards descriptive coding. Descriptive coding is the foundation for qualitative inquiry to assist readers to see what has been offered in visual imagery (Wolcott, 1994 in Saldaña, 2013). I analysed the images for their meaning according to the tradition of Islamic arts and Goffman’s analytic tools. A total of 141 emergent codes were identified from the attribute and descriptive coding, which were later further examined in the second cycle coding to identify recurrent codes.

In an inductive strategy, themes or categories emerge from the data, not determined by the researcher (Othman, 2009). As the coding process proceeded to the second cycle, the recurrent codes were inductively examined and later transformed into 10 themes. I worked back and forth between the data and my own perspective and understanding to make sense of the evidence to finally reach the three dominant themes. The explanation and interpretation were conducted rigorously by weaving insights from the theory of Islamic art and Goffman’s analytical framework of visualising gender. As the themes required interpretation in accordance with the research questions, I located the interpretation in the context of media representation of Muslims within British multiculturalism. This iterative step was illuminated in the stages of cycle coding as summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Coding process of visual analysis adapted from Johnny Saldaña’s The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (2013)

STAGES OF CODING	TYPES OF CODING
1. First cycle coding (grammatical and elemental methods)	<u>Attribute coding</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Single depictions</i> <i>Private frame</i> <i>Public frame</i> ▪ <i>Couple depictions</i> <i>Wedding frame</i> <i>Marriage frame</i> ▪ <i>Group/Pair depictions</i> <i>Domestic frame</i> <i>Community frame</i>
	<u>Descriptive coding</u> 141 codes emerged

<p>2. Second cycle coding (analytical methods)</p>	<p><u>Focused coding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10 emergent themes identified <i>Femininity</i> <i>Well-being</i> <i>Participation</i> <i>Modesty</i> <i>Consensual act</i> <i>Equal function</i> <i>Nuclear family</i> <i>Special kinship</i> <i>Social relations</i> <i>Occupational rank</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 dominant themes developed <i>Individualized female</i> <i>Idealized partner</i> <i>Socialized citizen</i>
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4.2 Focus group interviews

An image may have its own visual effect, which is mobilized by its production but always intersects with the social context of viewing. Rose (2007) calls for serious attention to visual elements in a varied context of production and consumption. Sociologists argue that it is the interaction of the image and with audiences that is important in constructing meaning (Hall, 1973). Ball and Smith (2001) note that the challenge in debates around photography and realism is the tendency to focus on the process and circumstances of image production, while ignoring the importance of viewers' interpretations of the image. Banks (1998) also points out that besides the materiality of the visual object, the technologies, dissemination and viewing of the object must be equally considered in the interpretation of images. It is considered that a viewer's thoughts and opinion would usefully supplement and extend the interpretation of image.

In an influential paper 'Encoding/Decoding', Stuart Hall argues the need to study the process of production, circulation, consumption, and reproduction of communication messages in television (Hall, 1999). Hall suggests that the audience is actively engaged with media messages and makes sense of meaning from their autonomous belief and experience. Audience response to media content might be received and contested in three ways: The dominant or preferred reading, which refers to audience interpretations that correspond to the meaning encoded in the text, as intended by the producer; the negotiated reading, which refers to audience acceptance of the encoded view, and rejection of some; the oppositional reading, which refers to a total

disagreement with the encoded dominant view. This plurality of audience reception to media text has become a simplified theoretical basis for the interpretation of images of Muslim women in British Muslim magazines. It is important to note that production and consumption contexts are different which can affect interpretations. Readings intended by the producer (and the production context) might be different from the context of consumers, therefore I would expect to find this inconsistency, particularly with the interpretation by non-Muslims due to the different cultural contexts within which the magazines are produced.

Whilst quantitative methods could provide statistically useful data, it is qualitative methods which can often explore people's perspectives on issues they might have previously given little thought to (Barbour, 2007). Therefore, focus groups are important in analysing meaning and I am interested in what meanings different groups take from images and whether these images would challenge dominant ideas of Muslims originating from mainstream media. Since my thesis revolves around a limited research objective and is exploratory in nature, a focus group discussion offers an effective way of broadening the research beyond the analysis of the selected images and gaining an insight into public attitudes to and awareness of Muslim representational styles. It was decided that the best way to conduct the investigation was to interview Muslim and non-Muslim groups to examine their knowledge and understanding of Islam and Muslims within the British context, through their reading of Islamic visual conventions, and to explore how those opinions are constructed. The focus groups opened a space to observe how social and cultural contexts construct individual and collective meaning. Moreover, they served as a respondent validation of the initial interpretation of the visual data.

The use of focus group interviews is a well-established approach in audience reception of mass media content, marketing research, sociological inquiry, and health studies. Bryman (2012) highlights a wide application of focus groups as a research method in numerous investigational areas such as lay health beliefs concerning heart attacks (Morgan & Spanish, 1985), the responses of women to watching violence (Schlesinger et al., 1992), audience responses to media messages about AIDS (Kitzinger, 1994); audience responses to reporting of social science research (Fenton et al., 1998); children's use and experience of using the internet (Livingstone, 2006); and cultural tastes (Bennet et al, 2009). In a large-scale, global research, Freedman *et al.* (2013) use focus group interviews of adolescent and young adults in five urban cities (Amsterdam, Budapest, Chicago, Helsinki, and Hong Kong) to interrogate their interests in the production and use of self-initiated visual culture.

When compared to a one-to-one interview or participant survey, Kitzinger (1995) underlines several attractive features of focus group interviews that make it stand out. The interaction between informants within a group would be able to:

1. capture the respondents' attitudes and framework of understanding
2. allow research participants to develop their own analysis of common experiences
3. obtain further in-depth information on the group norms and values
4. facilitate any underdeveloped idea and experience through the debate within the group

There are however, certain problems with the use of focus groups. One of these is that there is a risk of a conformity effect whereby the group norms influence what should be said and should not. This can be avoided during the recruitment process by considering excluding pre-existing groups such as classmates, roommates or club mates who meet on a frequent basis. In the sign-up process using Google forms, potential participants were asked to give their details including age, sex, religion, ethnicity, course of study, mode of study, and year of study. This screening process helped me to arrange the composition of groups as intended and minimise the risk of group conformity.

4.2.1 Data Collection and Sampling Procedure

Participants were recruited from three academic institutions in Stoke and Keele, two multi-ethnic areas where we could find Muslim diasporas that includes permanent residents of South-Asian descent, Muslim converts, and international students from various nations. Students studying multiple courses at Staffordshire University, Keele University and the Suyuti Institute⁷ were recruited for this study. Of the 36 participants, 22 were Muslims and 14 were non-Muslims. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, with participants aged between 19 and 36. The composition of the focus group members is shown in the following table:

⁷Suyuti Institute is a learning institute tailored to those seeking knowledge in the pursuit of Islamic Law and Theology in a part-time mode. Based in Stoke-on-Trent and established in 2002, the students are mostly working adults and British residents who enrol for short-courses, diploma, advanced diploma or bachelor. The mass lectures are held fortnightly at Staffordshire University's Stoke campus.

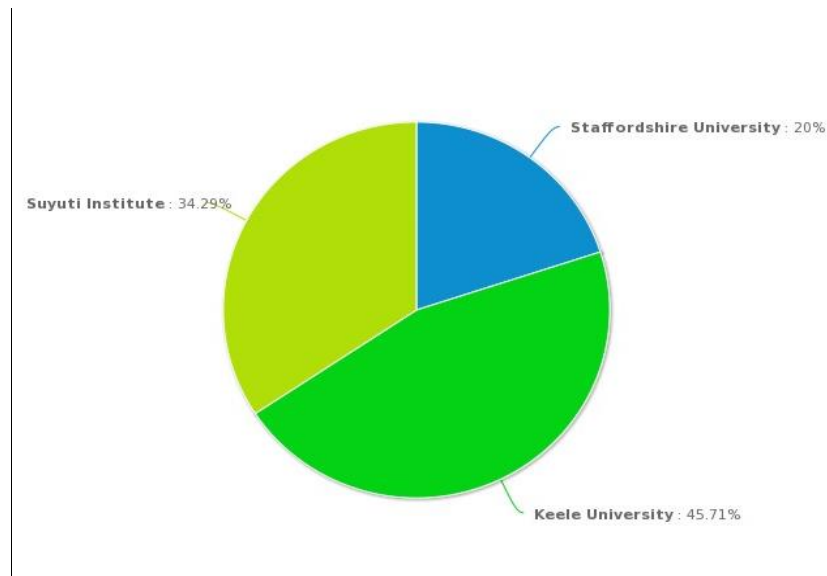
Table 4.3: The detailed composition of focus group participants

Focus Group's Demography		Total Number
British Muslim participants	Group 1: 6 students of Suyuti Institute (3 males, 3 females)	4 Muslim groups
	Group 2: 6 students of Suyuti Institute (3 males, 3 females)	
Mix of local and international Muslim participants	Group 3: 5 students of Staffordshire University (5 females)	
	Group 4: 5 students of Keele University (3 males, 2 females)	
Mix of local and international non-Muslim participants	Group 5: 3 students of Staffordshire University (1 male, 2 females)	3 non-Muslim groups
	Group 6: 3 students of Keele University (2 males, 1 female)	
	Group 7: 8 students of Keele University (8 females)	

Using students as informants has benefits and limitations. Whereas full-time university students could provide insightful thought in light of media literacy and local/global experiences in societal mixing, the part-time students from the Suyuti Institute could contribute to the meaning of images based on their advanced socialisation in the work place and their sound Islamic knowledge. This could benefit to better understand the pattern of media consumption among different groups of people when reading Muslim media texts. However, views gathered from groups of people at similar life stages tend to offer quite similar perceptions on certain issues. In addition, using students possibly forms a biased sample as they have reached a certain stage of education, and especially media students, who are used to providing critical analyses of media texts. Fortunately, the mix of gender, nationality and institutions could overcome these shortcomings and offer more variety of opinions.

The division of participants from different institutions can be seen in Figure 4.1 below. The chart shows 45.71 percent of participants are students from Keele University, 34.29 percent are students from Suyuti Institute, and 20 percent students come from Staffordshire University.

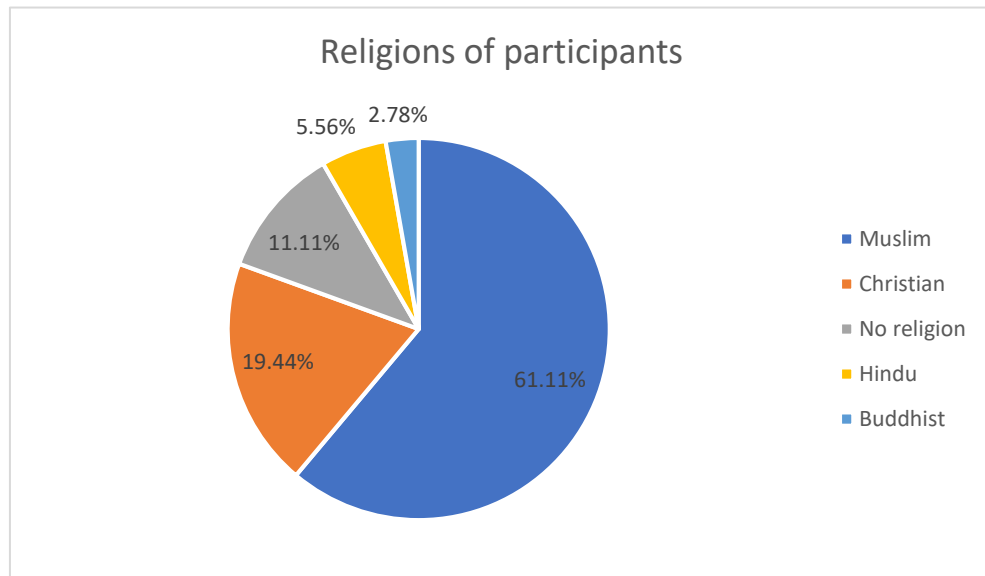
Figure 4.1: Division of participants from different institutions



To examine the reception of images, data was gathered from focus group discussions, between Muslim and non-Muslim participants, both international and British. Of the 22 Muslim participants, 18 respondents were born in Britain and 4 respondents came from other Muslim countries such as Nigeria (2 participants), Malaysia (1), and Bangladesh (1). More than half of the respondents (12) were British adults who enrolled in the Suyuti Institute as part-time learners. The other 10 respondents are full-time students of Staffordshire and Keele Universities.

Recognising the importance of maximising the potential for comparison, I purposely recruited non-Muslim participants from Staffordshire and Keele Universities in order to explore the feedback from people of different backgrounds to demonstrate existing attitudes to multiculturalism in the UK. They comprised White British citizens and some international participants who have resided in the UK for 3 years or more, and most of them had Muslim acquaintances within their friendship circle. Of 38.89 percent of non-Muslims, Christian believers dominate in 19.44 percent, followed by those declare themselves as having no religion (11.11 percent), Hindus (5.56 percent), Buddhists (2.78 percent), while none from Sikh, Jew and other religions. They might not be the magazines' readers, but the main point here is to see how they would view the images differently from those presented elsewhere. The composition of religion among participants can be seen in Figure 4.2 below.

Figure4.2: The composition of Muslim and non-Muslim participants



A small sample was chosen because of the expected difficulty of obtaining potential participants within the available time and resources (Patton, 2002). Among the intimidating challenges of conducting focus groups is trying to find enough potential candidates who were available during our planned schedule for the interviews (Barbour and Schostak, 2005). Some agreed but cancelled their participation at the last minute before the discussion took place. In terms of number of participants, it is possible to have three to four people in a group discussion. In an exploratory research, three or four is preferable (Barbour, 2007). As proposed by Kelly (2006), it is advisable to undertake a detailed analysis of a small amount of data, rather than conducting a superficial analysis of a large amount of data. This has been practised in many qualitative studies based on the concept of saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) - when new data could not offer any further meaning to the issue under investigation. Furthermore, Lee, Woo & McKenzie (2002, in Mason, 2010) suggest studies that apply more than one method require fewer participants, and it has been proven by Mason (2010) when 80% of PhD qualitative studies in the UK met Bertaux's (1981) guideline, where fifteen participants is the smallest acceptable sample.

As underlined before, reception of imagery from Muslims and non-Muslims will shed light on the discussions of media representation of Muslims in a two-pronged perspective. On one hand, to assess how people from different backgrounds understand the imagery. How did they interpret Islam and Muslims? Is there any difference in understanding? How would they view

the images differently from those presented in mainstream media? Did they find them positive or negative? Did they recognize the diversity of the Muslim population and the variation of representation? On the other, to see how they read the Islamic visual convention. To what extent do they demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Islamic visual representation? The following paragraphs will explain, through a phased chronology, the recruitment process that I adopted.

Phase 1: Pre-group discussions at Staffordshire University and the Suyuti Institute

Before embarking on the investigation, ethical clearance was sought by completing a fast-track ethical approval form. After nine days, I received an approval from the faculty's Ethics Committee to proceed with the data collection.

When inviting participants, the purpose of the research was clearly explained in the advertisement. I produced a digital recruitment poster, which I posted on several university-related Facebook and Twitter sites including the Staffordshire University official page, the International Students Association, and the Students' Union. I also pinned several copies of a printed poster in strategic areas within the Faith House Building. I also left some flyers in the discussion room. I expected the advertisement would attract students from multiple faiths. For those interested, they could contact me via email as stated in the ads to sign up for participation. Unfortunately, after two weeks I received no feedback.

This made me think of another way to contact students, which would reach every students' mailbox so that it would be easy for them to respond. Since the University's Data Protection Act does not allow me to have student contact details, I spoke to the Faculty's Operations Manager to help me disseminate an email advertisement to every individual student in the faculty. At the same time, I used personal contact to widen the search for participants. An unplanned meeting with the University Chaplain expanded my contacts with a part-time lecturer and PhD candidate of the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Sciences, and with the University's Muslim Chaplain. Through these people, I managed to recruit 18 Muslim participants and 6 non-Muslim respondents within two weeks. During the interviews, 17 Muslims (divided into 3 groups) and 3 non-Muslims attended.

Phase 2: Pre-group discussions at Keele University

I repeated the same process as at Staffordshire University, by producing and posting an electronic poster to Keele University's Fresher Facebook page. I also distributed flyers to the students I met while walking around the university campus. Unfortunately, no one signed up.

Again, personal and professional contacts were proven fruitful. My acquaintance with the Muslim Chaplain introduced me to the advisor of Keele Islamic Society (Keele ISoc). He extended my request to find potential candidates among Muslim students to the Keele ISoc president. At the same time, the electronic poster was forwarded to students' emails with the assistance of university staff. Luckily, out of seven candidates, five Muslim students attended the focus group interview to form Muslim Group 4. Recruiting Muslim respondents ended here when findings were saturated. Finally, recruiting non-Muslim participants continued. Due to a lack of interest from non-Muslims, I offered a payment which enabled me to gather 8 participants.

Phase 3: During the focus group discussions

On arrival at the discussion room, participants were asked to fill in a two-page form. First, they completed a brief biodata form to ensure their attendance on the right date with an updated profile. Second, they had to give a written informed consent (Appendix 1) to assign themselves to the focus group discussions on a voluntary basis. Once the forms were returned, the sessions began by explaining the purpose of research, followed by reading aloud the rules of the session. Participants were assured that their identity would remain anonymous in the thesis.

Eleven images were presented in stages during the focus group interviews and the discussions were based on several key questions. Questions in the focus group discussions were stimulated from the selected images to gain their interpretation where they made both individual and collective meanings. Each session was tape-recorded and ran for between 60 to 90 minutes. Two people facilitated the group discussions, and each was assigned individual tasks, with me as a moderator, and a colleague as a note taker/logistic support assistant. The images and questions are provided in Appendix 3.

For the non-Muslim groups, I invited a non-Muslim moderator to facilitate their sessions. This is a precautionary step to avoid 'the experimenter effect' (Byrne, 2012) whereby informants may be influenced by the demographic attributes of the researcher (in my case, my Muslimness

attributes) and only tell the group what they think she/he wants to hear. I wanted to create a comfortable environment for the respondents without being refrained from voicing out their views that might contradict with mine. While the invited moderator moderated the group, I took notes on the sequence of discussion and another colleague handled the logistics.

Phase 4: Post-group discussions

All interviews were transcribed, and all names were anonymised immediately after transcriptions. The transcriptions were later transferred to specialist software for qualitative data analysis, ATLAS.ti. for further analytic work.

4.2.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation Technique

The analysis process was inductive and took a thematic approach. Based on previous studies, the best approach for analysing focus group results appears to be thematic (Byrne, 2012). I did not derive variables or categories from existing theories or previous related studies, rather I expected that codes and themes related to research questions and information seeking would emerge from the transcripts through inductive content analysis and the constant comparative method undertaken during a coding process. Similar to visual analysis, coding took place in two stages, the first cycle coding and the second cycle coding. The main goal of the second cycle coding is to develop “a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from the array of first cycle coding” (Saldaña 2013, p. 149).

In the first cycle of coding, transcripts were openly coded with an initial code to break down data into discrete parts that related to the research questions. At this stage, the data was examined and coded manually on paper. Once familiarized with hard-copy coding, the codes were transferred onto electronic file by utilizing a software of qualitative data analysis. The ATLAS.ti software was used to support the coding process since it helps the researcher to code the data, rename or merge existing codes, and retrieve quotations effortlessly. ATLAS.ti also provides visual outputs of emergent codes and their connections to one another to examine for similarities and differences. In this elemental coding, 122 codes emerged from the Muslim groups and 86 codes emerged from the non-Muslim groups.

Next in the second cycle coding, the examination moved to focused coding to search for the most significant codes. The most frequent codes would guide the researcher to decide on the most compelling codes for analytic discussions (Charmaz, 2006). As a result, the iterative coding steps reduced the initial codes to 40 codes. The 40 codes in the second cycle of coding were then categorized to similarity which later generated 8 themes. The 8 themes were eventually transformed and classified into 3 major themes. Wolcott (1994, in Saldaña 2013) suggests that three major themes are sufficient to produce findings and discussions of a qualitative work. The coding process is summarized in Table 4.4 as follows:

Table 4.4: Coding process of interview data adapted from Johnny Saldaña’s *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2013)

STAGES OF CODING	TYPES OF CODING
1. First cycle coding (elemental methods)	<u>Initial/open coding</u> 122 codes (Muslim groups) 86 codes (non-Muslim groups) Total: 208 codes
2. Second cycle coding (analytical methods)	<u>Focused coding</u> The codes in the first cycle coding developed a smaller list of 40 codes. The 40 codes were then categorized to similarity groups which then generated 8 emergent themes: <i>Part of society</i> <i>Incorporating with western standard</i> <i>Religious affiliation</i> <i>Colour-blind community</i> <i>Diverse manifestations of Muslimness</i> <i>Representation of niqabi</i> <i>Constructing the opposites</i> <i>Dismissing stereotypes</i> The 8 themes were later transformed into 3 major themes: <i>Diverse ethnicity</i> <i>Hijab as symbol</i> <i>Blended identity</i>

The first and second cycle of coding encourage thoroughness, both in cross-examining the data at hand and in developing a systematic account of analysis. When the three major themes emerged, I needed a framework of analysis that would enable me to examine the social and cultural conditions of the reception of images. I drew explanations and interpretations of the three dominant themes from Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model. Elaboration of the model can be found in Chapter 6: Focus Group Discussions – Reception of Image.

4.3 Summary

In examining the reception of images, it is worth mentioning some of the limitations of the methods used. Visual analysis might have richer data if I included more examples of magazines or newspapers produced by British Muslims that might offer more nuanced representations. Also, focus group participants could have more British citizens to discuss issues specifically in British contexts as well as from different occupations and ages for more variety in views and perspectives.

To summarise, I used a triangulation of methods to examine Islamic visual conventions within Muslim magazines. The combination of visual thematic analysis and focus group discussions would strengthen the methodology that underpin the meaning of images and its reception. Two British Muslim magazines; and Muslims and non-Muslim informants were located as the data sources. The data was deductively and inductively analysed to provide description, explanation and interpretation of images. Rigorous examination of the data resulted in a rich description of findings. Results from visual analysis and focus group discussions will be discussed in the next two chapters respectively.

CHAPTER 5

VISUAL ANALYSIS OF FEMALE IMAGES IN BRITISH MUSLIM MAGAZINES

5.0 Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous chapter that explored traditions in Islamic art and introduced Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* as an analytic framework for exploring our corpus of images. The current chapter combines insights from Islamic approaches to the pictorial arts with Goffman's analysis of gender visualisation. The research develops a visual analysis of images of Muslim women in two British Muslim lifestyle magazines, namely *Sisters* and *Emel*. The analysis will position the visual representation of women in Muslim media in the contexts of British multiculturalism.

In the context of British media, both magazines reinforce a counter-depiction to mainstream representations of Muslim women but in distinctive ways. *Emel* frequently uses realistic representations to depict Muslim women. Natural photos of families, husbands and wives, wedding ceremonies, personalities, and fashion models provide a representation that offers one authoritative message – diversity. The findings show that the visual landscape of *Emel* features a diversity of races, local people, and international figures. There are converted White natives, South-Asian descendants, Black African and Arab people. They are also shown as participating in British society within a wide range of professions. This heterogeneity is firmly addressed through the depictions of women from a variety of demographic backgrounds. Their agency is also visually salient in the representations.

Sisters on the other hand uses a conceptual, graphic artistic representation of Muslim women. Its visual landscape features highly processed and idealized representations. Interestingly, the conceptual images are depicted using different kinds of techniques with less details. People are illustrated either in a graphic art work, cropped, or by using back shot images of natural photos. Through stylized images, *Sisters* impersonalizes and universalizes women. What is obvious, is


that both *Emel* and *Sisters* promote a positive image of women that is otherwise rarely represented in mainstream British media.

The following sections will discuss the meaning of images as represented in both magazines from a comparative perspective. All 105 images have been classified into three types of depictions – single imagery, couple imagery, and group or pair imagery – and can be retrieved in Appendix 2. Single imagery depicts a woman alone, while couple imagery consists of a woman and her husband, which highlights either the woman as a wife or as a bride. Lastly, group or pair imagery illustrates a woman with her family, and within a circle of other people, or in pairs. All visuals were analysed with the assistance of ATLAS.ti, the software built for qualitative data analysis. Throughout the analysis, all visuals were numbered in the sequence of pictures saved in the software.

5.1 Visual Analysis: Interpreting Images

In seeking to investigate and analyse the diversity of Muslims through images, this section will look at how the diversity of the UK's Muslim population is represented through these magazines. By reporting and discussing the results of the visual analysis, the findings will tell us something about the cultural identity of the producers and the context in which they are produced. Based on the coding process and its transformation from the first cycle coding to the second cycle coding as described in the Methodology Chapter, the images of Muslim women have been analysed in three types of depiction, six classes of frame, ten emergent themes, and finally resulting in three dominant themes as displayed in Table 5.1 in the following page.

Table 5.1: The construction of female imagery in *Emel* and *Sisters* magazines.

TYPES OF DEPICTION	CLASSES OF FRAME	EMERGENT THEMES	DOMINANT THEMES
Single	Private frame	Femininity Well-being	Individualized female Idealized partner Socialized citizen  One core theme: Hybrid Muslims
	Public frame	Participation Modesty	
Couple	Wedding frame	Consensual act	
	Marriage frame	Equal function	
Group/Pair	Family frame	Nuclear family Special kinship	
	Community frame	Social relations Occupational rank	

5.1.1 Single depictions

All images of women depicted as a single individual were placed in this category. The discussion will examine the ways the magazines represent the women as British Muslims. By utilizing Goffman's analytic framework of female imagery alongside a sensitivity to the Islamic tradition of artistic representations, the findings will show how *Emel* and *Sisters* magazines represent women as individuals in private and public settings. Are there any differences between the two magazines in the visual designation of representation? What values are attached in the representation? Goffman's categories of feminine touch, ritualization of subordination and licensed withdrawal are used to make sense of the images under study. In the category of single depictions, the explanation begins with the private frame and the themes of femininity and well-being; followed by the public frame and the themes of participation and modesty.

(a) Private frame

▪ **Femininity:**

The first theme to emerge from the single image of private frame is femininity. The term femininity is generally understood to mean womanhood or the quality of being feminine. Beverly Skeggs (1997) outlined femininity as “...the process through which women are gendered and become specific sorts of women” (p. 1). The concept of femininity first emerged in the 18th century, through mediated discourse such as books and magazines to distinguish middle-class and upper-class women from working class women. Look and body constitute the definition of femininity of modern egalitarian women. In the private frame, *Sisters* magazine strongly associate women with symbols of femininity whenever they are in the home. Utilizing the techniques of traditional Islamic artistic conventions in illustrating human beings, the magazine draws the artistic graphic representation of less personal details to depict women. In Illustration 1, the viewer can see the feminine symbols in all the six images. The femininity is symbolized with female anatomy and attributes of vanity. For example, a woman is visualized in a profile view with her hair tied into a bun; displaying the outline of her breasts and her long, wavy hair; holding a set of makeup brushes; having jewellery such as earrings and necklace; and wearing attractive outfits such as a dress and clutching a bag. By illustrating the female anatomy and those physical attributes, *Sisters* gives the viewer clear indicators of femininity.

What is conspicuous is the absence of facial features in the images. Without faces, the women’s bodies and other feminine indicators constitute femininity in general. It provides the viewer with the opportunity to talk about the images in ways which seem appropriate to them, and to apply specific values and discourses to abstract images. Therefore, the magazine opens up room for some negotiation of meaning.

In this frame, femininity is further enhanced by the feminine gestures. According to Goffman (1979), feminine touch symbolizes womanliness through a less firm gesture and merely for the purpose of attraction. In this analysis, it is found that when women are associated with beauty, they display feminine touch. P1 and P2 each shows a woman using her finger to touch a cream as part of her skincare regime, while another hand holds a bottle by her finger tips instead of holding it firmly. P3 also demonstrates a woman holding four cosmetic brushes in an attractive manner. Similarly, P4 displays a woman holding a replica of a heart to demonstrate her tenderness and approach towards love.

A woman is also portrayed in a free, seductive style with her body tilted and seemingly off-centre as illustrated in P5. Another picture on P6 portrays a lady in a straight posture with open chest to signify confidence. Her clothes, jewellery and accessories are symbolic of style and femininity. These kinds of posture are choreographed to indicate the pleasant feeling of someone engaged in an activity. These results match those observed in a study by Hochschild (2011) on American women's advice books, in which women appear ladylike for parties and display an erect posture as part of their positive sense of being feminine. While none of *Emel's* depictions represent women as being feminine at home, *Sisters* regularly represents Muslim women with feminine values in this way. In the visual construction of Muslim women, *Sisters* constructs this normalised character of feminine gender.

The postfeminist values are articulated considerably in the single depiction. *Sisters* portrays women in a modern approach of self-surveillance and self-discipline, and in the contexts of finance, spirituality, family, and self-development. Femininity is constructed as a physical property within a private context. Gill argues, "The body is presented simultaneously as women's source of power and as always already unruly and requiring constant monitoring, surveillance, discipline and remodelling (and consumer spending), in order to conform to ever narrower judgments of female attractiveness" (2007, p.150). The images are typical of postfeminist representations of women who are empowered by their sexuality and attractiveness but at the same time constrained by it.

The magazine presents a postfeminist representation, that women are empowered by removing the traditional and feminine associations from a wholly commercial motive. Although it is transmitting values relating to traditional ideas of femininity, it is not entirely commercialised here. The images emancipate women from brand names to enhance their appearance and feelings. It is more to inspire the reader on how to look and feel good, physically and spiritually from a female perspective using a didactic approach. By adopting an impersonalized character, *Sisters* offers the idea of beauty in general rather than selling beauty products or promoting consumer culture. In representing this stylization, *Sisters* impersonalizes Muslim women and decontextualizes them from a particular beauty regime. Images of jewellery, cosmetic equipment, and dress are illustrated generally to disassociate them from commercialisation.

Moreover, *Sisters* represents an idea of womanliness, not specific personalities. The employment of the conventions of Islamic art, save any particular Muslim woman from being

objectified by consumer culture or being subjugated to the male view. The images are stylized in nonhuman, doll-like, faceless representations within a cartoon convention. Through the graphic illustration, the images of women have undergone a process of stylization. It has commonly been assumed that Islam prefers stylization. Whenever animal and human figures are depicted, it involves stylization to impersonalize a character and represent a generic personality. It has been reported that stylization was utilized by the early-converted Arab Muslims (Faruqi, 1973) and that the idea of abstraction is a natural preference among Muslims and Arabs (Sadria, 1984). Furthermore, it is a traditional cultural practice as outlined in the previous chapter on Islamic art.

As for *Emel*, the magazine never associates women with feminine attributes as in the case of *Sisters*. Under the theme of femininity, no single image of femininity was found in the magazine. It shows that *Emel* represents a more progressive image of women by divorcing them from traditional ideas of femininity and therefore the cycle of commercialism in order to maintain beauty. In fact, the editor criticised the exploitation of beauty in the March 2010 Issue by highlighting the image of a Muslim Barbie-doll with its head covered on the front page. She condemned the production of the veiled Barbie doll as it enforced the stereotypical association of beauty with being slim, white-skinned and blue-eyed.

It can be seen that both *Sisters* and *Emel* do not represent women stereotypically within the consumer culture of capitalism as reiterated by Naomi Wolf in her book *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* (2002). Wolf argues that through contemporary commercials, women have been trapped in the patriarchal world which exploits beauty to maximise profits. Sexually and physically attractive women are the selling points for the survival of a capitalist system in an industrial society. Although *Sisters* still promotes beauty as a feminine attribute, it still does not endorse any specific products. To both magazines, no personality is able to represent beauty as it is subjective, and no woman can be victimised and objectified to be the icon of beauty to serve the patriarchal-capitalist industry.

- **Well-being:**

The second theme that emerged from the single depictions within the private frame is well-being. In general, the term well-being refers to a contented state of being happy, healthy and prosperous. According to the WHO Mental Health Declaration for Europe, mental well-being is

“...fundamental to the quality of life and productivity of individuals, families, communities and nations, enabling people to experience life as meaningful and to be creative and active citizens” (Friedli 2009, p.5). This definition of well-being has been constructed in both magazines to show woman as a beholder as well as a sustainer of well-being in an individual way.

The image producers promote personal values through an emotional state of pleasure, confidence and optimism that might contribute to the development of mental well-being. It involves one’s emotion, perception, relationship with others, and a sense of purpose in life. This theme is quite revealing in several ways in *Sisters* with the emphasis on self-culmination as well as connection with other people. Genericity of images is utilized by *Sisters* in cropped photos and graphic illustrations. For example, in Illustration 2, image P7 highlights the proudness of a woman embracing her female identity in a photograph. Her gender awareness is represented in a naturalistic representation of a cropped headless female, wearing a modest red *abaya* (long robe), sitting on a bench and grasping her own hands. By cropping the head, the woman is impersonalized. According to *Sisters’* World Editor, Brooke Benoit, one of the motives for image genericity in *Sisters* is to avoid Muslim women being homogenized as any race, ethnicity, age, culture or skin colour. They want to demonstrate that Islam is universal to all Muslim women.

The image shows a sense of gratitude of being a female. The woman’s expression of her gender is signified by her utilitarian gesture of holding and grasping of hands. This masculine gesture connotes her firmness and consciousness of being an autonomous female in relation to her body, sex and gender.

In the other two images, *Sisters* brings the notion of an uplifting spirit and self-confidence to viewers in the form of cartoons. As can be seen in P13, the image is meticulously designed with a careful illustration of a bare-footed and veil-less lady who sits in a garden under a blue sky to symbolize freedom. The garden enhances the sense of space and privacy that she is experiencing. The idea of well-being is further expressed through the hand tracing the outline of a saucer indicating calmness and relaxation. It exhibits the woman as having a positive mood that reflects her well-being.

Image P14 promotes the idea of self-appreciation. It illustrates a woman touching her cheek with both hands, perceiving herself as a precious being. The lady is represented in a cartoon form to give readers a general idea of optimism and self-appreciation that woman in general should

strive for. Self-touching symbolizes that the woman feels good about herself, hence achieving life satisfaction.

All the three images above demonstrate the feeling of positivity the women have towards themselves. *Sisters* utilizes feminine gestures to illustrate women in a mood of appreciation for who they are. There are no commercial products included in each as has been normally practiced in other magazines for commercial purposes (for example, Wang Lay Kim, 2006)⁸. The images are used to inspire the viewer with an idea of well-being.

Women's wellness is further visualised through the act of cradling an object in their hands. The image of a cradling hand symbolizes woman as a care giver who is nurturing others with love. In P8, the love of a grandmother has been signified by a couple of hands cradling a blooming rose to demonstrate that the woman's life is overwhelmed with love and it has been tenderly spread to others. The image describes the quality of a woman's life from the perspective of her grandchild. The grandchild recalls a happy memory with her late grandmother where the grandmother was described as a loving and caring person. The ability to spread love to others is associated with an overall satisfaction with life.

Hands cradling an object is also found in *Sisters* to visualise a woman as a household trustee, managing and safeguarding her family's finances. P10 shows a woman cradling a box of money in her palms. Financial or economic prosperity in a family is another domain of well-being in a person's life. A woman is responsible for maintaining the financial security of the household by taking care of the money matters.

Sisters also depicts women through the image of fingers. As can be seen in P9, a woman is using her fingers to hold a piece of puzzle to relate to another. The image stresses the key role of a woman in building a supportive network among family members. In her capacity as a mother and wife, a woman can contribute significantly to sustaining a healthy and strong network within

⁸ As indicated in a research by Wang (2006) on the analysis of four female magazines in Malaysia, namely *Jelita*, *Wanita*, *Remaja*, and *Feminin & Famili*, female viewers were made to believe that the glamorous lifestyles featured in the magazines can be obtained by consuming the products advertised in the magazine's pages. Also, it was found that such critical issues as health, sexuality, and aging were deliberately featured next to the advertisements of the products that were believed could overcome the women's problems.

the family by nurturing a feeling of trust. This image highlights women as a source of family well-being.

In further presenting women as caregivers, *Sisters* visualizes Muslim women as connecting with other people outside the family circle as part of their state of well-being. In a graphic art form, P11 shows a veil-less lady with an apron holding out a plate of cake. She is illustrated in a canting position to show her pleasant feeling to build a good relationship with her neighbours (as stated in the accompanying article in the section 'Why Don't You'). This refers to the domain of relationship that could cultivate love with other people in a community.

In addition, connecting with other people is visualised in a woman's hands, as in in P12 where a woman is cradling several coins to portray the Islamic value of community welfare. *Sisters* uses hands as a symbol of extending charity to people as another way to attain well-being. The coins symbolize belongings to be donated. In a society, giving charity is the act of connecting people between the wealth and the needy where the giver could initiate help to the receiver.

By delineating the idea of well-being, *Sisters* magazine promotes the quality of Muslim women of being well, mentally and spiritually in many ways. They are the supporters of the family and community morally, socially and financially from within the domestic hemisphere. This is in opposition to the mainstream depiction of Muslim women as being passive and oppressed at home. Well-being could come from within the self or through relationships with other people. Interestingly, through feminine gestures, the magazine reinforces moral values in the attainment of well-being but often in traditional roles. From the analysis of well-being images, *Sisters* displays women as comfortable and happy by being good to themselves and other people, which conveys positive feelings about their lives. Through the use of impersonalised images in representing the women's well-being, *Sisters* suggests these acts are universal.

Relating to image genericity, Machin (2004) said, "They do not represent actual places or events and they do not document or bear witness, but they symbolically represent marketable concepts and moods such as 'contentment' and 'freedom'" (p.316). This has been supported by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006): "By being decontextualised, shown in a void, represented participants become generic, a 'typical example', rather than particular, and connected with a particular location and a specific moment in time" (p. 165). As a result, "...the validity of images lies not in

their resemblance to visible reality, but in their adequacy with respect to the essential or general nature of the things depicted” (Machin 2004, p.170).

As for *Emel*, there is only one image depicting a single woman in a private frame. *Emel* chooses a photograph of a white convert to convey a feeling of well-being as can be seen in P15 of Illustration 3. In contrast to graphic art, a photograph of a full-face view offers a naturalistic representation that offers individuality and personalisation. In this image, the lack of background and the close-up framing emphasizes her personality and actions. Her gaze is slightly off frame. In the absence of eye contact, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) note, “It allows the viewer to scrutinize the represented characters as though they were specimens in a display case” (p.43). The lady displays a utilitarian gesture where she grips her hand tightly when telling her conversion story. Her open smile and tilted head give a hint of happiness and positivity. This combination of masculine gesture (hand gesture) and her smile is interesting, as it shows she is optimistic with her choice of conversion to Islam.

The above description can be specifically related to the concept of subjective well-being outlined by Diener et al. (2012). They define subjective well-being as “a person’s cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life” (p.63). Happiness involves a combination of life satisfaction and the relative frequency of positive and negative mood. After all, subjective well-being includes “pleasant emotion, low level of negative mood and high life satisfaction” (p. 63). In this image, *Emel* balances the weight of happiness and its cognitive judgement in one single lady. In other words, *Emel* expresses the spiritual wellness of one’s life through the lady’s cognitive and affective displays. In short, the masculine hand grip symbolises optimism, while the smile reveals happiness.

The image brings a new outlook of Muslim women to the viewer by focusing on the spiritual wellness of a highly-educated woman in a more utilitarian gesture, connoting a bold and firm attitude. A possible explanation for this might be that *Emel* wants to counter stereotypical associations between Islam and converts. The image is a subversive portrayal of a Muslim woman in British media where Islam is not confined to women of Asian or African descent who are deemed as outsiders. Portraying a native-White person sends a message that Muslims in Britain are not foreigners and this person addresses the social inclusion within the majority nation. However, White converts are being ‘re-racialized’ as non-White and are perceived as Others (Franks, 2000; Allen, 2014; Moosavi, 2015). They also suffer Islamophobic reactions from

family and community once they declare their conversion to Islam (Moosavi, 2015). Clearly, this image challenges the Islamophobic experience among the White converts who are potentially being questioned to re-evaluate their ethnicity. By depicting a personality with an intellectual background and an uplifting spirit, *Emel* represents Muslim diversity in a positive way, including white converts.

(b) Public Frame

With the advent of public-private divisions, women became associated with domestic chores and unpaid work in the home. From both the Marxist and functionalist perspectives, female domestic labour serves the capitalist society by providing service to the male workforce and bearing responsibility of rearing children at home to produce the future adult workers (Jackson & Scott 2006). In other words, while women are negated as being confined at home and being oppressed by male domination in the Marxist-feminist theories, the association between women and domesticity has been regarded as an ideal for a capitalist society where women serve the family's needs at home so that men could have a greater role in the development of the economy. Now in a postmodern environment, Western societies view themselves as more progressive and often assign these values to the 'Other'.

The visual analysis of the two magazines shows that the images challenge the idea that Islam is anti-modern as narrated in mainstream media. This frame will focus on the visibility of Muslim women in the public. I will discuss two themes that emerge from the frame, namely participation and modesty. These two themes are viewed as significant due to their wide narration of the mainstream media on the issue of Muslim women's engagement in society – how the veil has been perceived as different and has become socially disruptive in the British public sphere, thus hindering integration.

▪ Participation:

The first striking theme to emerge from the public frame is participation. A total of 14 images were identified in relation to Muslim women's involvement in the capacity of being a member of both a community and society. Throughout the visual analysis, these British Muslim magazines represent the participation of Muslim women in various fields. In general, women are pictured

as having varied careers ranging from police officer, sportswoman, journalist, consultant, and lawyer to driving instructor.

In the context of equality as a citizen in a democratic country, participation is one of the requirements for being a meaningful citizen (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2008) whether male or female. Opportunities are widely available for all individual citizens to explore their capabilities and potentials not only for individual satisfaction but also for the sake of the society they live in. This is in line with the values of individualism as well as collectivism, that encourage everyone to reach his/her full potential, based on freedom and rights granted to every citizen regardless of sex and gender. Unfortunately, capitalist society seems to undermine this value by segregating certain communities and at the same time labelling them as being segregated.

As far as media images of women are concerned, Goffman (1977) observed that women are always pictured associated with domestic chores such as cooking, washing, cleaning, and taking care of children. In scenes outside the home, women mainly perform a non-executive role and act as an assistant to a male superior. In short, women are subjected to male instruction and direction, and their place is mostly within the house domain.

Although Goffman's work is dated, and things have progressed in Britain, these ideas still apply to some women in minority populations due to job discrimination. Reports from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Race and Community (2012) concerning Ethnic Minority Female Unemployment, highlights the issue of high unemployment rates among Pakistani and Bangladeshi women who are mostly Muslim. During job interviews they were asked about marriage and children. Women with hijabs were discriminated against during the job selection. This scenario is likely to contribute towards less participation among Muslim women in society and further stereotype them as economically inactive outside the home. In response to a more recent report by Dame Louise Casey on the challenge of integration (Casey, 2016), economic exclusion and job opportunity are still being debated around the cultural and religious factors within Muslim community⁹.

⁹The report on integration also received criticisms for blaming the failure of integration on the Muslim community. Instead of tackling income disparity and institutional racism that requires effort from the ruling government, the report suggests a correlation between Muslim residential segregation and school concentration, with poor English and low employment rate, thus leading to social and economic exclusions, and later the penetration of extremist ideology. Also, participation of Muslim women is reported as very limited due to religious and cultural factors. The report carries western hegemony where thoughts on women, sexuality and freedom of expression are considered less progressive among Muslim minorities, connoting an intolerant attitude of diverse views.

Under this theme, the discussion will focus on examining the types of careers of the Muslim women depicted in the magazines, and to what extent they contribute to the society they live in. For *Sisters* magazine, the visualisation of Muslim women adheres to its conceptual representation without personal details (as indicated in [Illustration 4](#)). An image from *Sisters* in P16 illustrates a faceless marriage coach in a cartoon convention, without a facial feature, in an all-black attire and wearing a hijab. Her gesture demonstrates a traditional depiction of feminine touch, where she barely touches her face. This implies a caring and tender approach which reflects her career as a marriage consultant to women in need.

In comparison, P17 depicts a woman in a natural photo taken from behind. The photo focuses on her hand which grips a pen while writing on a sheet of paper to suggest her firm character in a corporate world. In general semiology, the back view may leave a negative impression that the subject is not engaging herself with the viewer and therefore the person is less connected with the other. This normal interpretation might be a deviation from what has been practiced by *Sisters* by not exposing the facial features of a person. What is more important is the firm hand gesture in the foreground that becomes the central attention of the image.

Although these two women are constructed in different forms, what is similar between them is their black attire to create a professional look. Both women in the image are dressed entirely in black from head to toe – the clothes and the hijabs. *Sisters* illustrates the professionalism of the workers through the physical attribute or props for a generic image. This observation is in line with Machin's (2004) study of generic, multi-purpose images which argued that "props are used to connote not only the setting but also the identities of the actors and the nature of activities" (p.322).

Other than professionals, *Sisters* stresses the role of the environmental activists. Three images represent women's participation in the environmental field by focusing on the hands to show women in an instrumentally-oriented behaviour. The hands are shown as cradling a round glass filled with water (P18), a replica of the earth (P19), and a replica of a tree (P20). These pictures project the feminine values of nurturing and caring for the natural environment which are signified by three elements of nature – water, earth and tree. This role receives prominent attention by the magazine as they publish environmental issues annually where women actively participate. The use of hands symbolizes their strong commitment to the environment.

All the images are counter-conventional to mainstream media where women are depicted as serving their community in different pursuits. Instead of being stereotyped as living at home and serving the family, the images offer a nuanced representation of Muslim women who are free to expand their social network with other people outside the home and actively engage with social activities. *Sisters* focuses on the role of providing service to people and nature through the careers of a marriage advisor, lawyer and environmentalist.

Through a symbol of hands, Muslim women are depicted as carrying the traditional feminine quality of nurture as well as the masculine quality of determination and purposefulness. The salience of hands is articulated well by *Sisters*, to construct the roles Muslim women play when participating in society. As cited by Ethel J. Alpenfels (1955), the human hand is an organ of performance. "The human hand also is an organ of perception and thus lends itself to the most abstract concepts." (p.4). From the perspective of the Islamic art tradition, it shows that there is flexibility in depicting a part of the human body. Without depicting the personality of the women involved, the images of hands - whether they are natural or unnatural - are able to convey the women's function within the society. Hands become a symbol of a woman's characteristics.

Emel on the other hand, represents women's participation through their exceptional achievements at a national and international level. Compared to *Sisters*, *Emel* demonstrates women's self-efficacy to excel in their own pursuits in a wider range of activities such as sports and women's rights. It breaks a stereotypical image of women who are deemed restricted to certain fields of work due to cultural constraints. Women are visualised as great achievers and freedom fighters who realize their potential, opportunity and rights as a citizen. *Emel* through the female imagery embodies values more traditionally associated with masculinity, which are synonymous with power, confidence, control, intimidation and action.

As can be seen in [Illustration 5](#), women are depicted as active, in control and autonomous. The first four pictures portray Muslim women leading in aggressive, traditionally male-dominated sports, specifically as a coach for a national cricket team (as represented in P21), a national champion in taekwondo (P22), an international champion in fencing (P23), and also as a certified kick boxing trainer (P24). All of them demonstrate a utilitarian gesture, which signifies determination, courage and competitiveness. Above all, they seem focused and in charge of their surroundings.

We can see that *Emel* forges these political representations to instil ideas about Islam's inclusiveness within the wider society. The women are British citizens who have great achievements in sports at national and international levels. For example, Salma Bi (P21) is the only Asian female cricket coach in the UK who won the Outstanding Achievement Award in the 2011 British Asian Sports Awards. P22 depicts Nur-Jehan Shaikh, who was ranked number one in karate in her age category in Britain. In the accompanying article, it is stated that she won the European Karate Federation Championship, the British International Open and the British Karate Federation Championship.

Besides sports, *Emel* also depicts a woman in a dangerous and male-dominated career. As revealed in P25, the uniform and the walkie-talkie inform the viewer that she is a community police officer. With her direct gaze on the viewers, she stands up straight and openly displays her chest, signalling her courage and readiness to act when needed. A woman whose work is office-based was also identified. In P26, a magazine editor was depicted as looking directly at the readers and displaying a utilitarian gesture, in which she grips her hand and rests her chin against it. Both are White and wearing hijabs. The images visually establish the ways in which the British White Muslim women are presented to their readers. Both establish eye-contact which gives an assertive look and conveys engagement with the reader that they are Muslims and part of British society.

Images depicting woman in full-face veils could be the most appealing visual. *Emel* in several instances brings images of a niqabi woman to the readers. A picture of a driving instructor wearing a niqab is visualised in P27 where she is standing upright to the car with her hands in pockets, looking out at the reader. Her posture signals openness, confidence and engagement. The picture is a counter-representation to the mainstream negativity of niqabi women in Britain. Back in 2006, the veil issue sparked a controversial debate in the British media and has been politicized in the discussion on immigration, integration and multiculturalism (Williamson, 2014). The veil, according to its opponents, makes women invisible and inhibits interaction that leads to isolation and oppression. The picture, however shows otherwise, where the instructor is looking directly at and denoting her engagement with the reader. She is captured standing in front of the car signalling her empowerment in her job. The picture is related to the BBC2 documentary on a Muslim Driving School in Blackburn and symbolizes the freedom to work, and more generally to act and move.

In the other two images of niqabi woman, *Emel* moves from realistic images to artwork to represent women in other countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. In the first image, P29 illustrates a cartoon of a Saudi woman, who fights for women's right to drive. It is an artwork by a Brazilian political cartoonist, Carlos Latuff who is well-known for his work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Arab Spring events. In 2011, a group of Saudi women launched a campaign of #Women2Drive as an attempt to raise awareness of the ban on female drivers and to force change. The campaign received wide international media coverage. The caricature shows the woman gripping a steering wheel and signifying her determination to drive and fight for her rights. The woman is made salient by being portrayed in black and white. Her eyes are sharp looking straight ahead as if confronting an unseen opponent. This face-veiled woman is visualised in a traditionally masculine posture, to symbolize that Saudi women are confronting the rule of banning women from driving which has been sanctioned by the kingdom's clerics.

There is another picture of a Saudi niqabi woman in graphic art depicted in *Emel*. This image on P28 shows a female poet from Saudi Arabia who participated in a popular reality programme on Arab television, *Million's Poet*. In her poem 'The Chaos of Fatwas' that received enthusiastic comments from juries, Hissa Hilal criticised some Saudi clerics for their harsh judgements and oppressive rules over those who support gender mixing in the country. The picture shows the poet's image which attracted media attention worldwide. It was stylized from AP Photo. This stylized photo illustrates Hilal on stage from a frontal view, where she is standing straight behind a podium at the centre of attention. It connotes strength and her voice being heard.

What *Emel* represents is in sharp contrast with mainstream media images where niqabi women, inside or outside Britain, have often been depicted as victims and refugees who need rescuing. These two stylized images defy the negativity and evoke an idea of the courage and determination of niqabi women. The stylized photo represents the real women out there who voice their rights and denounce unjust rules. The images show they are not the passive victims, but they are the fighters. *Emel* publishes an uplifting image of conscientious women to counter-depict the passive and vulnerable stereotypes.

- **Modesty:**

The next recurrent theme in the public frame is modesty. The concept of modesty is embedded in the representation of Muslim women in distinctive styles of hijab. Saleem (2003) suggested

that Muslim women vary in their style of dress depending on the culture they embrace, but they are confined to a Muslim dress code which is compliant to two principles – coverage and modesty (in public). To what extent women should cover themselves or what constitutes modesty is subject to one's interpretation and intention.

As discussed in earlier chapters, in the context of multicultural society in Britain, the veil, in contrast, has been politicised to associate women with negative cultural and religious values associated with Islam. Islam has been perceived as regressive and oppressive especially to women, and the veil is a symbol of this suppression (Milly Williamson and Khiabany, 2010). Academic studies, however, have found otherwise, where wearing the hijab can be described as making Muslim women visible in public (Tarlo, 2007a) and asserting style autonomy in fashion (Lewis, 2013). Moreover, a woman's body is integral to the establishment, preservation and performance of British Muslim identity. In outstanding research on sartorial biographies of successful Muslim women in London, Tarlo (2007b) found that the hijab is no longer a manifestation of whether the wearer is fundamentalist or modernist, religious or secular, but it is an intersection of fashion, religion and identity of cosmopolitan residents in London. In fact, the veil has become an expression of social and political identity for many Muslim women.

In this analysis, the term modesty is specifically used to mean moderation in dress, whereby modesty is symbolised in the form of head and body-covered attire. Both magazines visualize women within the public sphere in various looks. In general, a woman is depicted in a headscarf and full-covered dress to illustrate what it means to be modest. In this regard, the hijab is the symbol of moderation and it comes with assorted designs and modes of covering. It could be a headscarf, long veil or niqab (full-face veil). Except for the niqabi (women wearing full-face veil), most of the images in the magazines show women wearing headscarves and matching them with various kinds of dress such as abayas, gowns, long skirts or pants.

In Illustration 6, *Sisters* depicts 12 images of modesty, mostly selected from the fashion section and advertisements. One discrete observation was noticed throughout the analysis. What is obvious is the absence of physiognomy or facial features of the female models. The images either cut off the heads, illustrate the faceless, are taken from the back, or focus on the hands.

Sisters in many images depicts modesty in naturalistic photographs but with edited versions. Whenever naturalistic images are used, the head part of a represented model was cropped

especially in the fashion segments. Out of 12 images, the headless women can be seen in 8 photos (P30, P31, P32, P33, P34, P35, P38 and P41). For these naturalistic representations, women's heads are cropped to make them impersonalized and the focus is on the clothes they wear. As a result, it becomes a more objective image, where readers can detach emotion from the look and characteristics of the fashion models, focusing their attention on the garment instead. By cutting off the head, *Sisters* has placed women's fashion in line with the tradition of Islamic art and yet still fulfils the commercial function of fashion retail. Unlike images in the femininity section where there is a lack of commercialism, the images of modesty highlight consumerism to promote modest attire which covers a woman's body.

When highlighting fashion, *Sisters* focuses on the beauty of the fabrics instead of the personality. In P42, the picture focuses on female hands to represent a wedding attire which is adorned with jewellery. And if the women are illustrated in profile or half profile views, as can be seen in P36, P39 and P40, they are illustrated in graphic images without facial features. If the woman is portrayed in a full figure, a back-view shot is used, as can be seen in P37. The absence of eye gaze and showing the back of the body may create a disconnection, which is unlikely to appeal to readers. However, this strategy has been widely applied in websites dedicated to Muslim dress to avoid the fashion either being too religious, ethnic-oriented or influenced by the model's look (see Tarlo, 2014).

From the traditional point of view in image-making, it is significant for *Sisters* to avoid a complete human figure from being depicted as it is considered an imitation of God's creation. It is in accordance with the interpretation of the Prophet's sayings on imagery that forbids imitating the work of God by creating animate life including human beings. For those who make the human image, it is advisable to dehumanize it by cutting off the head. Alternatively, hands can be utilized as a symbol of a certain idea.

The absence of body part or focusing only on a certain part of the human figure however, has been discussed by some scholars. One of them is Sut Jhally (1995), who argues that this form of representation dehumanizes women and the missing head devalues women's intellect and feelings. Moreover, in Goffman's proposition of licensed withdrawal, women are perceived as disoriented, adrift from the surroundings and silenced by the missing facial features. But it seems that the complete human figure does not complement the idea of modesty in *Sisters*. Although there is no physiognomy, their body postures can reveal the mood and feelings of the female

models to exhibit the modest attires in a pleasant manner. The generic representation whether a cropped naturalistic depiction, faceless graphic images, or symbolical hands, give a sense of modesty through the physical attributes of modest clothes.

It is possible to relate *Sisters'* treatment of human depiction with Islamic tradition. Concerning this, according to Faruqi (1973; 2013), Islam at the outset is not interested in analysing the human figure. When viewing a denaturalized figure, a spectator will apply his sensory and intuitive faculties to apprehend the values of the art, instead of discursive reason and understanding. Faruqi (1973) reiterates, "For in the apprehension of aesthetic value, immediate intuition is always prior. The discursive understanding here plays a secondary role by lending, as it were, a helping hand only" (pp. 82). So, the most important thing is to appreciate the modest attire, not to perceive who wears the clothes.

Sisters presents a generic representation of modesty. Through generic representation, the image of modesty is decontextualized from British society. This genericity is regarded by Faruqi as "...the power of the aesthetic values of Islam and such was the artistic unity they produced out of the most diverse assemblage of cultures..." (pp. 81). Indeed, no individuation, no character and no personality offer an idea of modesty that applies to all Muslim women all over the world of diverse cultures. In other words, the images of modesty are represented through the meanings and the values of the clothes, not through the physiognomic stereotypes that overwhelmingly represent Muslim women's identity in British media. In this case, Muslim women's identity has been suppressed in order to avoid homogenization of Muslim women. This argument of visual genericity has been supported by Leeuwen (2006) who argues genericity allows the images to be universal by not homogenising women as to one specific identity.

For *Sisters*, the modest attire sufficiently serves as an attributive symbol of Muslim women. The role of attributes in generic representation is not unique to the Islamic tradition. It has been excessively used in stock images online to represent general attributes for a profession, for instance. This technique can be traced in the history of western art as mentioned by Machin (2004, p.324):

"It is as if we are back in the era of medieval art, where saints and mythological or biblical characters were recognized not on the basis of their physiognomy but on the basis of their attributes (Jupiter carrying the thunderbolt, St Catherine carrying the wheel) or on the basis of their dress or hair style (e.g. St Peter was

an old man with hair and beard cut short and wearing a blue tunic and yellow cloak).”

Sisters possibly does not want to associate modest fashion with religion as people might assume. Nor does it try to depict modesty in a strict mode of headless representation to reflect an austere interpretation of Islam. This technique can be seen in many advertisements of Muslim women’s apparel such as *Afaaf*, *Losve* and *Shukr* (Tarlo, 2014). Tarlo found that the main objective is to “...avoid discouraging Muslims who do not cover and non-Muslims from taking an interest in the clothes...The decision to remove heads was in this case motivated by a desire to reach out to the broadest range of customers possible” (p.219).

Sisters in a similar vein, seems to adopt this strategy to market the clothes as modest rather than religious. By not showing the models’ heads, *Sisters* does not make the viewer feel obliged to wear the clothes with the veil. The dress can be worn either among girls or in a close family event. It might be suitable as well for those who do not wear the veil or even to non-Muslims. Instead of dehumanizing the women, the beheaded images could avoid associating Muslim women with veils. This would also endorse commercial value to the dress to widen its marketability.

With a modern and political temperament, *Emel* never hides the personality of the women in its visual representations. Women are presented as full figures complete with facial features to present modest fashion. We can see women mainly in a mix-and-match types of clothes and hijab from traditional *abaya* with *niqab* to modern jackets, pants and skirts with headscarves (from P43 to P48 in [Illustration 7](#)).

By providing naturalistic photographs, the reader can easily relate the models to a British multi-ethnic setting. Except for the artistic image of the Chinese woman, women of different ethnic groups are depicted in a fusion of modest and modern outfits which cover the head and the whole body. This is how *Emel* represents Muslim women within British society and distinguishes itself from *Sisters*.

It has been reported that there is a big disparity in racial representation between white and ethnic minority groups as cover girls in British fashion magazines. In a diversity report of 44 major print magazines around the world, UK’s *Harper’s Bazaar* failed to include a single non-White model as their cover girl throughout year 2014. Apart from featuring superstars Naomi Campbell,

Beyoncé, Rihanna and Salma Hayek, *Vogue UK* is even worse, failing to use any models of colour as a solo cover in 12 years (Forbes, 2014).

Furthermore, the images of modest fashion are represented in a style such as non-smiling because not smiling elevates their status as someone superior to the reader. Ketelaar, et.al (2012) has shown that fashion models display non-smiling faces when representing prestigious apparel brands in order to appear influential and therefore give the impression of dominance and superiority over onlookers. In order to highlight the modest attire as classy and prestigious, *Emel* depicts the fashion models without smiling to present a powerful association with modest outfits. *Emel* has visualised the modest fashion in accordance with the commercial context of mainstream fashion which aims to present design and desirable garments.

In another picture, a graphic depiction of a Chinese lady in a fully traditional Chinese garment with her head covered (P48) gives a nuanced representation of Muslim women from a different background. *Emel* uses the graphic art of a woman to symbolize Islam in China. The image is designed to show the woman wearing a modest traditional Chinese garment that covers her whole body including her head. She demonstrates a female gesture where the right hand softly touches the fan on her left hand. *Emel* uses a popular and stereotypical representation of the Orient from the western view when depicting Islam in that country. In plays, novels and movies (*Great Wall*, to name the latest), far eastern countries such as China are always represented by an exotic woman. The same happens with Islam, the religion of the East. This image plays its part in *Emel* as a symbolic system to represent the idea of the religion in the country. The image is doubly orientalist.

Overall, it can thus be suggested that both magazines depict modesty as a sign of Muslim women's identity when they are outside the home but in separate ways. *Sisters* chooses to depict Muslim women in a more traditional approach but displays fashion commercially in a creative manner by impersonalising the models. It blurs western and Islamic fashion by not delineating the religious symbol of the hijab. The images of fashion focus on the very clothes to highlight its beauty and use, which potentially appeal to Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

Emel on the other hand is more political in visualising Muslim women by depicting them from various ethnic groups in a mix of modern and traditional garments. The use of a white model and western attire stylizes hijab as inclusive within the wider society. It can be suggested that

modest attire which has come to be associated with the hijab is a symbol of political culture in modern Britain. The findings support the idea of Göle (2013), who suggests that the wearing of the Islamic headscarf has now become a manifestation of Muslim existence as a new public imagination in the West. *Emel* further enforces this idea.

Furthermore, the hijab could save women from a state of insecurity which places pressure on them to look beautiful as defined by capitalist society. Sarah Joseph, the chief editor of *Emel* shared her views on this: "The hijab is represented not just (as a) religious injunction, but the weapon in the war against an industry that demanded women reach unattainable goals of beauty and weight" (Emel, March 2010, p.22). In fact, the hijab brings an autonomy to Muslim women that releases them from the trap of male-defined beauty that prevails in the consumer world. Liz Hoggard (2013), a London-based consumer journalist affirms that mainstream fashion is paternalistic. "Female dress(es) are often written by female journalists, but largely it's a male editor's view of the world" (p.182). Instead of being oppressive, the modest clothes empower women when they are no longer judged merely on physical appearances. They do not need other's approval to feel beautiful and they do not rely on looks to exert power over men.

The depiction of modest fashion and the hijab in the magazines can be related to the injunction of wearing modest clothes, which has been outlined in the Quran in Chapter 33 verse 59: "Prophet, tell your wives, your daughters and women believers to make their outer garments hang low over them so as to be recognized and not insulted: God is most forgiving, most merciful" [translated by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (2010)].

The verse can relate to the contemporaneous issue of modest fashion in the context of Muslim women living in the West. The concept of modest fashion in this verse carries political and social significance. The clause '*so that they may be recognized and not be insulted*' can be clarified in two manifestations. Firstly, it is about 'to be recognized'. Where political identity is integral in a postmodern society, the modest attire has become significant that it gives identity to Muslim women to be known and distinguished. This political identity has an impact on social interaction which results in the second injunction. The terms 'not be insulted' here possibly means not to be offended by an inappropriate view or desire. The beauty of a woman may invite others to judge her merely on physical attractiveness and obscure her other qualities such as intellectual capability or hands-on skills. In other words, it would save a woman from being objectified by male view and from being subjugated to male desire. Moreover, by being modest in appearance,

it gives women the choice and implies the freedom to go out and mix in a society. As inspired by the Quran, the modest garment dignifies and empowers Muslim women when participating in the public sphere.

Based on the results of single depictions, the findings suggest that the producers portray the agency and diversity of Muslim women. They are autonomous with their bodies in private and public places. They have a prominent function in the family and society too. The mixture of masculine and feminine gestures exhibits women's capacity. Muslim women demonstrate self-efficacy due to their abilities and skills as represented in the public frame. The variation of professional settings provides evidence that the producers realize women's potential and project it in the right medium to counter mainstream images. Despite using different approaches, both magazines visually promote Muslim women's self-empowerment and civic participation in British society.

In the next section, the discussion will move to analysing the findings of couple imagery in *Sisters* and *Emel* magazines. As Goffman (1977) rightly noted, life is generated through co-presence of different individuals. The discussion will revolve around how the magazines depict the agency of Muslim women in relation to marital partners, and what values are infused by the image producers to the women as spouses.

5.1.2 Couple depictions

In seeking to investigate how couples are depicted in the magazines, it may be useful first to consider notions of marriage from a sociological perspective in general and as an institution in Muslim communities. This section will look at this issue, discussing briefly the kinship system and its practice within Muslim communities in Britain.

Marriage is one of the social units that operates within a kinship system. In the system of kinship and its terminologies, Radcliffe-Brown (1941) identified two types of kinship – the elementary family and the compound family. The elementary family has three social relationships – between parent and child; between siblings (brother and sister); and between husband and wife who have the same child(ren). A compound family on the other hand could be found either in a polygynous family where a husband has married more than one wife or in a monogamous family through later marriage that produces step and half (brothers/sisters) relationships.

The three social relationships identified in the elementary family above are classified in the first order of an elementary family. The elementary family could develop into the second order that includes father's father (grandfather), father's brother (uncle), and mother's sister (aunt). The next link to the people of the second order elevates to the third order which includes father's brother's son (cousin) and mother's brother's wife (aunt – through marriage). The third order of relationship was also outlined earlier by anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881) who distinguished relatives by blood (consanguinity) from relatives by marriage (affinity).

As the third order indicates, the relationships become further apart from the first and second order. It is in the third order where the arranged marriage takes place to retain the close relationship among family members of the first and second order. Arranged marriage is a traditional practice and an inherited custom for many among those with South Asian heritage in the UK.

It is possible to say that the historical practice is contemporaneous and relevant to the current situation. This has been stated by British social anthropologist, E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1951) who suggested that the family institution of a certain group of people could be discussed from an interpretative approach and that the interpretation takes historical perspective into account. Arranged marriage for instance, can be interpreted as an agreed union of bride and groom to keep a relationship between two families connected. Historically, the third generations of Asian families were separated when the first generation migrated to Europe due to economic reasons. Therefore, marriage is considered as one way to unite families.

Besides maintaining relationships, arranged marriage is sought to ensure private property can be transmitted within the initial first and second order of the family circle through the system of inheritance. Private property affairs serve the requirement of a capitalist economy (Taylor, et al, 2002). Obviously, arranged marriages serve to fulfil social and economic obligations of Muslim private affairs, hence a combination of traditional and modern purposes.

In a Muslim community, both polygamy and monogamy are allowed, however the former is more restricted due to economic considerations and fair treatment of each wife. Although polygamy is permissible, Muslim men are encouraged to have only one wife to avoid any unfair and unjust treatment of their wives. For those who practice polygamy, they are required to provide fair and equal provisions to each wife in terms of material support and emotional well-being. Therefore,

an ability to marry more than one wife can be measured from their wealth as well as their physical and mental well-being, so that the compound family would be able to establish tranquillity and function well within society.

Under the UK's secular law, polygamy is illegal (Johnson, 2005). This analysis will focus on the practice of monogamy and the concept of marriage in the British Muslim community. Obviously, both magazines depict marriage as an historical institution where monogamous marriage is in focus. There are no images of polygamous marriages depicted in either magazine. This reflects the normative practice towards marriage and family in the UK.

In this section, couple imagery consists of an intimate relationship between husband and wife. The couple depictions are divided into two frames – wedding and marriage frames. In Muslim communities, marriage is an official institution for a couple to validate their relationship as a husband and wife in order to form a family. Therefore, the wedding ceremony is an important event for a Muslim couple to announce and celebrate their agreement to live together.

This section will focus on the depiction of marriage as represented in couple imagery from the two magazines. The total of 25 couple images indicates the vitality of the marital institution in the Muslim community that later form a family. Goffman's categories of feminine touch and ritualization of subordination are used to make sense of the images of Muslim couples.

(a) Wedding frame

Goffman (1979) argues that people's relations can be identified through a symmetrical and asymmetrical character in a relationship. When men and women were pictured together, the physical expression exhibits a superior-inferior configuration. Women, most of the time are pictured as being under men's protection and direction, in the scenes of "arm lock," "shoulder hold" and hand-holding. By examining couple depictions, we can see in what position women are pictured in Muslim marriages and what values are implied in the images.

In a Muslim community, a wedding ceremony signifies an official bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife. Throughout the analysis in the wedding frame, *Emel* and *Sisters* visualize the wedding as a celebration of a lawful relationship between a man and a woman on the basis of reciprocal feelings towards each other. One single theme, consensual act, emerged

from the wedding frame. The theme of a consensual act is articulated well in the representation of newly wed couples in both magazines but in a different form and style.

- **Consensual act:**

The single striking theme identified within the wedding frame is the consensual act. The images can be contextualised within the British context where the issue of arranged and forced marriage are widely discussed and argued as being oppressive to women. What is obvious in the wedding frame here is the choice of images within South-Asian weddings in traditional garments.

It is noticeable in [Illustration 8](#) that the embroidery, wedding dress, ring and mehndi send a clear message to readers that the people in the frame are a newlywed couple. Two wedding images of P49 and P50 from *Sisters* display a utilitarian gesture where the brides are holding the men's hands firmly. The use of symbolic representation of female and male hands carries a bold and clear message of the bride's consent. This is explicitly portrayed in the wedding frame where the hand of the bride is on the top and firmly holds the groom's hand underneath. This kind of image provides an attributive symbolic process where there is a vector line between two participants in the image to show who is the actor and the goal (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The actor, the one who initiates an act is considered superior to the one who becomes the goal of the act. By referring to this image, the bride's hand is the actor and the groom's hand is the reactor, implying that the woman is in control. It is apparent that the use of real hands signifies the human relationship that is built upon the consent of two parties. Without showing the couple's faces, the male and female hands are utilized to represent the idea of inclination towards marriage.

Image P49, highlights the issue of traditionally arranged marriage, which is still present in today's Muslim community in Britain. The writer of the accompanied article, who is of Indian descent questions the cultural tradition which in some cases would deny the bride's and groom's consent. The picture emphasizes the consent of the bride which is in line with Islamic law. It reflects an excerpt from article, that states: *The Shariah advises to marry if there is inclination to do so...Inclination leads to love and harmony, which is the foundation to a successful and blissful marriage.* This contrasts with forced marriage as understood by many. The union will not be materialized until agreement is sought from both parties. The marriage is carefully arranged and sometimes even takes years.

Through the representations of Asian couples, *Sisters* show that a successful marriage must be based on consent and love so that both couples could easily establish a shared social reality. It is the right of a bride and a bridegroom to have their consent before agreeing to marry. It is also the right of each to reject any marriage proposal.

Sisters also represents a bride in another temperament. On P51, a bridegroom's hand is caressing the top of the bride's hand, while the bride is holding her own hand. In the work of Goffman's *Gender Advertisements*, holding one's own hand signifies the body is precious and the act of caressing signifies that the person being caressed is desirable. In this image, both husband and wife realize that the wife is someone who is precious and dignified, not to be neglected and oppressed. In short, the hands signify a consensual decision and the wedding celebrates love between two individuals. Although arranged marriage carries a notation of forced marriage (Joppke, 2004), this does not appear to be the case.

In image P52, *Sisters* depicts a wedding couple in a silhouette. It was taken from a long shot reducing their size within the frame and making their faces unseen, hence deemphasized. The bride's veil signifies a newly-wed couple and their narrative representation exhibits a symmetrical posture of extending hands to each other's waists. In this image, both are the actors and the goals, thus symbolizing a reciprocal and mutual commitment. The image projects the idea of a consensual decision to marry each other at a youthful age. The issue of getting married early has been discussed in the article. Marriage at an earlier age can be related to the new trends in a modern society that places stress on freedom and equalitarianism (Berger and Kellner, 1964)¹⁰. The newlywed couple are symmetrically standing on the ground, equally hugging each other's waist and facing each other to show their mutual love and consent.

Emel on the other hand, represents brides with a different emphasis as can be seen in [Illustration 9](#). By depicting the real photo of the couples, *Emel* reveals the real humanistic characters of the people through facial expressions. In P53, we see the bride is smiling broadly when the bridegroom places a wedding ring on her finger and at the same time is extending her hand towards him. The image symbolizes an acceptance on the part of the bride and her readiness to

¹⁰ In supporting early marriage, the authors argue that the trend towards marriage at an earlier age has been noticed in an industrial society as a need. "This has been correctly related to such factors as urban freedom, sexual emancipation and equalitarian values" (p.9). Although this statement seems outdated in today's modern times, from a Muslim perspective though, the three factors above can only be legitimate in a different-sexed marriage.

be his wife that can be seen clearly from her emotive expression. The same expression of a bride can also be seen in P54 where a bride is smiling and teasing the bridegroom by placing an artificial rose right on his nose as if he is smelling a scented rose. The bridegroom is lying on a bed while the bride is at an elevated position next to him. This second image of *Emel* gives the impression that the bride is happy with her choice and suggests that she is in control of the relationship.

Interestingly, *Emel* highlights two couples of different races getting married and sharing life. Each picture provides a nuanced representation of Muslim couples within an exogamous marriage. They are not restricted to marrying someone from the same ethnicity, language, region or customs. P53 represents an 'East-meets-West' couple in modern attire, who held their ceremony in an open park. Meanwhile P54 portrays an Asian couple from different countries in traditional attire yet demonstrating a happy relationship where the husband is lying down on the bed and his spouse is sitting next to him. This kind of wedding seems quite different from a traditional ceremony, which is normally held in a building in which couples are pictured in a typical wedding pose.

This is clearly an advantageous use of images by *Emel*, which unlike *Sisters*, uses the practice of exogamy to represent the diversity of Muslims. The viewer can see the physical attributes of the couples that could inform their race and origin. Again, these findings provide a counter-argument to mainstream ideas about arranged marriage. As other cultures, Muslims combine endogamous practices with exogamous practices.

These results do not conform to the popular view that the tradition of arranged marriage suppresses women from agreeing or rejecting any marriage proposal, and that love and chemistry between partners are not important. Both magazines show marriage as an agreed union of bride and groom to preserve a relationship. In fact, love, marriage and mutual devotion are celebrated in Muslim communities.

(b) Marriage frame

From a traditional viewpoint, marriage is a foundation for seeking comfort or what has been termed by Berger & H. Kellner (1964) as "a protection against anomie for the individual" and therefore serves as a "nomos-building instrumentality" (p.1). It lies in the couple's hands to

manage their relationship for its realization where the family becomes an arena to socialize in order to build the meaning of life. In other words, the marriage could provide tranquillity and safeguard the partners from harm. Importantly, husband and wife are the main characters in a play to exercise such a socialization process. Berger & Kellner (1964, p. 5) wrote:

“The chief protagonists of the drama are two individuals, each with a biographically accumulated and available stock of experience.... By definition, then, marriage constitutes a nomic rupture. In terms of each partner's biography, the event of marriage initiates a new nomic process.”

The institution of marriage has been enforced by the magazines in their images of heterosexual married couples to show the intimacy between two different people. The frame revealed one dominant theme - equal function that defies notions of oppression and inequality. The images of equality in the magazines visualizes what Kausar (2005) has underlined on the equality of human beings. She observes that Islam stresses the ‘original equality’ of humanity which transcends merely economic equality as understood by Communist, or social equality through female liberation of house chores and economic dependence on men as demanded by western feminists. To Muslims, women can seek complete equality in marriage through fair treatment and firm, mutual responsibility. Kausar (p.115) says:

“The family in Islam is not perceived as merely a biological and psychological or an economic necessity, but as an institution in which a husband and wife and children are united in the bonds of love, concern and mutual responsibility.”

- **Equal function:**

The magazines show images that emphasise each husband and wife as having roles to perform, and their functions are derived from the roles attached to each couple. The roles are mutually exclusive and carry certain rights and duties that need to be fulfilled. In this regard, Berger & H. Kellner (1964, p.10) state:

“...marriage involves not only stepping into new roles, but, beyond this, stepping into a new world. The mutuality of adjustment may again be related to the rise of marital equalitarianism, in which comparable effort is demanded of both partners.”

The mutuality of adjustment can be understood as the mutual responsibility which each couple must perform. They need each other as the husband has duties to perform to fulfil the rights of

the wife and vice versa. What roles they accomplish depends heavily on their agreement to realize their social reality as husband and wife.

In Illustration 10, *Sisters* utilizes the symbols of hands to visualize the relationship of husband and wife without male domination. The first two images highlight the wife's utilitarian gesture. P55 shows a wife holding her husband's hand while walking together. P56 shows the wife is grasping her husband's hand while her left-hand rests on the top of his. However, P57 presents a wife's hand in a more feminine touch where she is caressing her husband's hand. All three depictions reveal one single message that the wife is an active partner. The top position of the wife's hand suggests that the wife is in control and voluntarily acts upon her consent to extend her feeling and support. In short, the wife is pictured as the actor, not the passive reactor.

In this frame, hands reveal a human touch and describe feelings between people in a relationship. In the history of arts, the hand is the most frequently symbolized part of the human body to express action, emotion and feelings (Alpenfels, 1955). In *Sisters*, the hands become a symbol of intimacy and express the mood and feelings of the couples. They are iconic symbols of love and intimacy.

For *Emel*, the magazine chose to represent a number of couples in naturalistic settings to illustrate the equal position between husband and wife. As can be seen, in each image in P59, P60 and P61 of Illustration 11, the husband is holding the wife's shoulder and the wife is snuggling into the husband's arm. On P62, the husband is standing behind the wife while the wife is comfortably leaning against his body. They look happy together while sitting symmetrically next to each other. Image P66, however, shows a different temperament, with the wife hugging the husband's shoulder, placing him as subordinate. Lastly, P67 shows the wife in an elevated position where she is standing with her arm extended to the husband's shoulder, while the husband is sitting on the chair. This is similar to what has been observed by photography historian William C. Darrah (1981, in Gonzalez 2009) as the most universal pose of a married couple of various ages.

In other images, *Emel* symbolizes an equal function through the act of nuzzling which encompasses mutuality of love, compassion, trust and commitment. Three pictures of couples (P63, P64, and P65) show each spouse nuzzling each other. Other than nuzzling, conjugal devotion is detected in P66 where both husband and wife are hugging each other. This kind of

feeling possibly grows from the consensual decision they made at the beginning of their marriage as illustrated in the wedding frame.

Furthermore, the equality can be traced from the initial code of the symmetrical level. The couples are standing/sitting on the same ground and performing the same gestures. There is no clear indicator of superiority or inferiority. For example, in P68, a senior couple are standing on a green field while they are extending and touching each other's hand in the same length and positions.

In an overall sense, *Emel* tries to show that each couple has its own way of complementing each other's needs based on one's own capacity. Moreover, the identical gesture suggests that each husband and wife have duties and rights where duties must be executed, and rights must be fulfilled. The symmetrical position of husband and wife signals equality where the functions are not necessarily similar but complement each other and are far from subordination.

In the marriage frame, both magazines visualise the theme of equal function to show the important ingredients of a successful marriage. The concept of equality that emerged from the visual data suggests that husband and wife are obliged to respect certain rights and duties in order to maintain a harmonious relationship. The marriage works based on the concept of relative function. It is the duty of the husband to protect, educate and provide material provision for his wife because it is the right of the wife to receive the best treatment and protection from her chosen life partner. Simultaneously, it is the duty of the wife to be loyal to her husband because it is the right of the good husband to redeem the wife's loyalty, and vice versa. The rights and duties are assigned to safeguard each party's welfare from any extreme demand and to sustain social justice to every individual (Kausar, 2005).

It is important to note that protection does not mean the protector is superior and the protected is inferior. It is rather about the rights and duties in a functional marriage. Both are equal in status and deserve to be loved and cared on the basis of reciprocal trust and devotion. Each spouse is in control of the relationship and understands the limitations and freedoms towards each other. While the husband is likely to perform physical duties, the wife could provide moral support and emotional well-being in the marriage, or it could be the other way around. This relative function is clearly represented in the marriage frame. The combination of physical and emotional quality forms a perfect balance of an alliance of two different people.

It is noticeable that both magazines establish marriage as an important institution in the Muslim community. It is where the family begins and later constitutes a society. Whether it is an arranged marriage or choice marriage, the marriage knot is conditionally tied with the consent of both parties and built on mutual love and trust. Although families initiate the selection of partners in an arranged marriage, the right to agree or not, remained absolute to potential spouses. Reciprocal consent is the prerequisite for a successful marriage that aims for tranquillity, love and mercy. This is in conjunction with the Quranic verse in Chapter 30, verse 21: *“Another of His Signs is that He created spouses from among yourselves for you to live with in tranquillity: He ordained love and kindness between you. There truly are Signs in this for those who reflect”*[translated by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (2010)].

For most Muslims, cohabitation, same-sex marriage and a strong assertion of individualism could jeopardise the development of a systematic and well-organized society that is built on the virtue of marriage and family. In this regard, a Muslim community places great emphasis on marriage where each spouse is able to perform his/her duties of procreating, loving, supporting, guiding, counselling, educating, helping and befriending based on moral pursuits. It appears that both magazines subscribe to this view and represent the married couples in line with this Muslim view. In short, equal function does not necessarily mean identical, but reciprocal to each other and distinctive from one couple to another. The visuals provide counter-narratives, dispelling ideas of oppression or male domination over the Muslim women.

5.1.3 Group and pair depictions

The group and pair depictions are selected where women can be seen in a group of males and/or females, or when a woman is paired in a frame with a person other than her spouse. Two frames were classified in the group and pair depictions, namely, family frame and community frame. In this section, Goffman’s work is further utilized to analyse the group and pair depictions. Goffman’s category of the family is applied to explore how the magazines visualize women within a family frame. The other two categories, function ranking and relative size, are applied in the analysis of female imagery within the community frame.

(a) Family frame

In the group and pair depictions within the family frame, women were pictured as occupying a prominent place in the family institution. The depiction of the family in both magazines is derived from a traditional definition of family. In a classical perspective, a family is a unit of two or more people who live together, undertake joint activities, share consumption, and bear children (Anastasiu, 2012). They are related by blood, marriage or adoption.

The nuclear family emerged as a theme within the family frame. A nuclear family comprises immediate family members, which includes 'father', 'mother', 'sons' and 'daughters'. In the family frame, female imagery can be found within the circle of the family with certain prominent roles such as wife, mother and daughter. In this frame, family bonding is identified and prevalent in both magazines.

In Goffman's framework of the family, it is a social unit that consists of a father, mother and their children. Normally, the son displays behaviour that resembles his father, while the daughter tends to imitate or follows her mother's behaviour to demonstrate a unity within the family. It appears that there is a special bond between the male members and also the female members. Throughout the visual analysis, the magazines highlight the conjugal family unit that consists of parents and their children.

- **Nuclear family:**

Within the family frame, the discussion revolves around family bonding and relationship among the family members. Illustration 12 and Illustration 13 demonstrate how *Sisters* and *Emel* magazines respectively visualise the concept of a nuclear family. The nuclear family is generally understood to mean a biological family unit that consists of two married parents of different gender and who live with one or more children. Within a nuclear family, Goffman suggested that representations of a special bond between father and son, and between mother and daughter show gender behaviour as socially constructed.

Sisters depicts an ideal imagery of a nuclear family to accompany an article which highlights an issue of rearing children (as can be seen in P74 of Illustration 12). According to the article, rearing children is a matter of choice, not a matter of force. It could be said that the image of a nuclear family in *Sisters* remains an imaginary concept where the father and the mother do not only

carry the responsibility to rear their children, but to make decisions about the family size in the first place. This equal weight of responsibility has been highlighted by Elizabeth Bott as a 'joint conjugal role' within a nuclear family in a modern society. In her research on 20 urban families in London, Bott (1955) asserts that the husband and the wife are likely to share household tasks and interests when the social network surrounding the couples (such as a close family) is dispersed rather than connected.

The image of family in *Sisters* exhibits the formation of a middle-class family which has a symmetrical relationship. This kind of image employs similar symbolic images on the front cover of text books on family and kinship. One notable example can be found in Elizabeth Bott's *Family and Social Network* cover page (Bott, 1968). Similar to the *Sisters'* image, the book depicts a conceptual form of a family in a generic representation where a son and a daughter are positioned in the middle between the mother and the father. Both images visualise the symmetrical relationship of the husband and wife in the family and the children become the centre of the institution.

In another example, Jack Goody's *The Character of Kinship* (1975) book cover also depicts an illustration of a family that consists of a father, mother, son and daughter to illustrate the kinship system and its structure as well as relationships in varying degrees and types. Using the same generic representation as *Sisters*, this anthropology text book also places the children at the centre of the family. While the mother is sitting on a bench, the father is standing and extending his arms around the family circle. The position of the father supports Goffman's argument on the role of the father to protect the family. In an overall sense, what is similar between *Sisters'* image and the images on the front covers, is the centrality of the children in a nuclear family. The magazine represents the family in a traditional way that implies the family as a unit of biological reproduction.

As for *Emel*, the magazine politically constructs the nuclear family in the UK and depicts it among ethnic groups that idealize the reality of multicultural Britain. Far from the oppression of the mother and domination of the father, as largely reported in the mainstream media, families are depicted as reflecting the definition of nuclear family that emphasizes symmetrical roles and the relationship between family members. In all images in Illustration 13, children occupy centrality within the family. Children were positioned in the foreground or in the middle between the

parents. However, the role of the father and the mother is displayed in nuanced representations between families.

In P75 for example, a family, comprising of a mother, father and a son are composed in a vertical position where the mother elevates the father. The mother is at the top, the father is in the middle and the son is at the bottom. The mother is smiling and is directly looking at the viewers while the father has his eyes closed. It is worthy to note that both father and son are wearing white shirts showing a special connection between them, while the mother was made salient in the representation by being dressed in black with her head covered. They are conventionally associated with the symbolic values of a family. In a family, the wife's role and position is central in keeping the family together. Her role is to nurture emotional stability that viewers can relate to. Moreover, the mother is the umbrella of the family as emphasized by the elevation, while the father seems to be distancing himself from the situation at large by keeping his eyes closed. The mother's direct gaze makes her appear more important than the father. The image overall gives an element of power to the mother.

In another image, P79 also emphasizes the mother's role. The image shows a couple of parents monitoring their children's activity. The mother is acting as an active doer when she is giving instruction to the daughter, while the father is looking smilingly at them.

Emel's construction of the mother as a protector can be seen in several images of a British family. P77 shows a White family who live in the British countryside. There is a connection between a father and his daughter, where the father, a sheep farm owner, is caressing a lying sheep and the daughter is touching the sheep's ear. Both father and daughter are positioned side by side next to the sheep, while the mother is sitting behind them, implying her role as a protector of the family. Similarly, P78 depicts a family of Pakistani origin which shows a small daughter snuggling into her father's arm while the mother is standing quite distant from her child.

Emel's construction of the mother's role reveals a difference between the role of a mother in a British Muslim family and that of a mother in an overseas Muslim family. While British mothers are depicted as protective and dominant, Palestinian mothers are visualised as less dominant. In images of the Muslim family outside the UK, it is the father who is depicted in a protective position. The image on P76 shows a portrait of a Palestinian family in Israel that demonstrates the father as standing outside the family circle and extending his arms around his wife's and one

of his daughters' shoulders. As put by Goffman, shoulder holding suggests a sense of protectiveness provided by the doer to those he holds. This gesture emphasizes the role of the father to protect the whole family. By not generalizing the Muslim families, the magazine depicts the family frame as 'neither patriarchal nor matriarchal but consultational' (Kausar 2005, p.155). It is interesting to observe that *Emel* represents a degree of equality between parents in the UK families, but less equal among the other families, connoting a sort of 'othering' of non-British families.

- **Special kinship:**

Apart from the images of the conjugal family among British Muslims, the close connections between mother and child, father and daughter, as well as among siblings are visualized in the magazines. These types of connection are analysed under the theme of special kinship which emphasizes the special relationship between members of an elementary family.

Sisters highlights a matrifocal family that centres on a mother and her children. In *Sisters*, images of babies and infants receive a central emphasis in the growth of the family. Mothers were pictured as a source of comfort to children, a health-conscious and knowledgeable mother as well as a mother who struggles to balance family and work life. Depictions focusing on an exclusive relationship between a mother and her child can be seen excessively in *Sisters*, where a mother and her baby or small child is captured in the frame. By highlighting the mother and child impersonally, the images construct the concept of intimate relationship between mother and child using a universal approach.

As shown in P81 and P82 of [Illustration 14](#), hands become a symbol to describe a mother-baby bond. In both pictures, the baby's hands are in the mother's soft grasp to show the intimate connection between a mother and her baby after birth. Photographic images are used to simulate the natural phenomena of giving birth. The images can be linked to the related articles that provided tips and advice to mothers on natural child-birth. It empowers mothers to deliver babies using an alternative method.

The importance of the mother in a child's development can be seen in several images where the child is snuggling into the mother's body (in P83, P84, P85, P86) and the mother is nuzzling her small daughter (P87). Snuggling here signifies that the mother provides comfort and warmth to

the child, while nuzzling is a kind of behaviour that shows full attention is paid to the person receiving this care.

In the context of mother and child bond, *Sisters* stresses the classic role of a mother as a child bearer when her baby is depicted as snuggling in her arms against her body. Instead of perceiving it as an inferior task of unpaid work at home, the visualisation of mother-child bond grants her an exclusive power to give birth, protect and pamper her child. According to Muslim belief, being a mother is an honour to a woman and a privilege over a man. It is an absolute truth that conceiving and delivering babies is naturally granted to the female. *Sisters* highlights this uniqueness generously on the magazine pages. Unlike some feminist movements, who view motherhood as a trap of enslavement to male domination (Neyer and Bernardi, 2011), many Muslims view motherhood as an identity that empowers them as a rational being and should be upheld in dignity.

Another image of the mother-child bond (P88) shows a mother cradling a baby in one hand and gripping a laptop in the other. Standing next to her is her small daughter. This portrayal came in an article on mothers working from home or being self-employed. The utilitarian gesture shows her determination and commitment to balance her life, family and work. The image suggests a dedication of a woman to maintain her role within the home, but at the same time not being sanctioned from working and establishing a career. This traditional form of faceless image implies the modern role of a mother who has to balance her career and home life.

While *Sisters* focuses on the importance of the mother in the early life of children, *Emel* is more interested in depicting kinship relations in the later life of people in the family. For *Emel*, special kinship can be seen through the exceptional relationships among adult people within the family. The portrayals of father-daughter bond, the interfaith relationship of mother and daughter as well as siblings have been visualised to show that other kinship relationships can also provide some explanation of the importance of the family network. *Emel* includes some political impacts in its representation which will be elaborated on the following paragraphs.

In [Illustration 15](#), image P90 exhibits a special bond between a father and daughter where the daughter is embracing her father's arm. According to Goffman, this behavioural arrangement of arm locking signifies "a woman is under the protective custody of the accompanying man" (1979, p. 54). Given the context of Saudi Arabia, the image of a father-daughter bond demonstrates the

influence of a father to mould his daughter's attitudes towards life and the provision of moral support. It may symbolize the patriarchal family system practiced in that country. The smile gives an impression of pleasure and comfort at being in the father's company.

In the second image, a mother-daughter bond reveals the special interfaith relationship. Despite embracing different faiths, the intimacy between the mother and her daughter is maintained. P91 provides interesting data that depicts a mother and a daughter of different religions. Kathryn, the mother, is a Christian, while Anisa, or Claire as she was previously called, is a Muslim. While both are smiling, indicating a harmonious interfaith relationship, it can be seen from the image that the mother is canting her head towards the daughter. It is possible to interpret the posture as a symbolic acceptance to Anisa's conversion to Islam as well as a true support for what she chose to believe.

Furthermore, their smiles indicate that they are comfortable with each other and the special bond between mother and daughter remains solid and strong, which no other factors can damage, despite them having different faiths. Socially, *Emel* shows that faith is not a barrier in maintaining a consanguine relationship. Politically, it implies that Islam can be integrated within the wider society and even exist among 'Us'.

Finally, kinship among siblings was illustrated to show that brothers and sisters are also part of the family as shown in P92. The photo depicts two sisters and their elder brother where the two sisters elevate the brother. The siblings, Nedred, Beqir and Luljeta Kazazi have inherited a European White-Muslim heritage and they are proud of their ancestors who lived harmoniously within a European community. It was reported that their grandfather sheltered refugees from the war in Yugoslavia and their father saved a family of four Jews. The brotherhood and sisterhood within a family, especially when they are adults could provide a supporting network to each other in order to establish a sound family life.

The results of the family section show the importance of family as a basic unit of society. Both magazines highlight the consanguine family in different forms and emphasis. While *Sisters'* depiction of the family centres on children, *Emel's* visualisation of family on the nuclear family and older people. Despite a different emphasis on family forms, both recognize the traditional family unit.

As far as family is concerned in *Sisters* particularly, one interesting finding is that women are associated with traditional values when they are mostly pictured as the administrator of the family, the place of comfort and the resource of nurture. This finding seems to be consistent with the functionalist position that places the mother as the manager of the household. A study on British Muslim women found that womanhood and motherhood are closely related with the collective identity of immigrant Muslims in Britain. In her research on the reactionary retreat to tradition, Mohammad (2005) suggests that family institution offers working class immigrants a refuge from marginalization that centres on women. As household carers, women are expected, first and foremost, to rear children and prepare them for future generations. However, *Sisters* relates the image of motherhood with middle class women who are educated, professional and knowledgeable. From both religious and cultural points of view, motherhood is not low status, but it empowers a woman with an honour and absolute privilege of conceiving and nurturing qualities. It is contradictory to the liberal feminist view that perceives women as victimised by being homemakers and who need to be freed by entering the work force to be economically independent from men.

Features of a nuclear family where both parents have reciprocal responsibilities towards the family upbringing were implicitly coded in *Emel*. Men as fathers, for instance, are conceived by the images as the heads of family. Their size, gestures and professional appearance determine their social status as the providers of food and shelter as well as protectors to all family members. Unfortunately, these types of (Muslim) modern family are never highlighted in the mainstream media.

In the use of photographs of the family, we can see a discrete observation in the use of the body. While *Sisters* focuses on hands to depict a pure relationship between a mother and her infant, *Emel* stresses the image details of the people that include racial biographies, facial expressions, body postures and hands. These nuanced representations reveal the different treatment of images by both magazines that could inform us of how the image producers differ in the utilization of pictorial arts but are similar in depicting the traditional role of family.

Also, we can observe that both magazines present an idealised version of a traditional nuclear family that reflects Islamic values, and we can find this in non-Muslim commercial magazines too. This idea of the perfect family is used across the world to sell ideas and products. There is

not much diversity in the make-up of these families that also reflects universal patterns in non-Muslim publications.

(b) Community frame

Certain female images were grouped under the community frame where the images are connected to outdoor activities and community affairs. Within this frame, two themes emerged, namely community relations and social rank. In this section, two propositions of Goffman's framework are utilized to analyse the group and pair depictions within the community frame. The first proposition is relative size, which suggests that a person who is depicted smaller than the other when pictured together, connotes a subservient function. The second category is function ranking, which indicates that those who are visualised in a subordinating position occupy lower ranking and a reactionary function.

▪ Community relations:

For depictions under community frame, the analysis examines the way the magazines visualize women when they are pictured with other people outside the family circle. Community has been analytically discussed in the dichotomy of traditionalism and modernism in Western sociology. According to Nisbet (1967), community is conceptual opposite to society where the latter is considered as the new order of modernism. Social bonding is the genesis of a local community to realize a genuine connection among its members. Society on the other hand, is considered on a larger scale, where the members are not necessarily connected but have equal opportunity in an egalitarian network. Throughout the analysis, we can see how the two Muslim magazines depict women in relations between Muslims and how they function in British society.

As can be seen in [Illustration 16](#), *Sisters* represents Muslim communities as comprised of multiple races. They are distinguished by their hair colour. *Sisters* illustrates female images in relation to interpersonal cross-cultural encounters within the Muslim community. The first image (P93) is a rear shot of two female teenagers sitting symmetrically on the floor where no personal identities can be identified. However, from their hair colour, we can see the girls are from different ethnic groups to symbolize a Muslim multiracial community. The article that accompanied the picture tells a story of a mother who shared her daughter's experience of

mixing with schoolmates from different races within an intercultural circle, yet they were sharing the same religious belief that unites them together.

Similar to the first image, the second image (P94) shows a graphic illustration of a private conversation between two women of different races, which is indicated by their hair and skin colour. Females were depicted as socialising among themselves by having private conversations and getting along together. The image is related to an article by a divorcee concerning marriage advice. Based on the body and hand gestures, it can be seen that the woman on the left appears to be the speaker and the other is the listener. The white-skinned and fair-haired speaker is extending her arm while talking, and the brown-skinned and dark-haired listener has her arm placed on the table. Both are illustrated as being of a similar size and in a symmetrical position sitting at a table. The image suggests that sharing experience of private affairs and giving advice to fellow members of a community are ways to develop human relations within the community and to keep them close.

Aside from the interpersonal relationship, *Sisters* highlights a depiction of children in a foster programme who need support from the community. An illustration of boys and girls of similar heights standing in a circle represents Muslim orphans in the UK foster care system (Image P95). The graphic of the young children is placed on a person's palms, connoting support from the community. Hands are used to symbolize the quality of caring and guardianship. The foster parents are expected to play their roles as the guardians of the children and to perform parental duties, provided the prospective adopters can meet the best interests of the children including their original religion, culture and language as stated in the Adoption and Children Act (ACA). The act was established in 2002 by the Labour Government and later reformed by the Conservative–Liberal Democratic alliance (Ali, 2014). The image visualises the support from community towards the foster programme and shares the concerns of the government agenda.

As for *Emel*, group depictions are notably political in the wider society as shown in Illustration 17. *Emel* stresses relations between different communities in a society to illustrate an imaginary good citizenship. In the first instance, the image on P96 represents the concept of intercommunity relations in Britain to propose an integrated relationship between British Muslims and other faith communities where they are standing next to one another around the globe. Muslims and non-Muslims, male and female alike are standing on a symmetrical level and of equal size, signifying they are equal and connected to each other. The faith is signified by the

attire they wear. The Sikh man can be identified by his turban and beard. The Jewish man is signified by the hat and beard. The Muslim is recognized by his white headgear and beard. For women, the female Muslim can be traced through her hijab and the Indian woman is identified by her traditional sari.

On P97, the second image draws two groups of Muslims who were divided into foreign and native people. The related article calls for treating Muslim immigrants equally, particularly newcomers who have sought asylum in the UK. The idea of equality can be seen from the position of all the people on the scale. Two Muslim communities consisting of males and females are shown of identical weight. One is native, and another is foreign. This result indicates Muslims are equal no matter where they come from. In both groups however, males and females were depicted in quite varied sizes where men are taller than women. As this image was graphically designed, it is possible to suggest that the slight difference is due to a common identification that on average males are taller than females in every community (Schmitt et al. 2008). These images appear to show a positive representation of multiculturalism in the UK.

- **Social rank:**

Aside from community relations, images of women in role taking were detected in the theme of social rank. According to Goffman, women are normally visualized as inferior to men in terms of ranking in a working environment and only looked superior when performing domestic chores. Women's contribution in professional fields has been reduced to being subservient and subordinate to men.

It has been assumed that there is an androcentric view of the social role women can play in a capitalist society, especially among minority ethnic groups, including Muslim women. Many claim Muslim females have limited economic activity/ involvement. For example, niqabi women in Britain have been generally portrayed as weak, passive and vulnerable that limits their capacity in any job role. The visualisation of social rank in both magazines informs us of how *Sisters* and *Emel* magazines depict the role and function of Muslim women in society. Do they agree with the normalised assumption that Muslim women are deprived of social, political and economic advantage outside the home? If they don't, how do they depict the realities of Muslim women? Is there any difference in the form and content of representation between the two magazines?

In the context of occupation that would indicate social position in the wider society, an advertisement in *Sisters* depicts a woman in an occupation involving care and nurture. As can be seen in illustration 18 on P98, a woman is illustrated as a care worker at a day care centre who is looking after a baby. She is snuggling the baby in her arms. The image shows a female silhouetted in blue and clothed in a long robe and hijab. From a half-profile view, the female body shape has been sharply described to represent a woman. It is common in the media to find images of women in caring roles and also the female imagery that emphasizes eyes, hands, feet, fingers and all the little anatomic intricacies adopted to represent women (Goffman, 1979b; Pennington, 2009).

Since Islam prohibits drawing a human figure, silhouettes serve as an alternative technique to depict a person. Historically, the use of silhouettes was largely found in Persian ceramics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Baer, 1999). Also, the figures of dancers were regularly depicted by Iranian painters on ceramics and royal pottery during the Fatimid era. *Sisters* adeptly depicts the image of woman using a traditional approach with an emphasis on the traditional role of nurture but accommodates the image within the context of capitalist society. The nursery serves the need of career women to leave their children to the professional babysitter while they are working outside the home.

Emel on the other hand, highlights various kinds of women from several types of occupations and roles. The depicted females are a politician, a social activist, a film director, a consultant, and teachers. They are depicted with a group of people, which can convey their social position and their functional ranking within the society.

As Illustration 19 shows, it is possible to identify group depictions in international and national contexts. Women from abroad were visualised as symbolic contestations over women's rights, autonomy and status. Women from outside the UK are being depicted more positively to counter-depict mainstream images of Muslim women as asylum seekers, domestic victims, deprived of education, and denied of rights (Morey & Yaqin, 2010). In contrast, *Emel* exhibits constructive images of foreign settings linked to such countries as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Palestine and China which demonstrate the role they play on the local and international stage.

In the first instance on P99, an image of a Saudi woman is depicted as having an equally significant role as men. As one of the board directors of a consultation agency for women's

welfare, she provides consultation to empower women's opportunity and capacity. By standing at the forefront and alongside other people, she is made dominant and distinguished from her male counterparts.

Next, the depiction of Malala Yousavai, a social activist from Pakistan who fights for women's education and literacy in her community, was placed on the cover page of *Emel* together with the politician Imran Khan (P100). The illustration may be significant to British Muslims, many of whom are of Pakistani origin and see Pakistan as their imaginary homeland. On the cover page, Khan appears taller than Yousavai. However, Yousavai is placed in front while Khan is positioned quite far from the viewer. This kind of composition gives a sort of balance in positioning the roles between genders. It connotes their equal weight of importance in society.

Women associated with a teaching role were also found in three depictions in *Emel* with different settings. Image P101 shows a female teacher in China who is standing in between her adult students. Being in the centre indicates importance and empowerment. Although Muslims are a minority in China, where there is a scarcity of Islamic resources, it was reported that there exist several mosques for women led by female Imams. Muslim women are granted an autonomy to lead and socialize among themselves within their own space. *Emel* also recognizes women's efforts to take part in an international humanitarian project. In P102, a female instructor was pictured as teaching a music lesson to a Palestinian boy. She is closely monitoring the boy who is playing a violin. Lastly on P103, the image shows a female educator using a kinaesthetic approach when teaching children with special needs. Despite affirming the traditional role of women in the field of education, all the three images demonstrate the teachers having varied skills and specialties in critical areas including in a Muslim minority country, in a war-torn territory and in the school of mentally-impaired pupils.

In the British context, *Emel* offers uplifting images of women in a variety of roles including male-dominated occupations and in leading positions such as a film director and a politician. Muslim women in Britain are generally stereotyped as having a lack of autonomy over themselves including in their sartorial and work choices. Moreover, Muslim women are typically reported as engaged in certain professional roles such as in the fields of law, medicine and education. Image P104 for instance, shows a film director giving instructions to two male workers while shooting a film. The males' eyes were directed towards her extended hand.

The images of Muslims displayed in the pages of *Emel* tend to adopt a more realist style of representation analogous in certain respects to the stylistic conventions employed in Ottoman paintings and art. James (1974) observed that Islamic Ottoman representational imagery portrayed power themes including the submission of enemies, battles, the enthroned monarch, the hunt, and the figure of a prince/princess. In *Emel*, the position of women and their eye gaze is depicted in naturalistic photographs and stylized representations that emphasise their power relations and status in society. Although power continues to be a 'newsworthy' topic for most modern media outlets. There are a number of examples in which *Emel* constructs images of women employing an Ottoman style of representation. For example, in image P100 of Illustration 19, the image shows a stylized representation of Pakistan's Malala Yousavai, who fights for women's education in her country. She is shown in front of the male leader, looks larger in size, and thus appears important. In another instance, a female politician with a leading role has been stylized in monochrome, as shown in P105 of Illustration 19. She is positioned upfront of the other two male counterparts to show her social rank in the community. Her clothing (suit) symbolizes her professional affiliation in politics and her folded arms signify her determination to serve her community. These two stylized images in *Emel* share much in common with the symbolism and aesthetic perspective found in Ottoman art. This type of photo illustration in *Emel* involves a form of computer art that begins with a digitized photograph. By using a special image enhancement software and applying a variety of special effects, the artist transformed the photos into a work of art.

From the perspective of social cohesion, the notions of social responsibilities and duties in the family and community are so central to the Islamic form of society. The accommodation and reconciliation of Islamic values into western values are tangible in *Emel* and *Sisters* magazines. In the context of British Muslims, the image producers exhibit the integration of Islamic and western values that characterise the intersected identity of Muslim women in particular and the British Muslim population in general. Via visual representations, we can see the elements of Islamic art are instilled with political and social meanings. These concomitant political and social meanings would assign Muslims with a sense of Britishness. Integration with the wider community is not alien to Muslims as it is essential to a Muslim individual to designate him/herself in relation with the society. The individual is not a separate entity but forms a part of the larger group. This is because the nature of collective culture is its obligation to align with the living society. As noted by Sardar (1998, p.61), "In non-western cultures, the individual does

not define him/herself by separating from others, but in relation to a holistic and integrated group: the family or clan, the community or culture, religion or worldview.”

The visual representations show that Muslim culture is adoptive and cohesive towards national integration. While religion is integral in a Muslim community, being separated from society and living a parallel life is not Islamic. Both magazines illustrate the idea through distinctive ways of representation that Muslims are committed to integration and adhere to a normative standard.

5.2 Conclusion

The emergent themes of femininity, well-being, participation, modesty, consensual act, equal function, nuclear family, special kinship, community relations and social rank, all represent the counter-depictions of the normalised western view, that emancipate women from being objectified by a single ideology.

As written in art history, Islamic art represents various Muslim empires and societies. The Islamic visual convention is the reflection of an interpretation of the Quranic text and the prophetic tradition. The interpretation might be different, amongst different groups, as it is a manifestation of a pluralistic community with diverse contemplation. Throughout the analysis, the construction of social and political identities is rehearsed through the visual representations in *Sisters* and *Emel*.

Historically, the Ottoman Empire applied genericity to images in retelling the events of the empire and the universal quality of a sultan. Similarly, *Sisters* constructs the social experience of Muslim women whether from a perspective of an individual female, mother, wife, career woman or a community member. It highlights the stories in the form of impersonalized images to emphasize the universal values the women bring to the viewer. Arts in the Mughal Empire focused on individualism to depict real events and tolerance between different races and religions in its region. Likewise, *Emel* visualises the individuality of Muslim personalities from different backgrounds and ethnicities and emphasises the politicisation of a Muslim woman who embraces a cultural identity that accords with ‘British values’.

In this analysis, the images are constructed differently by the two female editors, represented by the use of graphic arts, which demonstrates the diverse cultural identit(ies) of the Muslim

community. The identities that unfold from the analysis demonstrate the diversity of the Muslim population in Britain and might challenge viewing Muslims solely through the lens of a deterministic religion. In fact, there are diverse aspects of cultural practice within the Muslim community. In line with this, Katherine Bullock in her opposition against the Orientalist view of Muslims reiterates that:

“...religious text does not determine in any causal way how people live. There are factors of interpretation of text, prevailing discourse, local customs, and political, economic and social considerations. Any study that purports to discuss Muslim women as they are must account for all those forces” (Bullock 2002, p.xxi-xxii).

It is apparent that *Emel* and *Sisters* magazines apply a distinct preference in representing imagery of women in their publications. Among the plausible explanations for these findings is that Muslim cultural practice(s) are not determined by a restrictive interpretation of religious texts. Muslim cultures are based on an open interpretation of the religion, an understanding of being Muslim and British within a community and society, and as a result of women’s own understanding of their roles and what values they embrace. These interrelated aspects are represented by the media producers through the images of Muslim women.

Moreover, the visual landscape is a human production (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) therefore its cultural products are determined and influenced by the beliefs, values and intentions of the image producers. *Emel* aims to show that the Muslim community is not a homogenized population but is composed of varied ethnicities and cultures. This heterogeneity shows Muslims to be just as diverse as other people living on earth. In other words, Muslims and non-Muslims are alike and they could be well-integrated. To counter stereotypes, the founder of *Emel* uses counter-depictions of Muslims, mostly in the form of photographic images.

Emel is more political in its approach to representing people. The magazine visually represents people from a modern-political outlook. It played a significant role in supporting the integration agenda of social cohesion under Tony Blair’s government, and as such has a positive function in promoting social cohesion in a multicultural society.

Sisters on the contrary, represents people from a universal outlook. The generic representations are devoid of racial and traditional stereotypes. *Sisters* presents Islamic culture as innovative and accommodative. It modifies the form of Islamic art into the projection of modern images and

embeds them with postfeminist values. Its publication focuses on woman's development as an individual who seeks balance between her relationship with God, family and the community.

In many images, *Sisters* utilizes parts of the human body to represent women and their roles, for example, hands. *Sisters* depicts the hands of a mother and her infant to illustrate the relationship between a mother and her child. Other natural biological phenomenon can be observed in the themes of weddings and marriage. Hands become the central focus to demonstrate the union of a man and a woman through a marriage. Hands are also made salient to express the relationship between human and natural environments including water, trees and earth. In all circumstances, hands are symbolic of nurture, protection and care.

Although both magazines utilize various styles of representation from different outlooks, the visual analysis of the two magazines inform us of the distinctive values the image producers embrace and impose on the readers. This study argues that the images of Muslim women are best understood as a 'distinctive sensibility' (Gill 2007, p.1). To provide a simple explanation, Gill suggests that the articulations of female gender in the media should be viewed as a woman's consciousness (if they are produced by women).

The producers' sensibilities can be seen in several interrelated themes which are interwoven between modern and traditional values. What is obvious is that the embodiment of modern and traditional values in the Muslim community are embedded explicitly and implicitly in the depictions. This provides a counter-argument to the Orientalist view when Muslims are generally seen through the prism of religion. Women become a symbol of the Muslim community in the West whose performance does not threaten anybody, instead it is a peaceful subject with distinctive and universal values.

To conclude, the visual analysis demonstrates the place and use of photographic and artistic images in *Sisters* and *Emel* magazines via nuanced representations that are not common with established conventions in the British media. It shows the image producers use their own sensibilities to visualise Muslim women within the interrelated domains of self, family and community. The summary of the depictions between the two magazines can be seen in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: The visual representation in Muslim media

MAGAZINE	FREQUENCY	TYPES OF REPRESENTATION	OUTLOOK	APPROACH	VALUES IN FEMALE VISUALISATION
<i>Emel</i>	Frequent	Photograph	Conventional outlook	Political approach	British-Muslim values
	Rare	Graphic art			
<i>Sisters</i>	Equally Frequent	Graphic art (faceless)	Alternative outlook	Subversive approach	Postfeminist-Muslim values
		Photograph (headless/focus on human body/back shot)			

The form of visual representation in the magazines is not entirely religiously motivated but is more concerned with the ethical bound of visual techniques to forge gender representations of British Muslims in a more realistic (sometimes idealistic) manner. Rather, it is social and political. Nor is it completely secular. Since the producers are Muslim, it is not uncommon that their religious values are embedded in the representation. The contents are faithful to the social and religious norms within the Muslim community which sit harmoniously with British and postfeminist values.

By presenting a positive visual perspective of Islam to accompany articles on life's problems such as a marriage crisis, discrimination in the workplace, intercultural relations and issues surrounding single mothers and divorcee, the images may appear somewhat idealistic. As journalistic publications in Muslim culture are considered as a medium for educating and inviting people for self and social transformation (Mughtar *et al.*, 2017), images are made didactic. The informative and instructive message is represented in the images as a directive to the reader to improve life.

Apart from promoting the positivity of Islam through idealistic representations, the magazines stick to the universal practice in the business of selling by presenting a conservative, mainstream view of society. This can be found in the depiction of an ideal nuclear family as well as fashion. The elements of family bonding and femininity are regularly illustrated for commercial purposes. This supports Gill's proposition on neoliberal feminism in marketing dominant social values with

an emphasis on self-esteem, self-satisfaction and pleasure as the solutions for gender discrimination (Gill, 2016).

After all, both magazines embed Islam and Muslim culture in their representations, which seems similar to mainstream media. What is new in the findings is that the visual representations present a more diverse identity and inform us of the heterogeneity and hybridity of British Muslims.

The next chapter will expand the discussion on the Islamic visual representation to include audience reception. Participants of different cultural background, Muslims and non-Muslims, were interviewed to see how they would interpret the images of Muslim women in the context of multiculturalism and British values. Thus, identifying any possible differences or commonalities in their interpretation of the images.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ON THE RECEPTION OF IMAGES

6.0 Introduction

Findings from the visual analysis in the previous chapter show that Muslim producers have diverse ways of visualising women in Muslim media. Both the content and form of these representations demonstrate the flexibility and diversity in representing visual imagery of Muslims. In line with the variation of representation, all images under investigation carry a notion of the heterogeneity of Muslim populations in the West, particularly in Britain. Furthermore, the results show that Muslim populations adopt hybrid values and that their religious and cultural practices do not threaten the wider population. Indeed, the visual representations illustrate who Muslims are from the perspective of the magazines' producers.

This chapter will move from the visual analysis of Muslim media to further discussion on audience reception. Thereby in this research, I will discuss two key issues. First, interpretation of the images of Muslim women constructed by the image producers. Second, I will then proceed to explore and compare and contrast the level of understanding within the various focus groups of Muslims and non-Muslims concerning the traditional artistic conventions of Islamic visual representation.

The bulk of this chapter is given over to displaying themes from within the focus group data. The focus groups are comprised of full-time students of Staffordshire and Keele Universities as well as part-time students of the Suyuti Institute. The British and international student participants, both male and female, express a range of opinions and attitudes towards the visual data presented to them. Although they are comprised of different nationality and gender, my major concern is to see in what ways Muslim and non-Muslim participants generally perceive Muslim identity that is possibly influenced by their own values. The findings will reveal how different people interpret images that are strikingly different to mainstream media coverage. Do the

images challenge people's ideas of Muslims which may already be informed by mainstream media.

In addition, I would like to know their level of understanding on Islamic visual convention. Throughout the focus groups, the discussions look at the aesthetics and contexts of Muslim female imagery as described by the Muslim producers. The aesthetic aspects of the images were brought into the discussion to see how the images would be interpreted, especially in the use of graphics.

Selected comments from Muslim and non-Muslim participants will serve as analytic data to illustrate my comparative analysis of different focus groups. The purpose being to establish how the different focus groups attribute meanings to the images. The visually mediated construction of Muslim identity also to examine the level of understanding within the various focus groups concerning the Islamic conventions of visual representation. In line with the research objective to test the viewers' cultural knowledge and understanding of the found images, the comments were selected to answer the research questions: How do different audiences understand and interpret these images? Excerpts of participants' quotes were included throughout the thesis when they were found useful to show the levels of interpreting images whether through the prism of preferred reading, negotiated reading, or oppositional reading.

Attendees were presented with 11 selected images during the focus group interviews and the discussions were based on several key questions (refer to Appendix 3). Questions in the focus group discussions were stimulated by images selected from the visual analysis to gain their interpretations, where they made individual as well as collective meanings using both previous knowledge and what they were presented with.

6.1 Analysis of findings

Theoretically, I adopted the ideas of Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model to approach respondents' opinions concerning Islam and Muslims in Britain. As Hall sees a society from a non-essentialist and dynamically constructive view, his model is helpful for me to analyse findings solely on political economic factors. This theory suggests meaning lies in the interpretation of the reader who is located in 'interpretive communities' (i.e. based on shared cultures).

As understood by many, representation is an intersected component of power and knowledge. According to Hall (1999), those who have power can influence what and how a thing is represented in the media. However, people may apply different meanings to the represented item. Hall argues that an image can have multiple meanings and may not necessarily work in a way intended by the image producers when they first created the image. By interrogating the image from a Muslim and non-Muslim audience, we can expect to see a difference in the interpretation of the images in the two British Muslim magazines.

Since Muslims are a minority and Islam is considered in some quarters as foreign in Britain, it is interesting to discover the interpretation of the images from these two groups. However, we would not expect the responses of the two groups to be homogenous. The diverse heterogenous identity of Muslims and non-Muslims who come from various parts of the world with assorted cultures could produce varied meanings. Although they believe in one religion, they might embrace a different understanding of Muslim practice, thus have a different interpretation of the images. Additionally, Muslims have intersected identities as shown in the visual analysis in the previous chapter. Other variables combine with their religious identities to contribute to a variety of readings. The aim of this chapter is to verify whether there is a difference in viewing the identity of Muslim women amongst the Muslim groups? To what degree if any do their views differ? How do people from diverse backgrounds understand the imagery within the convention of Islamic visual representation? How differently would they view the images from those presented in the mainstream media? I expect that religious identity would be important in the interpretation of images due to the content that highlights female Muslims lifestyles.

Meanwhile, for the non-Muslim groups, it is important to have their views on the images of Muslim women so that we can see how the majority view the Muslim community in general. How do they interpret the identity of the Muslim women? Do they recognize the variation of representation? How differently would they view the images from those presented in the mainstream media? Do they find them positive or negative?

A total of 11 images were selected from *Emel* and *Sisters* magazines to stimulate discussions on Muslim women (refer to Appendix 3). At the outset, participants were shown the first six pictures of Muslim women from different physical and cultural attributes, labelled as Pictures 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, and 1F. They were asked: How do they define the women? Did the images reflect multi-

ethnic British society? Were they different or similar from what they see in the mainstream media?

Next, participants were shown Picture 2, depicting a handholding scene between a man and a woman. They were asked to describe what they could see from the picture and whether they noticed any differences or similarities with their existing knowledge of Muslim cultural practice.

Then the discussion moved further to discuss Picture 3A and Picture 3B. Again, they were asked what interpretation they derived from these two pictures, and whether it works to correct the misconception of Muslim cultural practice. Finally, participants were asked to compare and contrast the images of two different women in Picture 4A and Picture 4B. Participants were expected to share their feelings towards the faceless images. How did they respond to the image? Were they relatable and what meaning did they take from them?

The results show some similarities and differences of reception among Muslim and non-Muslim participants regarding the 11 images of Muslim women presented during the interview sessions. The findings will be discussed within two categories – Interpreting Islam and Muslims; and Understanding Islamic Visual Representation – to demonstrate the similar and diverse opinions of both groups in reading the images of Muslim women.

6.2 Interpreting Islam and Muslims

This section explains the participants' knowledge and understanding of Islam and Muslims which were prompted by the images presented to them. The first key issue will discuss the interpretation of the Muslim female imagery from the views of Muslim and non-Muslim groups – how they interpret the images of Muslim women whether from the perspective of preferred meaning of the magazines, negotiated meaning or oppositional meaning, and why?

Table 6.0: The First Key Issue and Its Themes of Findings

FIRST KEY ISSUE: Interpreting Islam & Muslims	THEME 1: Diverse ethnicity	THEME 2: Hijab as symbol	THEME 3: Blended identity
Muslim Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred meaning • Negotiated meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred meaning • Negotiated meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred meaning • Oppositional meaning
Non-Muslim Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiated meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiated meaning • Oppositional meaning

As shown in Table 6.0, Muslim and non-Muslim groups adopt different positions in interpreting the visual representations of Muslim women. Reflecting their heterogeneity, Muslim groups amongst themselves view the images from different standpoints. Although the majority held a collective view through preferred reading, a few of them have a personal opinion on certain matters which results in a negotiated and oppositional reading of the image. For non-Muslim groups, except for the first theme, they interpret the images through a normalised western view on Muslims, where the integration of the superior West and the less progressive Orient was much adopted, producing a negotiated reading. The next section will discuss three themes that emerge in the issue of interpreting Islam and Muslims as perceived first by Muslim groups, followed then by non-Muslim groups.

6.2.1 Muslim groups

In seeking to investigate and analyse how the participants interpret Islam and Muslims, it may be useful first to consider media representations of Muslims and Islam in the UK. As depicted in the mainstream media, Muslim identity in the West is seen as different to the extent that Muslim values and practices are incompatible with 'western society'. Muslim identity or 'Muslimness' is connoted by visible Muslim practices (Kundnani, 2012; Allen, 2014). The manifestation of Muslimness has prompted a discussion on the alien nature of Muslim cultural values, which are claimed to be separate from 'British values' (Poole, 2016a).

In response to Muslim media, the participants' interpretations are different to mainstream representations. The majority viewed the images as imbued with multiple identities that carry positive connotations of being British Muslims. The following paragraphs discuss the themes of diverse ethnicity, hijab as symbol, and blended identity that emerged throughout the focus group discussions.

Theme 1: Diverse Ethnicity

From the first six images presented to them (Picture 1A to Picture 1F), Muslim ethnicity was recognized as diverse and not fixed to a certain race. The facial appearance was the cue to this diverse identity.

Mareesa: ...Islam has no ethnicity I mean this girl we don't know where she is exactly from maybe the first one (Picture 1A) British. The same one with the niqabi (Picture 1D).

Fizzy: You can show the woman can be anyone from any colour, any culture, any society, any background.

With regards to the social and political context in Britain, they viewed the diversity as an indicator of the fluidity of Islam to be embraced by any ethnic group. It is not bound by a certain race or nationality such as Arab, North African and South Asian, but inclusive to the White majority. This shows how these images could counter the claim that Islam is foreign and strange. One participant from Group 4 highlighted that the representation of the White Muslim lady in Picture 1E is a positive image for correcting the misconception that the Muslim community is a threat to the established white majority society in Britain. The participants felt that these images demonstrated the diversity of Muslims and that they countered negative images in the mainstream media.

Asma: I think the thing is although she's in this country, in the West, people have a lot of issue to Muslims because it is obvious that we do have a negative light often. And usually, there is a sort of attacks like immigration that people are coming over and take over their country. Since there is a White Muslim I think it is trying to show that 'No, we are not going to attack you. We are part of you.' And I think when they show especially a White Muslim hijabi they think that it's changed, it's different because we always see people here they expect Muslims are not White. They think of Muslims different while they are part of their own. When you show someone who is obviously white, or sort of their facial features, sort of norms of this country, it makes someone acceptable and makes people

become a bit more accepting of Islam because they realize it's not just people from outside. They are our people. It shows some of the positive light because trying to show that everyone can be Muslim.

A male participant made a point that the women represented in the pictures had faces which were familiar to England. Despite different appearances ranging from the veil-less, with a headscarf to full-faced veil, they are the 'common faces' that can be found everywhere in the UK and constitute British society. The presence of Muslim women regardless of their racial identity has become normalised in a multicultural society. Although the niqabi has been labelled by the majority in the UK as different and isolates Muslims from the rest of society, it was stressed that they are British citizens with a distinctive identity that must be recognized.

Shah: Whereby you have community being a lot of democracy, we dress in the particular way. For example, 1D. I live in Birmingham there is a road called Coventry Road. In Coventry Road around that area, you find a lot of Muslim women wearing the niqab, they dress modestly. We did not take the community as the way they dress. On that basis, for that particular community. We see in Birmingham whatever they part of the British community.

Pic 1A I will use that one because you have Muslim women who dress modestly and they also take part in a different role within the British society without compromising their values. So, that is one example of someone who is holding, keeping their values but then also partaking particular roles to help the community or other jobs or whatever it is.

Through his depiction of common faces, Shah suggests an understanding of Muslim identity which corresponds to the discourse of liberal multiculturalism. In this discourse, communities within a society are imagined as diverse yet cohesive. Although they embrace different culture, they participate in the labour market, thus being part of the society. They don't live in separation and this is what constitutes a good citizen.

Yet participants also saw some shortcomings in the images. In particular, they felt that Muslim women are still portrayed as being inferior in a patriarchal tradition and subject to backward cultural practice. For instance, the generic image of 1B, when illustrated with other objects led to another interpretation. Demonstrating a negotiated reading, a female participant who was initially happy with the concept of a generic image that is not associated with any specific race, expressed her unpleasant feeling towards a faceless mother. To her, the image of the woman with a baby in her arms connotes a normalised standard of being a woman at home. She viewed the image from a feminist viewpoint and so deemed it inappropriate. Unlike other participants,

the female participant demonstrated her individual opinion, which contended with the notion presented by the picture, which places the woman in a submissive position.

Asma: There's a computer there can't tell whether she is working or just relaxing. If she is working, it is the fact that she can work while look after the child from home. The fact that on the facial features I would notice that it is not necessary to be put on a magazine. It's just the fact that it's trying not to differentiate or distinguish a person as if this is what every woman is at. You don't need to have facial features, we want to show she's one of the many. To show that it's general woman with children. And also, I guess it is also quite stereotypical like of being a woman with a child in her arms. If she is working, she is juggling with these different aspects of her life. You could easily say oh where is her husband carrying the child. It could easily show that the struggles of the woman, trying to balance her home life, her work life.

While recognising the multiple racial identities of the Muslim women, they agreed that a strong identification with a single identity of being Muslim within diverse ethnicities leads to the homogenization of culture and eventually the failure to distinguish religious acts from customary practice. In other words, diverse ethnicity brings multiple customary practices to the British Muslim community, which unfortunately have been generalized as an Islamic practice. This issue was brought up in Group 1. The group consists of five female members where 3 of them are British and the other 2 are Malaysian and Nigerian citizens respectively, all residing in the UK. Since the group members are all females, discussions focused more on women's rights according to Islam and the privileges Islam grants to women. Their interpretation indicates that the self-representation of Muslim images corresponds to Islam which is contrary to the mainstream images.

The issue of forced versus love marriage was intensely discussed in other Muslim groups as well when they were presented with Picture 2 (symbolic hands of bride and groom). This picture triggered their dissent on inaccurate reporting of mainstream media on Islam as a religion. Looking from a religious perspective, they believed the image to be constructed with a more modern and religious meaning rather than an old and customary practice that contradicts Islamic teachings. They claimed that Islam is compatible with modernity while some customs are not. In the conversation, they use the term 'culture' to denote cultural traditions and customary practice.

Mareesa: I think this isn't too cultural (traditional), it's a bit modern because... not because of clothes, because the way they are holding their hands. If it's cultural (traditional) it would be more shy but it's a bit bold, and like she said

maybe the photographer told them to do what they should, but still, you can tell there is some... how can I explain this...an acceptance from what ties in a marriage. Even the photographer told them to hold hands I don't think they do it was a force.

Ameena:I think culture (tradition) shows that men are higher than women. While instead, Islamic religion shows equality, I think. And so that's where culture (tradition) comes in... young boys have this idea of a woman is beneath me.

They collectively saw the image from a preferred reading. The idea of love marriage was viewed from a religious perspective, which condemns forced marriage that contradicts Islamic values.

The fact that Muslim participants felt mainstream media to be responsible for forming misconceptions about Islam and Muslims generated a view that the problem is rooted in media reporting that fails to differentiate between custom and religion. Their conversation shows that they were not really aware of the political agenda of the media, thus having low media literacy. As stressed by Kundnani (2014), the Otherness of Muslims was framed to justify surveillance towards Muslims in the name of combating extremism and terrorism as well as to absolve the unequal proportion of economic opportunities. This was not articulated well during the discussion, instead stressing on the ignorance of media practitioners about Islam.

This led the participant to differentiate between custom and religion as one way to defend Islam and to avoid misapprehension of the religion. She gave her opinion in relation to the South-Asian tradition of arranged and forced marriages. To her, it is important for the media to criticise the tradition or custom of an ethnic community, which is not rooted in the religion.

Aryani: I think media probably should try to separate the culture (custom) from the religion a little bit more because when they are mixed together, they can't explain it is culture (old tradition), not religion. We should do that a little bit more. Especially like... it's not a problem in Islam. It's a problem in Muslim society because of their culture (tradition).

The participants saw tradition as capable of misrepresenting Muslims and smearing the image of Islam. Moreover, it could jeopardise efforts of integration and push Muslims further into the group of 'Others'.

Ameena: What you are saying is like what... culture and religion is separated. Thus, an honour killing, which is a culture thing, right? No need to be religion. That is the inner part of a religion that people actually believe. An honour killing

it's for a person's honour, not for religion. But things like this stop the two (Muslims and non-Muslims) integrated because non-Muslims don't want to kill their own child because of their own honour. That's an issue.

The connection between power, control, and manipulation of religion was of concern to the majority of participants. When encountering prejudiced images in mainstream media, for the Muslim participants, it is the role of media practitioners to be aware of the distinction between customary and religious practice. This is because in certain circumstances, religious teachings may not favour old tradition. The fact that religion and custom are not always in harmony should be narrated wisely.

The idea of separation between religion and custom can be found in Shams's (2006) debate on the practice of arranged marriage and forced marriage. His research showed that the former is in line with both Sharia and British laws, while the latter is clearly against them. For the majority of Muslim women, private issues such as marriage should be discussed from a religious point of view (Brown, 2006). Unfortunately, forced marriage has been misdiagnosed as rooted in Islam which is regularly misrepresented in the media.

These results are consistent with those of Basit's (2012) findings which showed although cultural norms and religion are both important among British Muslim youths in every step taken in their lives, religion is often a determining factor of any chosen action. This includes matters relating to pursuing education, choosing a career, and participating in society. While Islam does not undermine women's participation in a social role, for instance, tradition does. Any decisions which seem to contradict religion and 'British values' are as a result of traditional concerns and misapprehension of religious teachings. Basit argued that the misapprehension has led to a general accusation that Muslims are not compatible with national values and that Muslims are excluded from mainstream society.

While recognising the diverse ethnicity among the Muslim population, it appears to the participants that religion defines Muslim identity in spite of the diversity of races and customs. Although Islam has been seen as multicultural, they interpreted Muslim conducts and behaviours from the religious stance. To the majority, religious values should prevail over inherited customs and traditions of the multi-ethnic population that are perceived as backward and unjust. The following theme will discuss the hijab as a symbol in the identification of Muslim identity in the UK.

Theme 2: Hijab as Symbol

Besides the literal face that prompted the group discussion in the previous theme of ethnic diversity, what is salient to the Muslim groups was the sartorial attribute, especially the hijab. The majority agreed that the hijab is part of both a religious and political identity of Muslim women and that it is acceptable to wear it in western society. To some participants, Muslim women are partly defined by the hijab. From an Islamic and multicultural perspective, one male participant said that the hijab gives religious identity to a Muslim woman and makes her identifiable and distinguished from the rest.

Talal: Hijab obviously differentiates Muslim women and non-Muslim women.

As Islam is embraced by varied ethnicities, he considered hijab as a performative attribute to a Muslim woman in general who may apply different kinds of veil according to personal choice, so that her presence in the public reveals a distinctive identity. It serves an identification of religion and gender simultaneously. Religious and gender identities are symbolised by the hijab to mean modesty, representing Islam and female whenever going public. Moreover, the hijab symbolizes freedom to go out and to not be confined at home.

Collectively, all agreed that the hijab is the initial way of identifying a Muslim woman. As a crown is emblematic of royalty, the hijab is symbolic of womanliness. By referring to their own experience, female participants expressed their views that the veil is far from being an oppressive element in the life of a woman. Living in the West, the hijab has become a political statement of being Muslim. One female participant recognized the hijab as representative of a Muslim woman's identity whether they wear a headscarf or a full-face veil (niqab).

Lynn: I used to wear those like a scarf like that, yeah, people know we're Muslim by wearing our scarves even though we got like lots of cloth, stylo (stylish) thing. With 1D, yeah I see a lot of people with that so I respect them even though they wear niqab, they still do their work and still bring the name of Islam and I really respect them, so wish I could be like that one day... when you are wearing the scarf you are Muslim it doesn't matter what race you are what ethnic you are so, yea even though for 1D we didn't know what ethnic she is but still we know she is a Muslim by wearing that.

It is apparent from the discussion on Muslim identity that hijab is inclusive and even more important than the face to identify a Muslim woman. When the face is missing, the identity of

Muslimness remains through the existence of the hijab. To them, the hijab is a positive symbolic identity of Islam in opposition to the negative connotations in mainstream press representations, which always associate the hijab with backwardness and oppression.

However, one veil-less participant looked at it from a secular outlook. She refused the majority view that the hijab gives a symbolic and religious identity to a Muslim woman. To her, the Muslimness is experienced from the inner aspect of understanding, and the faithful feeling towards religion is something individual and private. It depends on one's interpretation and comprehension of religious text.

Ameena: I think for each and different person, Islam means to them what it means to them. I don't think everyone interprets it the same way. So, I could read a section of the Quran and feel that this is what it is saying to me.

This participant did not perceive the physical attribute of the hijab as important to describe her as a Muslim woman. She saw Islam as a spiritual faith, not as a political symbol of Muslimness. While the rest of the group members agreed with her point that Islam is spiritual, they argued the hijab keeps its wearer modest in appearance which is in line with the Quranic call for being modest when appearing in public. Since modesty is subjective to interpretation, all participants agreed to disagree. This led to a further discussion on a sartorial biography of Muslim women that gives woman individuality. This will be discussed in the next theme concerning female blended identity.

Aside from religious and secular perspectives, some participants of Muslim groups (Group 2 and 3 consists of 6 British citizens respectively, mixing 3 men and 3 women in each group) discussed the images mainly through their personal experience within the social and political contexts of Britain. Growing up in a multicultural and secular state, they did not place great stress on a religious point of view, rather they shared their own experience in secondary and tertiary education, and in the workplace. Based on direct experience, they thought that the majority of people believed media reports, hence knowledge about Muslim affairs originated mostly from media. World major events such as the 9/11 attack were prevalent in people's minds. Likewise, the majority's perception on controversial issues concerning Muslim women such as full-faced veil was contemporaneous with media framing.

They perceived the hijab as being associated with negativity and difference, which they believed has been fed by the mainstream media. As a result, the hijab has often been an object of Islamophobic attitudes among the wider community towards Muslims. As found by Chris Allen in his study, the hijab makes Muslim women visible in public and easy targets of Islamophobic people. In interviews with 20 British Muslim women concerning their way of presenting themselves in public with the hijab, Allen (2014, p.156), quotes: "...it became evident that their visible, outward appearance not only reflected their self-defined Muslim identity but so too acted as a signifier that prompted the recognition of them as being Muslim by others; relevant here to those perpetrating Islamophobia." In other words, hijab symbolizes Muslimness and triggers a feeling of dissent and hatred towards those who wear it. This, according to Allen, decreases a sense of belonging and makes the Muslim women feel further apart from the mainstream.

Khadija: Obviously, the Muslim women are represented as being oppressed in the media. The past year, I mean the past few years niqabis have been compared to bin bags.

However, one female participant felt such an attitude does not affect her psychologically. Seeing herself as part of the multicultural society of Britain, being the 'Other' or being different does not mean she is excluded. To her, it is a responsibility of everyone to seek knowledge about the 'Other' and to recognize the difference, and this, of course, can be sought from other channels than the media.

Khadija: Well I had people who had passed me in a car and said, 'get that towel off your head' and it's common like that. But it doesn't really affect me, to be honest, just obviously they do not know about my religion and that's for them to know, for them to find out and ask. All we want is the people to ask sort of suspicious about the religion and they should question, they should ask Muslims not just go by the representation of the media and what the media says.

To them, the media has projected the veil as a symbol of disintegration and an incapability to accommodate with English culture.

Shereen: Well obviously these people that are narrow-minded and probably have not done their own research in Islam, they actually think women with hijabs may not know English, may not be able to communicate in the English language. I did actually go to an event where all niqabis were on the panel. An English man from the audience when she spoke in an intelligent manner, intellectual manner, the man from the audience said 'wow' like 'how do you know English?' This is sort of a narrow-minded perspective, this is narrow-minded people that happened actually. Don't do their own research and just feed off the media.

Some others viewed misconceptions about Islam as due to a lack of space and less representation of Muslims in the media. For instance, issues on hijab and niqab are underrepresented and misrepresented. As one Muslim participant said:

Sirrul: I don't think there's enough said in the media about the hijab and the niqab. I think people just can't see why women do that.

This shows the participant performed a selective perception of the media content. He viewed Muslim images in the mainstream media as being hostile to his expected belief about the hijab and the niqab. Whereas negative political discourse is prevalent in the media, he expected to see a more positive representation of the veiled women and regarded unfavourable views about the veil as undermining the ideal function of the hijab to Muslim women. As outlined by McLeod et al. (2017), selective perception leads to the belief that the media is biased, which is connected to the level of media trust and credibility. Those who have lower trust in the media tend to perceive it as producing biased news and slanted views which contradict their viewpoint.

By affirming the media misrepresentation of Muslim images, they viewed the Muslim media's counter-representation as much welcomed in order to show what is happening now in British society. To them, the visual representation represents a part of the reality of Muslim women in Britain. Although they admitted that the hijab provides an identity to a Muslim woman, it does not make a woman without a veil, less religious. All agreed that the Muslimness of a woman is not symbolized by the hijab alone, but partly by the cause of her action.

The majority of participants found that the images show the hijab is worn by choice, not by force. It can be argued that the reception of images among Muslim groups puts a feminist perspective at the centre of discussion. They shared the view that the image stresses women's agency and choice.

Fizzy: I think 1D again to say that from the west perspective or non-Muslim perspective is you can't identify her rather than what's sparked the niqab ban....simply because it seems that maybe you have her father, her brother or her husband or someone who a male person in the family forces her to wear it. Although she may well be who somebody who chooses to wear by herself and the family doesn't really have that kind of pushy Muslim background. If the 1E is the revert she chooses to wear the hijab nobody would force upon her. The woman in 1F shows that women aren't forced to wear the hijab because she's not wearing it either.

Also, they commented on the diverse appearances of Muslim women with the hijab. Through a preferred reading, they observed that Muslim women could appear publicly in a continuum of the veil-less, headscarf and full-faced veil. To be more specific: Muslim women could wear an entirely western suit; a combination of western and eastern dress; and a fully-covered traditional attire. In fact, sartorial freedom symbolizes the individuality of the women.

Muslim participants consider this continuum as a positive representation of Muslim women to show the freedom they have when appearing in public. They viewed Islam as granting freedom to women to express themselves and the images show some of the examples of what they have personally experienced. They could be trendy yet modest. They could choose to cover their faces, but it does not prevent them from working. They might be comfortable to go out without the hijab but still, work for the welfare of fellow Muslims. To this participant, this is the meaning of female emancipation in a broad and intellectual sense, free to choose what to wear, as compared to a narrow scope of female imprisonment claimed about Islam by some modernists and feminists. These postfeminist sensibilities could be related to Butler's notion of performativity (1999) which emphasises the bodily practices of female that constructs gender. Muslim fashion for example, ranges from a dimension of veil-less, with veil or full-faced veil. The findings show Muslim females perform multi-performativity. There are multiple norms that are acceptable in Muslim communities with regards the choice of dress, but they are performed within the boundaries of gender norms within particular socio-cultural circles.

Mareesa: Well, pic 1C I could see myself in there. It's a young Muslim girl and I can see likes fashion at the same time she likes to follow her religion so by putting an identity on her that she's Muslim practicing. Pic 1D as the niqabi I mean masya Allah, a lot of Muslim sisters are wearing the niqab and working all the time and I really respect that they are struggling on that. So, I'm thinking that's something else that represents our society today. Pic1F is the woman without hijab but that doesn't mean she is not Muslim and also you do not know how her relationship with her god is, but she's still a Muslim and she is also one of the parts of our society.

A veil-less female participant stressed more the personality of the women in the images rather than their outer looks when talking about female individuality.

Ameena: One doesn't wear hijab but she's still successful (1F). One with the burqa (niqab) she's still successful (1D). You can wear hijab and be still fashionable like that 1C.

In another image of Pic 1B, they viewed the way the woman has been represented at home as having a balance between taking care of children, relaxing and doing her own things. They viewed the image positively and related it with the flexibility of a stay-at-home mother to do her own activities at home which is not limited to house chores only. The veil-less mother in the picture also sheds light on the freedom she has in the home as quoted by a participant:

Rayyan: I think many think the hijab is worn at all times. But she's at home and she's not wearing hijab.

Hijab challenges dominant constructions of antiracism that divide communities into White, Black and Asian, and unite the diversity of races within a more globalised Muslim community. The distinction of races is blurred by wearing the hijab where participants mostly recognised the hijab as symbol of Muslimness. In other words, the Muslimness of a woman is identified through the hijab, and not a specific racial profile. Apart from the hijab, the participants also interpreted the images of Muslim women in some other ways within the British context as discussed in the next theme.

Theme 3: Blended Identity

In the context of British society, Muslims are experiencing constant negotiation with their identity. Regarding the construction of identity, Dwyer (1999, p.65) states: "...communities are imagined contingently, are constructed through debate and dialogue, and are fluid and changing." In the discourse of multiculturalism, the Muslim community is imagined in opposition to broader society because of its different cultural and religious values (Dwyer, 1999). Stereotypically in the majority media, Muslim women are depicted as being traditional, passive and victimised although conversely, they are active and free to reach their potential in their chosen fields.

Muslim participants viewed the images as challenging the normalised depictions of Islam and Muslims, who are often perceived in opposition to 'British values.' To them, what the Muslim magazines offer contradicts mainstream images and results in a breaking down of stereotypes.

When viewing a picture of a mother and her baby in arms while working on her laptop in a home setting, most participants appreciated the choice a Muslim woman has without making association with any traditional values. The image of the stay-at-home mother (in Pic 1B) was perceived by the majority as modern where the mother gains her freedom to do her activities at home. The mother is perceived as having an autonomy at home and it is a personal choice. She is the master of home and is fully in-charge of all activities. This finding is in line with a study by Orgad and De Benedictis (2015) on the depictions of the stay-at-home mother in UK newspapers. They argue that kind of image is synonymous with neoliberal identities who are individualized, autonomous, self-monitoring, self-disciplining and freely choosing women.

In interpreting the images of women, the participants adopt multiple points of view to undermine the mainstream stereotype of Muslim women. This is in line with Irigaray's (1985) method of strategic essentialism which suggests that women are something other than what the majority views. Women may have their own standpoints to explain their actions rather than being subjugated by dominant views. The Muslim respondents expressed their discontentment of some images of Muslim women in mainstream media who have been seen from an Orientalist viewpoint. To them, the images in the mainstream media were nothing more than a fabrication. There was a dissonance between 'positive' media representations of Muslims and their interpretations by Muslims. Again, dress dominated the discussion. They believed media content to be dominated by secular western standards.

Asma: ...I saw something in the news there was a Muslim woman and she wanted to be Miss Britain or something...You have the media portray Muslims in a positive light but at the end of the day, it's not positive. It depends on how we Muslims perceive it. In that case, I would say I disagree with that woman, going around, baring (not modestly covered), and saying 'I am Muslim. This is what we do.' This I thought you are not a representation of British Muslims.

In addition, they felt the definition of success is represented from a distinctively western outlook by the mainstream media.

Aina: I think the media tend to represent those authority without the veil in the media they tend to represent like Warsi in parliament. She portrays a successful figure. She doesn't wear hijab. So that interpretation of hijabi being represented in the media and would never happen in a successful way, in a positive light.

Furthermore, the representation of suppressed women has been challenged with a logical reason. For instance, they argued that making a connection between emancipation with the ability to drive is baseless. To them, female emancipation is not supposedly measured by the limited frame, rather an individual's thoughtful mind, self-efficacy, and conscience. In other words, the status of a woman within a society should not be judged by psychomotor skills, but rather according to her intelligence.

In the discourse of anti-multiculturalism, the Muslim community is imagined in opposition to a broader society because of its different cultural and religious values (Dwyer, 1999). Throughout the focus group discussion with Muslim participants, Muslim incorporation into western society was rigorously discussed in relation to two aspects – their contributions towards British society; and their cultural attributes. Socially, Muslim women were seen as having careers and participating in market forces. Physically, through costume, respondents saw that Muslim women perform a blending of two elements – Islam and the West.

The participants overall demonstrated that all images presented in the focus group sessions are representative of Muslim women as part of British society. Through a portrayal of Muslim women in different roles and contexts, Muslim groups regarded Islam as compatible with the West which requires active participation in society. As one participant said:

Shah: Going back to our pictures what they represent, they do different sorts of activities and different roles whether the policewoman, driving instructor, or politician or even a mother at home. They clearly show the Muslim women can still take on, carry out duties as Muslims and also conform to western activities and roles. I would see how beneficial the roles within the society.

Besides having a job, participants also observed that the way the women dress demonstrates a union of Islamic and western styles, through a combination of headscarves with pants and shirts.

Asma: Just to say that in a comparison, if you can hold the pictures except for 1D, it seems that all of them are sort of conforming to the western standard. Even 1B, I guess she's a mother but technically she's still working, sort of the western kind of civilization like all women are independent in everything coz they work. 1A she's working. She's a Muslim woman but obviously, she's wearing a

uniform. 1C she's wearing western clothing. 1E she's an academic and she's still wearing English clothing. 1F they're all wearing English clothes.

Ameena: Yea, coz I do think so in some cases women are more successful than men, so it does reflect society coz all we know obviously before women do not do much but now it reflects western society.

On the whole, the majority of Muslim participants said that the images represent Muslim women as free to decide what is best for them. They are free to choose whether to wear either the hijab, the niqab, or a headscarf. It is a matter of free will, not practiced by force. Muslim groups especially females, stressed the freedom gained by Muslim women in the UK and that constitutes the definition of free will and human rights in a secular West.

Marina: I would pick 1E because if it was... it shows a revert I would say it would be a good portrayal because if she was a westerner from the UK, this is a free country she could wear whatever she wants. If she is white maybe she is not married. She chose to be herself even though she has the opportunity not to cover, she chooses to cover herself. She seems quite happy in that.

Freedom was also defined through social participation and individual conscience.

Tirana: This also shows Muslim women not oppressed. They can work, they can decide to stay at home mom, and they can decide to work like 1A, the career woman. There's no real difference between Muslim women and non-Muslim women. We are on our own will to do what we think we want to do. If we want to work, we can work. If we want to stay at home take care of kids, you can. You can also be happy.

When moving into a discussion on the media representation of Muslims in general, they constructed a strong cultural imagination of the East/West binary. The Muslim respondents were of the opinion that the media represents Muslims through the Orientalist lens when reporting Muslim affairs that reinforce cultural assumptions of traditional Islam and the modern West. The participants held a collective view of conforming to the 'authentic' interpretation of Islam instead of the Orientalist interpretation of Islam. In some cases, they demonstrated a postmodern view on diversity and freedom of practice.

Haleem: I think what I see generally on the media, they tend to use this as something as negative views of Islam, to portray the views of the image like 1D (niqabi). But then in order to justify there's someone else who is also Muslim to justify what is said and they will use an image like 1F (veil-less) to justify. They almost cut out all the general people like everybody has in these images.

Faeza: I just want to go back to what Haleem said that they will try to put the negative and then bring the picture from 1E or woman from 1F trying to justify what that person is. I don't know if anyone here has seen it - the interview between Hebah and Mona Tahawi on the French niqab ban. When there was a niqab ban in France, they were invited a niqabi to talk about it. And then a Muslim feminist. So, I think they were trying to make a mockery of Islam like here a Muslim who is against the religion.

Concerning the dichotomy of fundamentalism and liberalism, Group 1 collectively supported the belief that Muslims are not supposed to be divided, but they can be different with equal treatment and fair reception. One female participant constructed the diversity of opinion as fundamental in Islam where the difference does not undermine each other.

Mareesa: Islam has a lot of madzahibs (schools of thought)...different scholars. Some people like to stick to one scholar, some will listen to that what you are saying...you like to...different views. Me too. I like that. You don't stick on one thing, you don't let people feel, you seek knowledge and you look for that and I respect that.

They perceived that the media wrongly represent Islam in the dimension of fundamental Islam and liberal Islam. To them, the division was created by the western media whereby those who do not adopt western norms are considered as traditional and backward, while those who uphold western values are deemed as modern and progressive. They rejected the proclaimed Western superiority that divides the Muslim community and that diminishes diversity and equality of different views. As observed by Tarlo, the politicisation of the veil as the representation of the Muslim community is consequential to both the unveiled and the veiled.

“Not only does it have the effect of marginalizing those Muslim women who do not wear visible indicators of faith, but it also reduces those who do to a single coherent and monolithic category as if they speak and think with one voice” (Tarlo 2014, p.5).

The findings support the three interrelated positions of the Muslim community in Britain (Meer, 2012). According to Meer, Muslim consciousness is a dynamic phenomenon that it can be interpreted from an intersectional approach to theology and sociology; accommodated through reconciliation between religious commitment and citizenship duty, and established via the Western recognition of diversity and plurality. This three-pronged Muslim consciousness contributes to all emergent themes of discussion on how the Muslim participants interpret Islam and Muslims.

When interpreting the image of a female leader, the participants crossed a spectrum of values. Although the majority of the group felt the woman is uplifting the image of Islam and incorporating it with western society, it is evident from the conversation that female leadership is still an issue to certain people. Members of Group 4 expressed a slightly different view concerning the image of a female politician in Pic 1F who is depicted in a Western suit and standing in front of two men. To a male participant, this representation was perceived as an act of compromising Islam to fit in with the West. To him, wearing the hijab is part of Muslim identity and cannot be extenuated in any circumstances. Furthermore, he interpreted the image with a gendered view, where the construction of the woman leading men in the community was not acceptable.

Haleem: To me, what I see there is it's trying to say that, again I think I know these people, we are Muslims. But they try to compromise their own background and their own faith in terms of that kind of image so that they can fit in the West.

The term 'compromising' however, was understood from another view by other participants. They argued that the picture tried to explain the degree of agreement in Islam towards the democratic system that rules western countries and that the image depicts universal values of gender. Women have a place in society and the image shows the compatibility of Islam with the West.

Shah: I won't agree. I think from the religious point of view how to compromise the religion and I abide by a current democratic system that simply exists in this country. It is a sort of representation of an individual that's compromising what they believe in the system that abides by the rest of societies.

Asma: It is just to share that it's sort of incorporating themselves within the West and sort of making the name for themselves and actually doing something - how religion they believe whatever I think to share that one in a position of power. They got to a point where if you look at the woman she's in front, she's obviously got a bit more control. Most people wouldn't associate with some sort of woman with power. Whether the people agree with that it doesn't matter.

Haleem: I think it's more about corporate image. In the corporate image, you will not look at faith or anything.

Faeza: It looks to me like they are trying to represent equality of genders.

They held different views when negotiating Muslim identities within the competing concept of Islam and West that lead to a hybrid or blended identity. The emergence of blended identity was

identified which supports the idea of social cohesion and liberal multiculturalism. This has been found during the focus group discussion when interpreting the images. The blended identity was perceived as an ideal identity of Muslims in the West. As in Dwyer (1999, p.54) words:

“Through the construction of new ethnicities, the idea of community might remain politically empowering through a self-conscious process of identification recognising the ways in which identities are made within particular contexts and moments. Of particular interest here is the emergence of politicised constructions of Muslim identity which undermined discourses of antiracism within which Muslims are subsumed within an imagined 'Black' or 'Asian' community (Modood, 1988), engaging instead with an alternative construction of an imagined 'Muslim community'”

6.2.2 Non-Muslim groups

This section discusses opinions from non-Muslim groups on the images of Muslim women. Similar to the previously mentioned Muslim groups, the key issue of interpreting Islam and Muslims is discussed under the themes of diverse ethnicity, symbolic hijab, and blended identity. The following section will show if there are any differences in the reading and meaning of images amongst the non-Muslim groups as compared to their Muslim counterparts.

Theme 1: Diverse Ethnicity

Among non-Muslim groups, the faces of Muslim women are negotiated through the self-representation of Muslim women. Some participants perceived the racial diversity of Muslim women that can be seen through the faces of Muslim images as a feature of a multicultural society. They perceived racial differences as normal and acceptable in the multicultural setting of Britain. Muslims of different ethnicity appear to be like other British citizens and do not seem to be different.

Dylan: First, I think every picture has been pretty much seen in a different race. Let's say white male, white female each of them seen before, it's all part of normal life I've seen. That could be a model of someone else. So, I think they are all pretty much in the standard of culture here and fit into the culture of England but to pick the best would be C, E and F, because they are pretty much fit to the normal people want to see when they picture other religions in the country and standing beside those who looked normal. And you are happy, smiling with no bad intention, you're just going off your money in a corporate world and doing

your things. So, for multicultural I think those would be widely accepted and easily accepted.

Viewed from a political perspective, the participant pointed out that the multi-ethnicity of Muslim people in the images constitutes multiculturalism. He considered Britain as multicultural and the depictions as positive in integrating Muslims into the wider society. However, when viewing the image from the western standard, the participant perceived the veil-less politician, the hijabi White, and the Black girl with pants and blouse to be more acceptable and inclusive in Britain. It seems that he is comfortable with someone who looks familiar to him and similar to the wider society. To another, without having seen a face of niqabi woman, it is disruptive to the multicultural setting:

Jason: I think 1D is negative, it's more negative with regards multi-culture. It looks like closed.

Similarly, another participant looked at the images in a quite stereotypical way about Muslims. The participant recognized the Muslim identity by looking at the racial indicator of the face, supporting a racist discourse that divide people into races and associate them with a certain fixed identity.

Alice: But for me, quite obvious when I see the person's face because I used to know the facial structure or the colour of the skin or anything or when they speak. It's very easy to recognize that... whether they are possibly Islam (Muslim).

For these participants, the existence of Muslims in Britain is welcomed as long as they perform behaviours that are acceptable to the majority that accords with national values - active participation and freedom from traditional norms. The wearing of niqab, in general, was perceived as a hindrance of integration and this was possibly derived from the dominant discourse of the full-faced veil in the media (Williamson, 2014).

To some others, direct experience and knowledge about Islam were tangible when viewing the images of diversity. It reflects diverse interpretations and varied practices amongst Muslim people, which was realized by one participant based on his socialisation with Muslims.

Isaac: I also noticed that when the 9/11 happened, I was in Cape Town and I went to a mosque with a friend of mine in the afternoon and the Imam was talking about 9/11 and this was in Cape Town itself. He was giving his insight and

how he interpreted this. Then, later on, that night I was invited to go to the mosque by another friend of mine 40 miles away and we went there again, and we sat down with Dr. Quick. He is an American revert and his talking on the event is totally different to the others. Like the Muslim religion I just find that depending on the area it is in, depending probably the country it's in, everything can change, it's different on what is permitted and what is not permitted in the media. In all religions you're never going to have one standard rule, are you?

Overall, their opinions were derived from discourses of multiculturalism and racism. The ability to recognize the heterogeneity of Muslim people proves to be helpful in understanding Islam and Muslims. The heterogeneity is, however, contextual. To them, the diversity of Muslim ethnicity is acceptable within British society, but the visible practices must be in accordance with mainstream values.

Theme 2: Hijab as Symbol

The hijab is now part of the visible image of European society that signifies the Muslim presence. It has become a 'disruptive visibility' in the secular western Europe (Golë, 2013). In London, however, Tarlo (2007) observes that the hijab contributes to the metropolitan character of its Muslim residents that diminishes the Orientalist belief of traditional-modern and religious-secular binaries. The discussion on the hijab as a symbol of Muslimness was viewed differently by the non-Muslim participants.

When asked to describe the images, most participants effortlessly linked the hijab with the image of Muslimness. The hijab as a religious symbol, which appears to serve the first identification of Muslim women and downplays other manifested signs such as race and career. Indeed, they emphasized the cultural characteristics of the hijab that distinguishes Muslim from non-Muslim.

Esther: ...1A, if I am saying correctly, it does seem a police officer. However, A representing the Muslim culture. They put a hijab on, they have a headscarf on to show their religion. 1E I also see like portraying a Muslim culture and it's got a headscarf on.

To a few participants, they focused on the similarity the women have with other people rather than the alienated hijab. While negotiating the meaning, they viewed from the normalised western view by judging what is normal according to the British norm. The social status and

activity that characterised the Muslim women were perceived as incorporating them into the western society.

Jason: They give me the impression that they are normal like other girls. They like hanging out, like shopping, like fashion, like the trends and something like that. They seem normal to me.

Casey: I just agree, it is not really that much different with like non-Muslim women, we do whatever we want whenever we want, the life they choose to. I think with all these pictures, it does make a statement and it does raise awareness that what is the difference really?

The niqab issue gained great interest among participants mostly in Group 7 and was discussed at great length and with enthusiasm. There were mixed reactions towards the niqabi woman. Although they can see the diversity of Muslim women and consider it as a wonderful variation, the woman who wears the niqab is exceptional. They saw the niqab in an oppositional view, which receives the most negative attention from the British media. The majority of participants supported the liberal view that Islamic practices and values are usually in opposition with those of British society.

By adopting an oppositional reading to the preferred meaning in the Muslim media, a majority of female participants felt they could not tolerate the wearing of a full-faced veil, as to them, it shows a restriction in socialisation and a violation of human rights. Borrowing the mainstream view, they perceived the niqabi as secretive, conservative, mysterious, hard to approach and difficult to communicate with. They felt the absence of face could hinder interaction and becomes a barrier to communication.

Ember: And 1D in all honesty, I can't necessarily focus. I don't know if I want to speak to that person because I would be scared, I wouldn't necessarily know what to expect, just to be realistic. Because obviously you can't see their face and you are not sure what they've got under the clothes or something like that if it makes sense.

Jessy: The first picture that really kept my attention is 1D because I can see a woman with all covered which is very not really....it doesn't inspire me a positive approach if I would like to talk to that person. I feel that I shouldn't because she just allows me to see her eyes and you cover your hands with gloves. I can only see a little bit of your skin.

Another participant offered a less personal view and put the issue in a broader context:

Valerie: From the safety point of view, I don't think it is appropriate to dress like that when a woman drives a car.

Whether they realized it or not, the dominant norm of niqabi women constructed by the media prevailed in the comments from the non-Muslims. Their views on the veiled women are in line with the media norms that represent western standards.

Jason: 1D I'm not sure about. I don't know because obviously, I can't see her. I don't know her face. You can only see her eyes, so you can't draw a lot of conclusion from that. But the women in F and E that I feel like I could have a good conversation with. Know this people and I meet them every day, but someone dressed in the niqab, I doubt... to me, could suggest a removal of yourself, of oneself from society in a way that I like. It's hard, I think it's difficult to communicate with someone whose face you cannot see.

The majority of participants felt uncomfortable with the image of the niqabi woman in Pic 1D whose face is missing. The niqab was seen as disruptive and questionable when they commented on the full faced-veil practice. But when they talked about the headless images of Pic 3A and 3B as well as the faceless images of Pic 4A and 4B, the same participants who felt discomfort with the niqabi's unseen face, felt that the headless and faceless images were acceptable. Although the image of the niqabi shares the same characterisation of the unseen face with the other images, the mediated value of the niqab dominated their perception of the niqabi woman.

The purpose of comparing the images 3A & 3B with the image of 1D is to explore the reactions of the audience to these two distinct representational styles. In addition, the research reveals aspects of the audience's level of knowledge concerning Islamic conventions for artistic representation.

However, two participants looked at the niqabi from a distinct perspective and did not focus on the withdrawal of face and the traditional garment. They looked at the image from other attributes. The car signifies an ability to drive and undermines the unseen face. They viewed the image as progressive.

Isaac: 1D I agree with you that it is dangerous to drive, but it comes across to me that a modern Muslim lady gaining her independence because now she is driving a car and if she can drive, she can go out, she can meet people which arenormally I would say 10 or 15 years ago you would assume that

the lady wouldn't do that, she was expected to be at home, taking care of children and the family. Geri: 1D, I don't know she's like.... she's driving? Or learning to drive which I think is quite cool. Coz I never saw that kind of woman in that full veil learning to drive. I don't know in other cultures they are allowed to drive so I think that's quite cool.

To non-Muslim participants, their interpretations are predominantly based on media norms and personal experience. It was found that the majority of members from Group 6 and 7 demonstrate an understanding of Islam at face value. Media images of Islam appear to have had considerable influence on their minds when interpreting the Other. Issues like the hijab and the niqab prevailed in their argument. In other words, the Otherness of Muslims and the alienation of Islam are fundamental in their opinion of the images. Although they supported the diversity of Muslim ethnicity as proven in the previous theme, they strongly associated the veil with negative values as propagated by some liberal and conservative perspectives and the media, thus their interpretation about Muslims so far were mainly informed by an Orientalist view.

The hijab as a religious identity, cultural artifact and symbol of difference was made salient in the discussion as per prevailing media discourse on Muslim women. They, however, tried to show a tolerance towards Muslim culture through their limited knowledge of Islam and Muslims:

Casey: My brother is 10 years old. And he saw me reading Malala's book. And he asked me something about why she wears a scarf on her head. Obviously, I told him something about like how the women they choose to do it, basically preserving themselves for their husbands...It's just to do with her religion like he is respectful of that.

However, more mature participants aged 30 and above in Group 5 gave another explanation. They demonstrated some degree of awareness on the political economy of the media. They were aware of the function and operation of media, demonstrating a sort of media literacy. Again, the image of a niqabi woman attracted more attention than the rest, showing it is a normalised representation of Muslim women.

Isaac: In the opinion on how you want to tag a line, I mean 1D could be a Muslim woman prevented from doing her learning because she refused to take the niqab off or it is a danger. Or another tagline could be great news Muslim woman passes or gains independence passes her driving license, depending on how you want to put it across.

They viewed the images as dissonant with prevailing images of Muslims. Their views were grounded in the mainstream media representation of Muslims, which dominates people's

perceptions. Especially to those wearing the niqab, one participant observed that the niqabi received huge attention in a negative light and were associated with stereotypical images of oppression and suppression. He believed the media to be the agent of cultivating homogenized perceptions about veiled women and eventually normalising those representations.

Jason: I think pic D gets too much weight I think in the media. That look gets given a lot of bad press and far too more than it deserves I think the role to stigmatising people and purport on whatever negative labels like the Daily Mail labels and addresses pic D. I think D represents the negative side of the media so quite a lot's debated and anything to do and receive negative aspect of multi-culture and the media like to hold out someone with full-faced veil. So, this is so terrible. I think that's quite common especially in the media.

Theme 3: Blended identity

The dominant perception of Muslims who are perceived as less progressive is ubiquitous during the discussions. While Muslim participants looked at the images from the perspective of freedom, their non-Muslim counterparts viewed from the dichotomy of modernity and tradition. For non-Muslim groups, the majority believed that the incorporation into western society is positive. Through the images, Muslim women have been normalised to embrace western standards. Some of them observed that Muslim women are blending two identities of Muslim and British. Their interpretation lies in the manifestation of Muslim dress that combines traditional and modern elements. One participant's quote could summarize all the views shared by all the other participants about Muslim women and their conformation to a Western lifestyle.

Casey: I just note something with the order of these pictures, it shows...it brings like the theme of feminism. Because you see the gradual kind of aversion, improvement in the Muslim women, the society. You can just see like the first one you don't really get anything. She just stares in the picture. You see that she is more comfortable for 1B and for the C, you see she's like comfortable with mixing things with her belief and where she lives in a western country. And you see an improvement like from D, again like I said before you can say, you can be whoever you want. But when I first saw that I thought that maybe she likes this....an improvement like driving....in eastern country this like a step further. And for the last one F, you can just see like a woman achieves something powerful she's like in charge over two men behind her. It makes me happy, you see something like what feminism says for years. You can see the gradual improvement that basically has been achieved.

The non-Muslim participants also recognized the Muslim consciousness to retain their Islamic values and at the same time manage to conform to modernity. Modernity to them refers to the Western standard. Whenever a western element exists, they consider it as modern and uplifting. Retaining traditional values while embracing a western style is considered positive.

Sita: 1C is really, really cool representational cultural harmonisation. You can see someone who is embracing the religious identity and also the modern western fashion and I think that's really cool because it's kind of like saying you don't have to be of any extreme and take one of the middle spots of the bar.

Geri: It's kind of like a balance between religion, tradition and western clothing which is all covered up really. She's only got a bit of feet and hands out. It's really nice to see that balance. You can see that walking on the street...

Isaac: 1C a young Muslim lady very western, she's trying to be more western, modern take on the style and also complying with what is required to wear a headscarf, head covered, the legs covered.

Based on the group discussions, non-Muslim respondents regard Muslims from their point of view, their standards of behaviour. Their interpretation is based on the secular, modern approach of seeing the Other. In other words, the majority looked at Muslims through the Orientalist lens with a Western outlook. The West is the Self and the Muslim remains as the Other. The identity blending of Muslims is seen as positive because there is a Western element in the appearance of Muslim women. Also, having a career and working outside the home are positive as these are what have been constructed by the West that shows equal opportunity between men and women. The Orientalist view is still dominant in the discussion among non-Muslim groups.

Furthermore, the participants recognized Muslim women's existence in multicultural Britain as having a normal life like others, such as pursuing careers and contributing to society. They were happy to see the images of Muslim women who actively participate in society by not placing excessive stress on religion. They viewed the images from a secular point of view and stressed more on integration.

Jason: I think if they would share images more like A and F, that would be different. Because I think both, when you say about multicultural society, they show people getting on and living a lot, doing a job without regards necessary like overwhelmingly to their religion. I think one of the things what multicultural things should be, involved in and to respect each other, that's

not what to be a specification of the white, Christian majority. There's also being questioned the other side. I think A and F are very examples of people, who speak more for themselves, they look like pursuing careers, fitting in multicultural Britain I think.

There was a feeling among non-Muslims that media is manipulative and has its own agenda setting for their own benefits. To one participant, media form and cultivate knowledge about what a Muslim woman looks like. In the politicisation of integration, Muslims have been victimised in the media to protect the best interests of political elites.

Gwen: I think maybe 10-15 years ago people were unaware what kind of operation media was. But now I think even if you are not really educated to that level or aware as such you have that sort of consciousness or understanding that the media can be very manipulative. So obviously there's a sort of formula what gets reported and what makes the headlines for someone's benefit to concern or report something. So, I think it's stupid really which you believe these things. I think that western media bring an agenda to demonize the religion and media outlet to make a conscious effort to find the most distressing and most negative images of Muslims. I don't think you have ever really seen something uplifting or nice.

Throughout the discussion, the majority found Muslim media representations to be otherwise. The above findings indicate that the Muslim media construct a more varied outlook of Muslim communities that has been received positively by both Muslim and non-Muslim groups. All completely agree that the images were uplifting and dismissive of stereotypes. These findings match those observed in Holohan & Poole's (2011) report of Muslims in the European Mediascape. In their main findings of interviews with producers of Muslim media, the interviewees perceived the coverage of Muslims in mainstream media as divisive and predominantly negative, therefore the Muslim media could provide a platform to counter those destructive effects. Moreover, the presence of Muslim media would bring diverse voices to the public especially from the Muslim community, thus connecting people from different religious and ethnic groups. As concluded by one participant:

Sita: I think it is interesting on how much the media has portrayed this image always with the relation to religion because as soon as we saw this we all thought Muslim women, but nobody would like to know what her religion is. So, I think there's a lot of how much media influence us.

Contrary to the views expressed by the Muslim groups to urge the media to distinguish religion from culture, a number of non-Muslim participants proposed some proactive steps through

mixing and socialising with the Muslim community to gain knowledge about Muslims. By realizing the political economy of the media, one participant suggested that social penetration could be helpful in understanding the Muslim community.

Isaac: Media is too easily manipulated. Depending on where you are, which newspaper you are, which radio station you are, television station, you can manipulate in such a way to portray different images. I think to get a true reflection on what you want to know about Muslim females, you go into the community and get the first-time experience either you live with them or befriend them.

Participants who have Muslim friends within their social circle did not view Muslim media as a reliable source to understand the community better, suggesting instead more interaction with Muslims. They seem to be more positive towards Muslims and look at them rather as normal human beings.

Geri: I think the representation is completely different from the reality, and my friends who are Muslim probably the most calming influence on me and the most respectful people and not really because they follow their religion. They are peaceful people and compare that to the media representation it's just completely different. And you see if you meet like someone who was a racist or against Muslim religion, sit down with someone who was a Muslim. I think they will have a completely different view of the Muslim religion. Just take the time and just say that they are normal people.

In the context of misrepresentation of Muslims and Islam, they believe people should distance themselves from the media. Based on the experiences of some participants, building social networks with Muslim communities has proven beneficial in forming an accurate knowledge about Muslims. They felt their relationship with Muslim acquaintances help them to generate understanding about Muslims.

Poole (2002) in her audience research of interpreting Islam in mainstream media found that the majority of groups who had contact with Muslims were not necessarily equipped with knowledge and interest of Muslims. 'Cultural proximity' was only impactful on racial tolerance. This differs from the findings presented here where non-Muslim participants generally acquired knowledge about Muslims and their practice through interaction. The religious identity of the hijab appeared to be unproblematic and Muslim women's lifestyle is considered normal and similar to non-Muslims.

This was evident in the discussions where they were aware of wearing the hijab as a matter of choice and how their articulation of identity in private and public life varies based on their friendship with Muslims. This can be related to contact hypothesis. First introduced by Gordon Allport in 1954, the Intergroup Contact Theory suggests that interpersonal relationships could reduce negative attitudes towards minority groups. Recent studies of contact hypothesis have proved that contact with ethnic minority groups eliminates prejudice towards Muslims (Savelkoul *et al.*, 2011) and time spent with the minority could help dissolve inter-group conflict (Davies *et al.*, 2011). In fact, close association with Muslims yields significant understanding and new knowledge about them.

Non-Muslim participants showed that they had information about Muslims that leads to the resistance of media manipulation. Participants could resist the distorted images of Muslims portrayed in the media either from their own knowledge and awareness of Muslim heritage or from their experience within their own social circles. They were aware of the political representations depicted in the mainstream media, which are biased and negative, especially concerning the image of the niqabi. Conversely, most of them have their own knowledge regarding Muslims and held with that knowledge when talking about Muslims. Those who do not have a close relationship with Muslims expressed their curiosity about Muslim practice and showed their willingness to expand relationships with minority groups, but their views were anchored by mainstream media representations.

6.3 Understanding of Islamic Visual Representation

This section moves from the first key issue on the interpretation of Islam and Muslims to the second key issue of the participants' knowledge and understanding of Islamic visual representation. As mentioned in the previous chapters on Islamic art and visual analysis, traditionally, Islam has employed certain conventions in its art and forms of visual representation. Within my corpus of data, many images from *Emel* and *Sisters* magazines take the form of photographs. The second form of data is graphic art, which is rarely found in *Emel* but frequently illustrated in *Sisters*. In all circumstances, *Sisters* never exposes the facial expression of the depicted people, but on the contrary, *Emel* rigorously highlights the personality of people. This visual convention informs us of the diverse identity of the image producers in the Muslim diaspora.

In this section, the discussion revolves around the participants' level of understanding of the Islamic visual convention in interpreting the images of Muslim women. To what extent do they understand the use of Islamic conventions present within Islamic visual representation? What are the interpretative strategies they used to make sense of the images? The answers will be explained in the following paragraphs to see how Muslims and non-Muslims employed their knowledge in interpreting the images. Their comments provide evidence as to what extent they understand the Islamic visual representations in interpreting the images within a British context.

Findings from all groups show that the participants generally employed common sense and reasonable judgement, derived from the values they attached to the images. To discuss this, I will combine Ismail Faruqi's and Titus Burckhardt's theories on Islamic art with Edward Madden's proposition on the aesthetic appreciation of Islamic symbolism. Theoretically, the faceless and headless images are considered as religiously sanctioned and traditional. In the western perspective, Islamic art is not a self-expression of the image producer or artist, but it is communal with certain boundaries (Madden, 1975). From the Islamic perspective, familiarity with Muslim affairs becomes instrumental in interpretation. At this point, identical understanding of Muslim cultural values is crucial in interpreting a depicted subject matter (Faruqi, 1973). The integration of these three theories is used to explain the participants' comments on the familiarity with the Islamic symbols and the objectivity of the Islamic art. We will see that these two components are constitutive in their knowledge and understanding of Islamic visual representation.

The discussion focused their comments on two cropped photos of the headless fashion models (represented in Pic3A and 3B); two graphic illustrations of the faceless Muslim girls (represented in Pic 4A and 4B); a group photo of Muslim politicians (represented in Pic1F); and the close-up hands of a wedding couple (represented in Pic2). The findings from both Muslim and non-Muslim participants will be discussed in a comparative perspective to see their level of understanding.

Throughout the discussion with Muslim groups, familiarity with the subjects depicted helped them to interpret the images. Lack of details in some images was unproblematic when viewing the images. Knowledge and experience of Muslim affairs are sufficient and helpful for the participants to interpret a symbol that contributes towards the meaning of the images, hence any relation to Islamic visual convention was relatively ignored and thus rarely raised.

In general, their responses on the headless fashion models and faceless figures demonstrated an ignorance of the Islamic visual convention. They just literally interpreted what they could see.

Moderator: What do you think when the magazine does not highlight the full figures of the models?

Asma: Yea, it cuts off the head. You can't see whether she covers, whether she doesn't, the type of person she is. Even on 3b, it looks like things like a skirt. It's not necessary she is fully covered, it's just the fact that what is showing is likely fully-covered. It's not tight-fitting but then it's not incredibly loose either.

Only one participant amongst the Muslim groups mentioned that it could be related to the prohibition of illustrating the human figure. However, the argument was not expanded because he felt the images were not connected with the religious injunction, rather a politically motive.

Rayyan: Picture 4B I would say it's for religious purposes. It's haram to draw things with eyes and it's probably Islamic for a Muslim magazine and obviously I would say, it's not about haram but just literally about keeping a debate open and not subject to one person.

Without artistic literacy, the participants performed a strict division between the knowledge of art and the content of art. This is congruent with Madden's observation (Madden 1975, p.424):

"... (Muslim) does not confuse knowledge about art with what art is about... Art objects are not things set apart from everyday affairs to be collected together in a special place but are part and parcel of the everyday life of the community and the individual. Art objects are found in the ordinary rounds of life: the mosque and mihrab, public gardens and fountains, rugs on the floor of the mosque and house, the drinking glass on the table, the illuminations of the book being read, and so on."

To Muslims, there is only one absolute knowledge and absolute creator that deserves to be worshipped, that is God. Artistic skill by man is only relative, thus minor at the heart of Muslims. When viewing the faceless images, one participant said:

Khadija: It would be better with the facial expression. But it depends on where it is published, so obviously fitting in the Sisters magazine and it wouldn't bring much difference. But if it is in a non-Islamic magazine without the face then shows that face without facial features with the question mark.... Because the pictures women with showing their faces I mean with Sisters magazine it's more sort of Islamic women focused, so Islamic women and religion magazine would not actually feel something negative because

they just think that she's one of both, and it doesn't matter whether she got a facial feature or not. What matters is how we feel after we read the article or after we see the image. What matters is what the result is after reading it. So, I think, no, it doesn't really matter if it is or it isn't whether women are allowed to show their face or not because it's not the case and it just shows sort of like different ways of looking at women so yea maybe she might not have a face, but it doesn't mean that it affects the image.

What is important to them is the meaning of the image and the impact it leaves in their lives. To them, art is manufactured to be utilized. It should have its practical function and should not be made for display only. Similarly, the visual representation is meaningless unless the meaning is sought to acquire new knowledge and to deepen understanding of certain fields. Art is neither sacred nor profane to be adorned. This is because the skill of art articulated by the artists is not absolute, rather it is relatively renewed time after time. As quoted by Titus Burckhardt (1967, pp.136-137):

“The use of anthropomorphic images is always fragile, for man is inclined to transfer his own psychic limitations to the image he shapes, in spite of all canonical prescriptions, and then sooner or later he rebels against it, not only against the image but also against what it stands for: those epidemic outbursts of blasphemy which marked certain époques of European history are not conceivable without the existence and actual decay of anthropomorphic religious art.”

Regarding the impersonalised image, the absence of face is normal to participants. Without relating to and perhaps not realizing the theory of the boundary in Islamic art, one participant feels it is all right to have a generic representation in a Muslim magazine. She was aware of the diversity within the Muslim community, so the absence of facial features could avoid Muslim women from being stereotyped as having a certain racial background and could enhance the general concept being attached with the image, such as modesty, freedom, and success. It suited the Muslim audience and related her opinion related to the Muslim cultural norm that considered look and face to be irrelevant for interaction.

Two participants from Group 5 of the non-Muslim participants showed a limited knowledge concerning the prohibition of visual imagery in Islam, especially in religious places. Unsurprisingly, they looked at the images from an Orientalist view that always acquaints Islam solely with religion and later showed a degree of disagreement, which eventually widens the gap between Muslims and the wider community.

Isaac: It must be a religious reason.

Valerie: Yes.

Isaac: I just want to know what is the religious reason?

Valerie: It is something in God we shouldn't copy?

Isaac: I can't remember where it is whether yes or not, being Muslim, you can't show the head, there's something about you can't on the mosque, on the wall or something. It doesn't look right not having the face.

When shown the headless fashion models in the cropped photos (Pic 3A and 3B), the face is not significant to all Muslim participants. Both pictures were cropped where the head and the leg were removed. This makes the clothes more salient than the models and more appealing to the participants. The message to sell the clothes seems honest and transparent without manipulating any mediator such as a beautiful model from a specific racial background that could deviate the viewer's attention.

Talal: Taking away the face, the facial expression, it does not affect me in any way. It's much more on clothing and the way it is.

The photograph emancipates women from being objectified. For the participants, a faceless figure does not show female deprivation or 'symbolic annihilation of women' (Tuchman 1981, in Strinati 2004, p.167). It is welcomed and acceptable in fashion sections because the images emancipate women from a stereotypical definition of beauty that stresses sexual attractiveness or a mediated definition of beauty. One participant in Group 1 said the headless images give advantages to Muslim women where they are not judged by their looks and beauty.

Ameena: Also, by moving the face, by not showing that it's selling clothes it's not like showing the other side I think, where this what is a beauty. Like these faces all make over all such thing is completely gone because there's a lot of women have the issues with what is beauty and what is not.

This point can be related to Wolf's argument (Wolf, 2002) on 'beauty myth', which she condemned as the backlash of feminism. The mediated illusion of beauty has manipulated women to become slaves to the pursuit of beauty created by economic forces. The creation of beauty promoted in the media has made women crave a particular definition of beauty and made them feel worthless without embracing the idea. By depicting headless models, the

participant can see the emancipation of women from the trap of beauty.

The images linked them with the symbolic values of modesty as derived from the clothes. They were aware of the trap of consumerism ideology which manipulates women to look beautiful. Collectively, the participants looked at the depictions of headless models from the commercial context.

Tirana: More focused on their clothes, maybe it's like selling the clothes.

Mareesa: Which is good, you do not see this in the non-Muslim media because what we kind of understand from the normal media is that they use women to sell their stuff. So, doing this shows that they genuinely sell the clothes, not the women.

The participants' view of the headless images is congruent with the objective representation in Islamic art that can be applied to a modern approach in depicting fashion. Objectification of women is psychologically removed from the scene. To be more specific, the traditional values of Islamic art could prevent women from being objectified by the image producer. As outlined by Burckhardt (2011, p.1):

"The work of man will never equal the art of God – but the shaping of the human ambiance. Art has to endow all the objects with which man naturally surrounds himself – a house, a fountain, a drinking vessel, a garment, a carpet – with the perfection each object can possess according to its own nature. Islamic art does not add something alien to the objects that it shapes; it merely brings out their essential qualities"

Female participants from Group 7, however, personally felt the images did not show a true concept of modesty, where the clothes are tight, and the headless model posed in a quite seductive way. By seeing themselves as customers, they personally described the clothes as not modest. They perceived an un-Islamic element in the dress. Although the head had been cropped and seemed to adhere to the literal meaning of the prophetic tradition prohibiting any image of humankind, they perceived that the depiction of the models' body shape as not being Islamic. Instead of looking at the image objectively, they viewed the image from a different side. The portrayal of a woman's body proved to be an issue to them.

Asma: I won't buy anyone either. That's not like my style.

Faeza: Me too. I won't dare wear it.

Asma: But I think people might take issue the fact that why these women show off their body. Even though they are covered there's still show (off the body). I don't think there is an Islamic message.

However, the non-Muslim participants' view of the headless images is congruent with the objective representation in Islamic art as well as the practice of modest fashion in Islam. For figurative art, Faruqi (1973, 2013) claimed that visual art in Islam does not require subjectivity. It offers objectivity. In short, Islamic art is not symbolic. Two participants shared the same opinion when viewing the cropped models in the fashion section. For the headless images, the participants commented in a positive light without linking their views with the cultural aspect of visuals. They saw the images as different to what they were accustomed to seeing in the western media.

Jason: It is much more on modest wear, modest modeling. Because in the west you got like Kate Moss who just like they become the face of clothes. I did find myself thinking you just wear clothes like... if you want to take a particular model you don't need to do the work like this one. It shows the idea of middle eastern, where the cloth, to see the cloth as cloth, not to expect much from it. You only see the clothes. When you look at a model wearing, you have the opinion about that, you see whatever.

Beauty to the recipient is also in its use. One participant interpreted the dress of the headless model from its practicality. Regardless of someone's faith, the application of the tradition in Islamic art forms the viewer's understanding of the object in an Islamic sense, in which 'beauty and use' work hand-in-hand in artistic representation (Burckhardt, 2011).

Elsa: Without the head and in a pose like that, I feel it is more about fashion. I would not necessarily judge like Oh this is a Muslim woman, covering up! I would look at the dress. I like that. So, I can wear that with a belt. I wouldn't jump into a cultural link.

This female participant expressed her pleasant feelings towards the dress which indicates her admiration of its beauty, and at the same time imagines the flexibility of the dress upon her. This kind of reception showed that the image suggests a sense of pragmatic use in the production of art. The image brings out the essential quality. It is the quality of a modest fashion which comes with beauty. It is the beauty of Islam that is represented in the form of modest attire. The injunction of wearing modest dress is clearly stated in the Quran, the divine source for Muslims. As stated by Burckhardt (2011, p.2):

“The art of Islam receives its beauty not from any ethnic genius but from Islam itself and just as Islamic science has its roots in the Qur’an and hadith, so the typical forms of Islamic art are rooted in the spirit of Islam”.

Thus, these comments indicate that traditional Islamic artistic conventions can be made sense of and have a place in a more secular world.

Melanie: It's kind of cultural dress. It's not a western dress. It's showing like...you can't tell the nationality. Anyone can dress like that. You can choose, even some western girls or women they also would dress like this if they like Asian style.

It might be possible to say that by being inside or a part of the Muslim community, it is easy for the Muslim groups to make sense of the faceless women, both the woman with the hijab and the other without the hijab (referring to Pic 4A and Pic 4B respectively). In other words, familiarity with the subjects leads to visual apprehension. They can easily distinguish the ‘private’ woman from the ‘public’ woman.

The hijab was considered a stable sign of identification and did not require any other elements for signification. The idea the hijab brings to the Muslim society of different races, be it religious, political, or social, made the apprehension possibly instant and without scrutiny. This is in line with what Faruqi (1973) had stated that the meaning of the image is derived from the knowledge and sensitivity to the values Islam had brought. “For in the apprehension of aesthetic value, immediate intuition is always prior. The discursive understanding here plays a secondary role by lending, as it were, a helping hand only” (Faruqi, 1973, p.81).

As Pic 4B reveals, the lines and curves of a woman’s body are sufficient to intuit the female. By depicting the faceless woman without the veil, and in a seductive posture, they felt the image could possibly resemble any Muslim woman in a private place. To them, it reveals a female being whose bodily figure is intimate and precious that should not be objectified to male view in public. By adopting an intuitive interpretation to the generic image, the participants related the image to the universal idea of femininity that has been constructed by the image producer. They felt they can easily connect themselves with the picture. They saw themselves in the faceless woman.

Asma: When you talk about the hair and wave it talks that freedom is what every woman wants. We all want to be free. We all want to feel the wind in our air. The fact that she has curves. She's a woman. We don't say it is

sexually exploiting a woman. It is literally showing a woman in a feminine most, not innocent but most vulnerable form. She looks like she's arrogant, not covered at all. I feel like this is what every woman wants to be when we are not outside.

Other than the generic anatomy of a female, a Muslim cultural artifact like the hijab complements the description of a faceless figure. An impersonalized character was defined from the hijab. It attracted the immediate attention of the viewer where the focus of viewing has now turned to the hijab.

Shereen: To me, the picture does not have a facial feature (Picture 4A). It's kind of that woman is defined by the hijab. She doesn't seem to have a double personality because she's not smiling, without expression and the fact that it's all faded away, have faith, a kind of conscious Muslim, she's wearing hijab...kind of getting a personality from that.

While Islam aesthetically encourages contemplative interpretation, it ignores psychological problems that may arise when viewing art. This was not realized by the non-Muslims and they perceived the impersonalized images as less passionate. They implied a personal bias when viewing the images. When showed the faceless hijabi woman in Pic 4A, the image was less favourable. However, when they were shown the image of a veil-less lady in a freestyle, they were pleased. They liked to see the face as they considered it made the image more realistic. Further, they liked to see more physical attributes rather than the generic image. To them, the basic structure of a human body and the cultural artifact such as the hijab are less appealing. They preferred the delineation of nature and details.

Isaac: I would like to see a face. It makes it human.

Valerie: I don't like it at all.

Moderator: What about this picture (veil-less lady in Pic4B)?

Sheila: Contrast. The design, beautiful, colour, the hair going the different way like an angle.

Valerie: I like that. I don't know why, I just really like that.

Isaac: The hair is blowing... freedom.

Valerie: It looks lively.

Adhering to their western cultural norms, they perceived the absence of face to be dehumanized and impaired. The lack of details made the images unrealistic, thus, hindering viewers from fully apprehending the image. Since western arts appreciate natural depictions with perspective, the decontextualized and impersonalized graphic images looked boring to them. Apart from those who had Muslim friends, the majority felt the faceless women less appealing. Among all participants, only two females viewed the hijabi faceless woman as more approachable than the veil-less one. They found the former to be adorable and humble which they found resembled their Muslim friends. This finding shows that unfamiliarity towards the subjects challenges their interpretations and makes the impersonalized figure clueless, thus unattractive.

Regarding the face, for non-Muslim respondents, their views resonate with a previous study on the significance of face in selfie images. From a focus group discussion among Swedish respondents, the interviewees applied western views that the face is important in order to be able to relate to another person and that the face opens up subjectivity. Face is "...communication and a projection of the self" (Ehlin, 2015, p.77). In the western interpretation of a self-representation, Ehlin concludes that the face is the fundamental feature "...to make sense of others and ourselves. It is a way to expose vulnerability in oneself as well as seeing it in others" (p.85). The finding is central within the western visuality that stresses the co-presence of people in a situation (Goffman, 1959) which is signified through the face and eye contact. The eye contact between two interactants signifies a symmetrical level between the two persons where each recognises the existence of the other. The absence of face disrupts communication.

However, a non-Muslim female could relate the image to a feminist view. Her opinion located the tradition of Islamic art within modernity.

Sita: I don't see any difference in these two (4A and 4B), except that it's (pointing to 4B) more common in the mainstream media like an article on feminism I think you would see the picture like that.

The way they viewed the images inform us that the impersonalized images encouraged participants to focus their attention upon attributes other than the person.

Apart from the headless and faceless images, art, which offers perspective to an image, opened up a discursive interpretation. The reactions of the focus group to elements such as full-face view, direct gaze, close-ups of hand and female body shape were received in a variety of ways.

The discussion on the interpretation of images, especially the cropped images that focus on the human body and remove the head, locates the Islamic art tradition within the practice of modernity. In fact, the photographs were put under scrutiny and the discussion developed a subjective interpretation.

Unlike the cropped human figures, the full-face view and the direct gaze of a woman politician standing upfront in the middle of her two male counterparts is a gendered symbol and received a contrasting reception. For example, a male Muslim participant who was inclined to a traditional view realized that the photograph is artificial and well-choreographed to send a message of gender representation which happened to challenge his belief.

Haleem: It looks like a Forbes Magazine or something like that. This is a very important person. It's professionally taken. It's in the studio. It's not a natural shot. She's obviously in the middle of two men. She stands in the front of the men as well, so she seems sort of a leader or has some sort of authority.

To the non-Muslims, the image producer choreographed an image that might violate a traditional view. The image, according to a female participant, offers a secular look which separates personality from religion. The woman is depicted without the veil and the absence of the hijab as a religious symbol is considered as disassociating the woman from any specific religious identity.

Geri: If I think I like F the most. She looks like a powerful woman. And you wouldn't tell what religion she stood, and you wouldn't judge her on her religion. And even though the men who are in the picture that standing behind her like she is the boss which it's kind of less traditional representation really because often thinking of the man is the leader of the house of Muslim or Asian family. It's quite good to see her standing in front of men in charge.

This photo applies a modern approach in delineating a modern view breaking the stereotypes of Muslim women. The image of veil-less and the leading position evoked contested meanings and feelings. Although this subjective and symbolic interpretation is alien to the tradition of Islamic art as outlined by Faruqi, it has a political impact on the viewer concerning the Muslim community in Britain. By abiding with Ramadan's position on Islamic art and culture that should consider the political and social environment of the image production, it shows Islamic visual representation is not problematic.

In summary, although they did not acquire knowledge of Islamic visual convention, their familiarity with the content is sufficient to interpret an image. To Muslim participants, the form or style of representation is not important. What is significant to them is the meaning attached to the image. This can be related to the diverse and global characters of Islamic art. As outlined by Burckhardt, Islamic art philosophy is diversity in unity. Islamic art might come in different forms whether in the form of plastic or graphic art. But on top of that, the art generally brings a meaningful identity either politically, religiously or socially to Muslims. The diversity is so close, familiar and normal to Muslims and it seems unnoticed and unproblematic.

6.4 Conclusion

Driven by multiculturalism and antiracism discourses in the British Muslim media, the images of Muslim women opened up a wide discussion among both Muslim and non-Muslim participants to the construction of Muslim identity. It is clear that people are interpreting images according to their own values and they are associating their own values with being progressive and unproblematic. Their views are subjective to the values they uphold as affirmed by Lombardo & Meier (2014, p.4) on the symbolic gender and political representations: “The connection between symbol and response is a matter of habit and social practice ingrained in norms and values.”

Drawing from Hall’s approach to interpretation, Muslim participants applied mostly dominant reading when interpreting the images. Their personal and collective views helped them to make sense of images which resonate with the preferred meaning constructed by the image producers. However, some images evoked negotiated and oppositional meaning, which indicated the different values embraced by Muslims. Symbolic attributes such as the hijab, for instance, did not receive identical interpretation amongst them. The veil might grant a religious identity to many, but to another, it is not important to be recognized as a religious symbol as it is a private matter. In another instance, a female participant applied a negotiated reading when interpreting a mother with a baby in her arms that connotes a stereotypical image of a woman with a domestic life. It was apparent from the discussion within the theme of the individualized female that Muslim participants embrace multiple points of view when reading the images, whether from a personal, collective, religious or political perspective. They looked at the images from postfeminist sensibilities which regard women as individual in character and subject to interpretations (Gill, 2016). All these views show that they did not interpret Islam solely from the

religious text but intersected with other factors. This dynamic interpretation preceded the way they viewed the images that resulted in the preferred, negotiated and oppositional meaning.

In non-Muslim groups, most participants interpreted the images of Muslim women by negotiated and oppositional meanings. Interestingly, they used different strategies as their reference that included media norms and personal contact with Muslims. Those who do not have personal experience with Muslims performed negotiated and oppositional readings by holding views on the normalised depiction of Muslims. The findings are in line with the YouGov poll in 2002 which stated that 64% of British society have knowledge of Muslims through the information they receive in the media (Allen, 2012a). This affirms the contact theory that knowledge and experience of an outside group could be gained from close association and eventually lessen the prejudice.

During the interviews, both groups applied varied strategies to understand the images. While Muslims viewed from the combination of religious, political, personal and collective perspectives, non-Muslims demonstrated that Orientalist views are central in defining the images. The familiarity of and resemblance with the subjects, personal views and collective perspective on religion are the tools for the Muslim groups in interpreting the images. To non-Muslims, the normalised dichotomies of modern versus traditional, western versus eastern and progressive versus backward were understood from the western worldview.

The finding shows that media norms are dominant to the non-Muslim groups when interpreting Muslims. The constructions of 'uplifting image' and 'modern lady' were repeated many times during the interviews when they looked at the images. They found the constructions to be opposite to what has been normalised in the mainstream media. This leads to resistance to the mainstream images. Both Muslim and non-Muslim groups are aware of the power of the media. In order to combat the misperceptions about Islam and Muslims, the majority of Muslim participants placed an emphasis on the media as the main player to counter this. To them, the media should separate customary tradition from religion. However, with the manipulative nature of mainstream media and the lack of Muslim staff in national media production, it is almost impossible to see the improvement of fair and accurate mainstream reporting. It has been suggested by Petley & Richardson (2011) that more Muslims should be employed as senior gatekeepers in media organizations for more meaningful reporting. Alternatively, Muslim media

could be the agent to bring about cultural and religious awareness to the audience as it has the ability to be the spokesperson for the Muslim community over disputed matters.

The majority of participants perceived that the negativity about Muslims is heavily fabricated in powerful institutions such as the media. The facts that Muslim voices are underrepresented and misrepresented in the mainstream media are in accord with previous studies indicating that Muslims have been negated in many forms of representation. Muslims are stigmatized as immigrants and outsiders who carry alien culture (Sian et al. 2012) and are perceived as a hindrance to national integration (Williamson, 2014). The recurring representations of Muslims negated and homogenized in the mainstream media has a cognitive influence in perceiving those representations by the public (Morey and Yaqin, 2011). The UK national press has successively performed its role of constructing ideological knowledge of Muslimness (Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013a) that purported Muslims' failure to integrate within the agenda of muscular liberalism (Holohan, 2014).

The finding can be related to what Edward Said pointed out on how Western society used the civic institution to form a cultural superiority over the Eastern minority. Drawing from Gramsci's work, Said argued that the western cultural hegemony permeates media discourse of Muslims and influences the majority's minds that Islam is inferior, weak, and backward, but ironically related to terrorism and extremism. The recent reports on the Trojan Horse incident proves how the British media associate the Muslim community with radicalisation and alienates Muslims from the perceived British values (Poole, 2016a).

In the discussion of the knowledge and understanding of Islamic visual convention with the participants, the findings from the focus groups show that that Islamic visual representation is not religiously constrained. This has been proven by the focus group discussions when they interpreted the photographs of the headless fashion models. They perceived that this form of image protects women from being objectified. It also brings the idea that fashion is suitable to everyone with or without the veil. The participants were unconsciously guided by the tradition of Islamic art to look at the images objectively.

Furthermore, familiarity with Muslim affairs helped them to interpret the images in preferred and negotiated meanings, particularly the graphic artistic representation of the faceless girl. While it was unproblematic to the Muslims, it was deemed unrealistic to their non-Muslim

counterparts to read the unnatural picture, except for a few of them who had close contact with Muslims. Unlike the majority who hesitated to express their views, they were quick to interpret the graphic images and could relate them with their experience with Muslims.

The Islamic visual representation prevails its quality in merging tradition and modernity. The tradition of Islamic art proves to be contemporaneous in constructing the gender and political representations of Muslim women within western society. It refutes Sussan Babaie's proposition (2011, p.133) on locating modernity in Islamic visual arts: "...it seems imperative for these artists to remain sufficiently unconstrained by those religiously defined traditions to be able to reappropriate their own culture—and especially its "Islamic" characteristics, if they are so inclined—in order to build the modern variant of those arts now deemed to be "traditional," or unmodern." The label of traditional or unmodern is given by the West, not similar to what has been constructed by the Muslim artist or producer. In fact, Islamic visual convention is already modern in its practice.

I made two observations from the focus group discussions. Firstly, the Muslims embraced different values and viewed the variegated images of Muslim women from different perspectives. On the contrary, non-Muslims upheld western values and viewed the diversified images of Muslim women from a unified perspective that strongly associates Islam with religion in its negative connotations (despite showing a desire to be open and positive). This might be influenced by the dominant representation of Islam and Muslims in the media. Secondly, since western art appreciates more natural elements, it was hard for the non-Muslims to read the graphic illustration of a non-perfect being. In the Islamic visual convention, the natural and unnatural are co-existent in its vocabulary with certain boundaries. The boundaries should be unproblematic providing the viewers are familiar with Muslim affairs and have close contact with Muslims. In short, aspects of the Islamic visual representation in the Muslim magazines could be a vehicle to increase understanding of the Muslims and characterise them as part of the wider society. This point will be elaborated further in the next concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

This chapter will synthesise the issues and findings of the study, consider the implications for the field of knowledge and highlight the contribution of the research. In order to carry out these tasks, the chapter has been divided into six sections. The first section of this chapter outlines the main objective of research and the research problem. This study aims to contribute to debates on Muslim identity in the media which is often constructed as different from the wider society due to perceptions of religious norms and cultural practices. I embarked on a journey, shaped by the theories of Islamic art and gender visualisation, which culminated in the discovery of several new findings relating to visual representations in Muslim media, and more broadly, Muslim identities in the media. Section two summarizes the results and findings from the visual analysis and focus group discussions. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that through graphic artistic representation, British Muslim magazines delineated a nuanced visual representation of Muslims, using a visibly different approach to the mainstream media in the UK.

Section three and section four offer implications for the field of knowledge and the contribution of the study respectively. Whilst existing literature in this field has contributed to a wealth of understanding relating to the misrepresentation of Muslims, few have unpicked how Muslim's visual representation could shape and simultaneously inform the wider public of the heterogeneity of Muslim identity. First, my thesis provides evidence that Islamic visual representation in the magazines under study reflects the diverse identities of Muslim communities. Second, the magazines apply a subversive approach to visualising gender. Although the approaches they used are different to one another, they both carry subversive meanings that redefine the mediated subject of Muslim women compared to mainstream media

in the UK. Then, section five explains the limitations of the research, and finally section six provides concluding remarks from my study.

7.1 Aim of research and the research problem

The main goal of this research project was to examine the visual representation of women in Muslim media in the United Kingdom. Using the techniques of visual analysis and focus groups, it sought to contribute to our understanding of the forms of Muslim cultural representation and of the significance of the variation in the images published, and audience interpretations of these images. The research was driven by these three primary questions:

- 1) What do the images tell us about the identities and practices of these British Muslims?
- 2) To what extent can it be argued that there is some variation in the representation of gender between the selected magazines?
- 3) How do different audiences understand and interpret these images?

This research approaches the media debate on Muslim integration through questioning the more simplistic view that non-integrated Muslims are rooted from monolithic and illiberal religious norms (see Amir-Moazami, Jacobsen and Malik, 2011), and instead argues that the Muslim community is diverse and egalitarian. Drawing from the theory of Islamic art and Goffman's analytic tools of gender display and using visual analysis of British Muslim women and focus group discussions, I explored the distinctive convention of Islamic visuals and the varied identities of Muslim women in relation to the mediated, orientalist representations of mainstream media. Furthermore, I discussed the visual representations from Islamic and feminist viewpoints, where this subversive media culture creates a potential space for alternative female identities to emerge. I argued that the Islamic visual representation points towards a convergence of British and Muslim values, rather than a clash of insider-outsider culture. Images of Muslim women in variegated roles and appearances in the forms of photograph and graphic illustration demonstrate a mix of traditional and modern values, thus producing hybrid identity as British Muslims.

What follows is the summary of findings from the visual analysis and the focus group discussions on the Muslim visual conventions as represented in the British Muslim magazines.

7.2 Summary of findings

The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that through graphic artistic representation, British Muslim magazines delineated nuanced conventions of Muslim visual representations using a visibly different approach. *Emel*, through profile photographs, represented Muslim women from a political outlook and embedded the images with intersected Muslim and British values. While *Sisters*, through graphic art and impersonalized photographs, represented Muslim women from a more communal outlook, whilst also giving autonomy to the women over their bodies and actions. The images contained both Muslim and neo-liberal values through discourses of multiculturalism as well as commercialism.

The findings show that the visual landscape of *Emel* features a diversity of races, local people, and international figures. They come from different parts of the world and have varied ethnicities. This magazine, through its features of Muslim lifestyles, celebrates multiculturalism in the face of negative approaches to integration. Politically, *Emel* explicitly shows Muslims from different walks of life and with an emphasis on ordinary women. It covered local and global current affairs and profiles of outstanding people. Most of them are depicted in the natural settings of their profession, marriage and family. Their individuality is made visually salient in the representation through the images of outstanding British Muslims in various pursuits as well as personalities from overseas who have inspired the diasporic community.

Emel put forward Muslim views within a message that British Muslims have a 'common culture' with other British people. Its visualisation of British Muslims is given a great deal of social power where it can control the meaning of the message by offering readers real people in real settings. It was conceived to show a positive and more realistic image of Muslims integrated within the wider society. The only difference between 'Us' is the religion, which is not supposed to divide people, but open up an opportunity to seek commonality.

Sisters on the other hand focuses on a conceptual, stylized representation of Muslim women. Its visual landscape features highly processed, essentialized and idealized representations. Interestingly, the conceptual images are depicted using different kinds of techniques. People are illustrated either in a graphic art work, as a cropped image or a backshot image. For example, all pictures concerning femininity in *Sisters* were depicted in conceptually graphic illustrations without attaching any personality. No clear background was identified in each image and this makes all the women the absolute carriers of femininity. What is thought-provoking is the

absence of facial feature in all images depicted in *Sisters*. Without personal identification, it provides readers with the opportunity to talk about the images in ways which seem appropriate to them, to apply specific values, and specific discourses to abstract images. *Sisters* promotes the emancipation of Muslim women as an individual female with different roles to play and commit. In its effort to uplift the self-esteem of Muslim women from diverse backgrounds, *Sisters* depicts them in a more generic representation to avoid hegemony of certain races or skin colours. Moreover, the absence of personality could free the women from prejudicial judgements based on looks and eye gaze.

Among the plausible explanations for these findings is that the visual landscape is a human production (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006) therefore its realities are determined and influenced by the aims of the media producers. As with other publications, *Emel* and *Sisters* have different objectives of publication. *Emel* aimed to show that the Muslim community is not a homogenized population but is composed of variegated ethnics and cultures. Despite their heterogeneity, *Emel* visualised Muslims as part of British society who live, work and socialize within society as a whole. In other words, integration between Muslims and non-Muslims is clearly possible since they share much in common. Social cohesion is the fundamental end of *Emel's* publication. The political images function to promote cohesion and to develop healthy intercommunity relations.

Sisters on the contrary, aimed to reach heterogeneous populations as wide as possible. Its publication focuses on a woman's development as an individual who seeks balance between her relationship with the family and the community. Self-transformation is the underlying aim of *Sister's* publication by inserting individual choice within the social boundaries that have been prescribed by Islamic values, yet without contradicting western values. In *Sisters*, women become a symbol of the Muslim community in the West whose performance does not threaten anybody, instead it is a peaceful entity with distinctive and universal values. After all, images in *Emel* and *Sisters* were illustrated as inclusive within the boundaries of the British public sphere.

The second major finding was that this study has identified a variation of roles and identities of Muslim women that reveal their represented hybrid identities in being a British Muslim. The represented hybridity manifests in the choice of career, education, and family life. Depicted with an Islamic identity symbolized by the hijab, Muslim women occupy stable careers, have a good education, and a happy marriage. These representations suggest that Muslim women have a varied life as confirmed by Brown (2006), where religious identity empowers British Muslim

women to pursue education, to have financial independence and to challenge customary practice such as forced marriage. When inspecting the contents, it was evident that Muslim women can be defined with assorted roles and functions, in private or public spheres of different emphasis, as shown distinctively in the magazines. These magazines give voice to marginal communities where women are in control of their own representation.

As a whole, the results of this study indicate that the representation of Muslim women show the women's self-efficacy and self-conscience. The representation expresses their individuality whether in private or in a public space. Although they might look different in public, they participate well in society and make individual contributions. The hijab, for instance is not a sign of difference. It is a symbol of identity for a Muslim woman in Britain. These results are in agreement with Basit's (2009) findings which showed young Britons among both ethnic minority and majority populations associate their identity either with personal traits, ethnicity, religion, gender or profession. Recognising these various identities and making them inclusive in the Britishness will cultivate a sense of belonging (Uberoi and Modood, 2013b), whereby belonging is one of the major components to be an effective citizen. By using their distinctive approach to representation, both magazines demonstrate egalitarian expressions of the Muslim community with diverse cultural identities, practices, and values. It allows room for innovation and integration, a sign of a dynamic entity.

Regarding the viewers' reception, three themes were identified through the focus group discussions of the Muslim female imagery. They are diverse ethnicity, hijab as symbol, and blended identity. The findings suggest some consistencies and inconsistencies across Muslim and non-Muslim interviewees in interpreting the images.

There is consistency of preferred reading by all groups in the first theme. Based on natural attributes of the Muslim women in the images, Muslims and non-Muslims alike recognized the racial pluralism they saw in the images as one of the inclusive elements in a multicultural society. In terms of social status, they considered the images of working women to be positive and indicative to a certain degree of integration through active participation in society. Both groups of respondents believed the natural and social attributes of the women demonstrated the characteristics of a successful multicultural society.

In the second theme, when discussing the hijab as a symbol of Muslim women, the participants showed sharp inconsistencies between the intragroup of Muslims and intergroup of non-Muslims. Among the Muslims, although the majority perceived the hijab as having a religious meaning, some applied an individual meaning in that it is not a religious symbol but rather a political identity. This can be clearly understandable as the conceptual meaning of modest garment in the Quran is open to interpretation where there is no specific description of what is modest. Giving the existing Muslim community as conceived of plural cultures and backgrounds, modesty is potentially understood from diverse views and manifestations. To non-Muslim members, they demonstrated negotiated and oppositional meaning whereby their interpretations stemmed from a normalised western view. They collectively viewed the hijab from an Orientalist lens through what has been depicted in the mainstream media. They repeatedly said that by matching the headscarf with pants and jacket, the wearer symbolized modernity and the image dismissed the stereotype of traditional garment which restricts movement and conversation. As for the image of niqabi woman, most of them viewed the niqab as limiting interpersonal communication thus failing to integrate with the wider society. However, the picture of the niqabi woman as a driving instructor was perceived as uplifting as she is depicted standing confidently in front of a car, with a straight posture and a direct eye gaze. The finding shows that the hijab is generally viewed as oppressive, traditional, and intimidating unless combined with the western style or attached with a western-approved activity, then it accords with a collective understanding of modernity.

In the third theme of the interpretation of blended identity, the inconsistencies remained. While the Muslim participants demonstrated a preferred reading, their non-Muslim counterparts showed a negotiated reading. The Muslims viewed the images as empowering Muslim women and emancipating them from backward cultures. To be more specific, religion liberates women from cultural orthodoxies and returns their rights and well-being (Brown, 2006). For female respondents, by referring to their own experience as being a Muslim woman, the images are authentically Islamic and reveal themselves whether in a private or public domain. This view was also shared by the majority of Muslim males. This view, somehow, was not held by the non-Muslims, implying that they thought that what is different from the west is backward and traditional. They perceived the images as modernising the women through an engagement with outdoor activities and the adoption of western fashion. Despite the depiction of assorted personalities and appearances, the individuality of the women was ignored while the Orientalised view prevailed. Overall, the majority of participants irrespective of religion or race,

viewed Islam and the West as dichotomous. To Muslims, the images of Muslim women were interpreted as compatible to the West. To non-Muslims, the images imply progressiveness that adhere to the western definition of modernity. The blended or hybrid Muslim identity is negotiated through the combination of Islamic and western values and needs.

Moving to the next discussion on the understanding of Islamic visual convention, the majority of focus group participants were significantly influenced by what has been generally discussed in the media regarding British Muslims, but they also seemed quite open-minded. They enthusiastically discussed the images presented to them in the context of the media's representation of Muslims and how the images could challenge mediated stereotypes and uplift the perception on Muslim women in particular, and Muslims in general. This finding is consistent with previous research by Brown & Richards (2016). In a series of interview with Muslim international students on the media representation of British Muslims, they found that the interviewees heavily based their existing opinions on mainstream discourses about Muslims in the West, which can be accessed easily within our media-saturated society. In my research, the participants' views, especially Muslims, were ideologically-driven, where the superiority-inferiority configuration and the clash of civilisation between Islam and the West heavily depicted in the media were disturbingly apparent. It seemed to them that the images presented during the focus groups counter the biased reporting and could become a means to correct misperceptions on Muslims. Although the headless and faceless illustrations were inspired from the traditional conception of image, the majority divorced their reading from religious interpretation. This finding seems to agree with my interpretation in the previous chapter of the visual analysis, which suggests that in contemplating the images, the tradition of Islamic art gives contemporary meaning and allows for universal interpretation without having to rely much on Islamic religious literacy.

To conclude, Muslim groups occupy preferred and negotiated meaning to interpret the images of Muslim women in these magazines. They demonstrated individual and religious views that shows a variety of opinion within the interplay of religion, gender, and Britishness. This reflects their diverse background and understanding of religion which is not static but dynamic. Non-Muslim groups support the dominant discourse on integration that tends to legitimise a collective identity of the majority which is demeaning towards the differences of the minority. Throughout the discussion, their views on Muslim women reflects western norms of modernity and progressiveness.

7.3 Implication for the field of knowledge

Having outlined the significant research findings, it is now appropriate to indicate their place and contribution to a broader scholarship. Based on the visual analysis and focus group discussions undertaken in this study, visual representations have been utilized by both magazines under examination to represent Muslim women. The findings have significant implications for the understanding of how the Islamic visual representation, which comprised artistic graphic art, could shape understanding of the identity of Muslim women in Britain. This study shows that the visual is an important medium for communicating identity to the viewer. It takes both a modernist and realist approach to represent Muslim women in the British context, embedding Muslim and western values¹¹. While *Emel* magazine politically highlighted diverse profiles of personality in different kinds of pursuit to represent women, both in selectively natural and choreographed settings, *Sisters* magazine has innovatively altered the photographs' presentation by applying the traditional approach of depicting images. Without disclosing a completely real body, heads were cropped, faces were hidden, hands were framed, and silhouettes were used. Interestingly, the revised images give contemporaneous meaning when relating to postmodern issues of media representation and Muslim integration in the West. In an attempt to avoid homogenizing Muslim women with static attributes such as an Asian look and religious apparel, the photographs offer open interpretation and release the viewer from a stereotypical judgement. In return, the viewer's interpretation has not been distracted by the subject's look and psychological traits. This was demonstrated during the focus group discussions where the participants held common views in decoding the headless fashion models and the bride's hands.

Moreover, adhering to the traditional approach of depicting images, graphic art was utilized to impersonalise female subjects by the absence of facial features. This implies the same strategy as previously mentioned to devoid from any stereotypical association to Muslim women and to avoid perceptual emphasis based on looks. The graphic artistic representation also serves as an alternative to illustrate an imaginary picture of veil-less women at home, the domain where they can fully express themselves. The findings provide insights for media discourse on Muslim integration from the Muslim media perspective where Muslims are diverse in delineating their

¹¹ It is worth to mention here that photography is the product of modernity in the late nineteenth century alongside sociology and anthropology (Ball and Smith, 2001). Unlike graphic art, photographs, due to the process of reproduction is political and its meaning is exposed to contestation by the viewers.

identities. They might be political in pursuing a Muslim lifestyle congruent with western values, or they might appear differently by converging the communal and individual values without impeaching the host nation's values. In relation to integration, they are neither isolating nor threatening.

Furthermore, my study offers suggestive evidence for the revision of media discourse on Muslim women. Currently, Muslim women are stereotyped in the media as the victims of a backward culture. In contrast, the results obtained from the analysis of the images of women show the magazines depict women's agency and individuality. Through conceptual and generic images, *Sisters* magazine constructs women heavily in private spheres through the image of femininity, well-being, mother and children. It shows women's empowerment over themselves and their surroundings. However, the strong connection with private domain may reinforce traditional images of Muslim women who are confined to home chores behind closed doors, hence bringing out negative connotations. While in *Emel* magazine, through the profiles of Muslim personalities, women were portrayed as embracing both feminine and masculine qualities to show their individuality, their relations with other people and their contribution towards society, which were largely drawn from the public sphere. The depictions altogether were imbued with a unified idea of countering the stereotypical image in mainstream media.

When situating the findings in relation to the integration agenda within British society, the magazines both align Muslim norms with British values. For example, despite depicting women with unfamiliar cultural attributes such as the hijab and modest clothes, they delineate the activity of Muslim women which does not contradict western values. Instead of focusing on the religious value, the magazines construct women's agency and individuality in a variation of images from single, couple to group depictions to visualise woman as an autonomous self, an equal life partner with complementary balance, and an active member of a social unit either a family or a community.

In the context of British integration and shared values, it was shown that there is an intersected identity and converged value of British Muslims (Meer, 2012). The findings of this study may help us to understand the heterogeneity of Muslims in Britain. They demonstrate the heterogeneity in two different ways: particular and universal values of being Muslims. The particularism is clearly observed in *Emel* where its images were largely political and were contextualised within British society. The universalism obviously can be seen in *Sisters* through its generic

representation where the images were communal and decontextualized from specific scenes yet carried a sense of individualism. Although the cultural representation is associated with traditional values, it is conceived of global values to be related with integrative milieus of any liberal and secular state including Britain. Despite the distinctive visual representations and the nuanced articulation of the role and function of Muslim women, they share the same objectives to be able to integrate within the wider society, hence the integration of Muslims in British society seems unproblematic.

The construction of intersected identities and egalitarian Muslim women in both magazines under study indicates that the Muslim editors possess high media literacy. Through the illuminating images of Muslim women, evidently, the magazines could contribute towards countering underrepresented and poor reporting of Muslim affairs. A study by the University of Cambridge-Al Jazeera Media Project found that besides imbalanced reporting by mainstream media, media illiteracy among British Muslims led to a lack of self-representation, thus inaccurate news about them fuel prejudice and Islamophobia in the UK (Safdar, 2016). Several media outlets, including *Emel* and *QNews* have ceased publication even though they had attained a high readership. Financial and human resources might be the reasons to explain the discontinuation.

Utilizing Internet facilities through global networking among the writers and contributors is probably the best practice as proven by *Sisters* magazine who use this strategy to maintain its publication and achieve worldwide circulation. Besides Na'ima Roberts who founded *Sisters*, Ahmed J. Versi, the editor and publisher of *The Muslim News* has proven successful in running the newspaper both in print and digital versions for British Muslims since 1989. To cater for audiences of various origins and multiple backgrounds, they report Muslim news and views from inside and outside the UK. In the US, *Al Jumuah*, set up by a group of Muslim professionals in North America, is probably the oldest Muslim magazine, which survives for 27 years in featuring the religion and Muslim affairs. Since launching its online version in 2014, it gains wider acceptance of Muslims worldwide and reaches around 100,000 readerships (<https://www.thoughtco.com/top-islamic-magazines-and-journals-2004262>). In producing global views, the writers are scattered all around the world from North America to the South East Asia. *TIM (The Islamic Monthly)* is a non-religious and independent magazine that goes online since 2011. Its founding editor, Amina Chaudary, is an American Muslim, who applies the same formula by her counterparts that highlights outstanding Muslims all around the globe and

publish articles from international contributors with diverse perspectives. Going global with cross-cultural contents seems to be the best approach for the successful publishers to reach a massive audience and to sustain operation in the media industry.

Although this study focuses on the Islamic visual representation, the findings may well have a bearing on the viewers' reception, particularly the broader society. As shown in the focus group discussions, while most of the time Muslims used religious and personal perspectives to justify their reasons in interpreting the images, non-Muslims applied ethnocentric thought in decoding the images of women by implying the west is more progressive than Islam, yet Muslims are starting to move forward. By relying on 'common sense' and echoing a dominant discourse on Muslim integration, the hijab was considered to be in opposition to freedom of expression and the niqab was perceived as a hindrance to communication. This kind of viewing cognition also occurs and poses challenges in ethnographic studies too when analysing photographs of non-Western ethnic groups (Ball and Smith, 1992). The interpretive work is derived from the viewers' cultural knowledge that is prone to be contrary to reality. In the same vein, non-Muslim participants read Muslim images from their own perspectives, or what Hall (1999) identified as oppositional reading. Or sometimes they applied negotiated reading when they perceived the images as generally uplifting by incorporating western culture. Ethnocentrism and orientalism are at work here. Yet, the non-Muslim groups were open to new ideas presented to them by the images which shows that if mainstream media was more diverse in its representation of Muslims, this may have a positive effect.

Taken together, the findings suggest a role for Muslim media to promote shared values. In this sense, alternative media is greatly welcomed to promote diversity. What I mean by alternative here is that Muslim media could be a voice for Muslims that is all but absent in the mainstream media either as a news sources or as editorial members. Online platforms could also be utilized as an alternative to the resource constraints encountered by traditional media production such as print newspaper, magazine and broadcast channels. The findings of this investigation complement those of earlier studies. Muslim media could challenge the preconceived knowledge of media consumers and offer alternative views from variegated sources (Holohan and Poole, 2011, 2014); provide a counter-balance for Muslim narratives on cultural and gender issues (Georgiou, 2012); and fulfil Muslim needs and interests in understanding their hybrid belongingness – their community and the wider society they reside in (Zick and Heeren, 2014). Overall, in measuring the level of media literacy, this research reveals 'the perceived motivations

of media producers and differing interpretations of media by audiences' (Ashley, Maksl and Craft, 2013, p.3).

7.4 Contribution of the study

In relation to the media discourse on Muslim identity, the findings from this study offer two major contributions to theories of media representation. First, my thesis provides evidence that Islamic visual representation in these magazines reflects the diverse identities of Muslim communities. Through the visual representation of Muslim women as depicted in this modern Muslim media, it expands the theory of Islamic art that largely lies in the artistic medium of the pre-modern era. By examining the images of Muslim women in *Emel* and *Sisters* magazines, I identified two different conventions occupied by the image producers, notably in relatively conventional and communal techniques.

Emel tends mostly to represent Muslim personalities using conventional photography on its glossy pages. This reflects their understanding of image production which demonstrates a fusion of modern and traditional British Muslim practices to reproduce 'reality' to the mass viewer. The utility of a product is significant here just as an image of a dancer on royal pottery or an illustration of an animal on a fine carpet in a Muslim home during the Fatimid reign in North Africa (Adly, 2007). Moreover, as the miniature painting of a sultan and royal events in the Safavid, Ottoman and Moghul empires, the image is not intended to be worshipped. In the current situation, the objective of the image producer is substantial in promoting Muslim lifestyle in the UK, to enlighten public knowledge about the community. *Emel* may want to inform and reproduce the 'reality' of British Muslims to the public through the depiction of Muslims in conventional photos so as to counter misrepresentation of Muslims. On the contrary, *Sisters* adopts a communal approach to representing Muslim women by adhering to the lateral interpretation of the prophetic injunction on image production. For *Sisters*, the magazine chooses to adhere to the fundamental meaning where it is forbidden to illustrate animate figures unless the head is removed to make it incomplete, thus inanimate. This was imposed during the prophetic era to avoid idolatry where image creation was normally idolised by worshippers¹².

¹² Graphic art is considered traditional, as according to Ball and Smith (2001) is available in pre-modern society and put in the context of worshipping. From their remarkable explanation, it is presumably understandable why the Muslim prophetic tradition prohibits any image making in the name of art to avoid idolatry. It is a contextual injunction, where in a traditional society hand-made images were created for worshippers. In other words, image is

Accordingly, *Sisters* opts to implement the traditional ethos of Islamic practice in producing images by cutting off the head in natural photos and not depicting the face in the graphic representation. Whenever the head is included, it is a back shot to hide the personality.

This egalitarian expression of Islam indicates that the Muslim community is sensitive and far from being static in its understanding and practices of handling human affairs. The diplomacy brings forth options to interpret religious texts on art, hence varied understanding and diverse groups emerge. Subsequently, the Muslim community is conceived of having a nuanced identity and beliefs among its members just like liberals, conservatives and other groups in the wider community. The fact that the Muslim population is diverse has been largely ignored by parts of the broader society in the politics of integration and Muslims continue to be politicised in the dominant discourse of accommodating immigrants – culturally, socially, politically and economically (Kundnani, 2012, 2014; Sian, Law and Sayyid, 2012; Khiabany and Williamson, 2015; Poole, 2016a).

This study stands out in its explanation to extend Said's critique on Orientalism. Muslim identity is not constructed solely through the lens of religion, but from other social factors. The emergence of hybrid or hyphenated identity from the visual representations suggest that the West and Islam are not seemed to be diametrically opposed and that they are not in opposition. The representation in Muslim media could diminish homogeneity of normalised images of Muslims in mainstream media that has formed a strong cultural imagination of the binary of Islam and the West for several decades. This could be materialised by forwarding the advancement of cultural globalism (Turner, 1989) that characterizes the world today where diverse cultural traditions are likely to merge. Global cultural plurality is promisingly achievable in peace time if one society is able to cope with its own internal diversity without prejudice (Samiei, 2010).

The second contribution of the study lies in the application of a subversive approach by the magazines to visualising gender. They both adopted different approaches, but both carry subversive meaning that redefines the mediated subject of Muslim women. By depicting Muslim personalities from variegated backgrounds, *Emel* counters the mainstream representation of the

created to be worshipped. The image is highly stylized and idealized to illustrate the imaginary object. This is totally prohibited in Islam as God is beyond any description and nothing is equivalent to symbolize Him.

Muslim population. *Emel* contends that Muslims uphold the intersected factors of religious, social, economic, and political forces to determine the way they lead their life. A woman dwells in three spheres; herself, the home, and British society. Except for promoting modest fashion, *Emel* rejects the popular concept of femininity that target women to sell beauty and home products. Instead of cultivating a desire to look good by material consumption, the well-being of an individual woman is determined by her spiritual conviction of being an educated, employed, single-minded Muslim believer. As a couple and family member, they are equally placed with the husband to support each other and the whole family either financially or morally. When outside the home, they perform duties in society in terms of national service such as a police officer and a politician. They also become the subject of national pride such as a British sports champion and humanitarian worker at international level. Through the visualisation of women, the politics of identity are present in the magazine pages as an alternative representation of British Muslims. Instead of focussing on religious and customary criteria, the women are the carriers of British values whose citizenry participation and contribution towards society are highly considered. The women are not alien, but part of the wider society.

Whereas *Emel* politically represented women through varied identities of female profiles that embraced British values, *Sisters* magazine redefined women by the articulation of impersonalised female subjects embedded with a subversive social meaning. The most striking convention in the magazine is the absence of head and face. This convention suggests a new understanding of populist femininity. Conceptually, *Sisters* depicts femininity in its traditional form where women display feminine touch, erotic body language, attractive appearance and facial expressions of delight. What is interesting is the femininity has been represented in a graphic illustration of incomplete women without facial features. Femininity is depicted differently in private and public settings. In the private domain, the pictorial device used to illustrate women is an artistic graphic representation where women are veil-less and display all the elements associated with femininity. In reality, Muslim women, whenever they are at home or within a female circle, are totally free to express themselves in whatever style, modest or immodest. In Islam, it would be against the concept of modesty if a real woman is depicted in the magazine and displayed her private femininity to the public. This useful technique saves any woman from being objectified by the public view and does not relate the meaning of beauty with a definitive look. Moreover, the pictures do not directly associate women with any commercial product to make them feel good. They don't have to rely on an established cosmetic, popular fragrance or designer fashion and hair style to make them feel confident and happy or

to make them look beautiful and charming. Women are depicted applying unnamed beauty products, wearing unbranded glamorous outfits, and embracing self-appreciation to maintain the close association between women and vanity. They are depicted as highly individual females who are not subservient to consumer culture and capitalist ideology. It shows the magazine has its own way to representing the individualism which is upheld in western culture. While the secularist claims to emancipate people from religion and other social institutions such as family and tradition to define its notion of individualism, the magazine brings forth the idea of individualism by liberating women from subjugation to specific products. Although these kind of images are still problematic from a western feminist perspective, but they are liberating from a Muslim feminist perspective (Kausar, 2005).

While graphic illustration is used to depict feminine women in the private domain, *Sisters* used a different strategy to depict women in the public domain. Women are pictured in photographs without head and face. In frontal views, the head was cropped to make the natural figure unnatural. Or else, the shot was taken from the rear view so that the personal face remained unseen. By cropping the head and hiding the face, *Sisters* offers viewers a new way of looking. When the eye gaze is absent, the depiction implies there is no interaction between the woman and the viewer. The viewer does not have a chance to read her look and to judge her psychological traits. Most of the images are not in agreement with Goffman's thesis on gender display (1979) who analysed the eye gaze and head posture to synthesise the inferior state of a woman. This absence does not reduce a woman to a lower value, but conversely, empowers her from being objectified by the viewer. My explanation borrows the feminist argument that contends the objectification of women in popular culture (Strinati, 2004). It does not follow the trend in consumer culture that objectify women. The images of Muslim women save them from being judged unfairly by the male view or capitalist demand. Therefore, the viewer will engage in a more objective viewing, especially in the fashion section. The beauty of dress lies in its design, colour or cutting, and is not surrogate to the personal attributes of the model. Although it seems to meet capitalist demand, it is inevitable when depicting a commercial material. The viewer is invited to experience an objective viewing by looking at the clothes closely and the fashion is no longer influenced by the model's look. It guides the viewer to follow her heart and taste. It is the clothes that are being objectified by the viewer, not the female.

Furthermore, by providing fashion pages, *Sisters* seems to support the consumer culture but operates in its own way. Being devoid of head, the pictures tell us the jilbab is not exclusive to a

specific group; a blouse might be worn by veil or veil-less woman, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. It divorces fashion from any racial background or religious criteria. By being more sensitive to cultural practice, this provides space for advertisers to widen their retail market more globally and in turn, benefits the magazine by allowing it a longer life span.

Another strategy adopted to inanimate people is framing hands in a close-up view. In the history of art, the hand is the most frequently symbolized part of the human body to express action, emotion and feelings (Alpenfels, 1955). *Sisters*, on many occasions, illustrates hands to symbolise the intimate relationship between a married couple, the warm attention from a mother towards her baby, and the responsible protection over her family, community, and natural environment in a mix of feminine and masculine gesticulation. Overall, the hands signify a women's role and function in relations with other people. It conveys interactional meaning between women and their surroundings. The hand was not boldly depicted to express female self-appreciation or self-emotion, as scrupulously found in advertisements. In Goffman's *Gender Advertisements*, hands were salient to show one's body is precious and even most of the time the hand appears without any obvious function unless for decorative acts and exploitative purposes for attraction (Goffman, 1979). In contrast, *Sisters* uses hands to symbolise a more significant role. The hands of Muslim women were instrumentally-oriented, and the utilitarian gesture connotes the degree of social obligation and masculine performance in social functions.

Analysis of Muslim females in this study supports existing literature on gender construction. It shows gender is a social construction cultivated by certain beliefs, needs and practices of a community. All the gendered practices are rooted in and influenced by the socialisation process that a person receives which eventually becomes social practice in a community. It is a social phenomenon and thus, can be contested (West and Zimmerman, 1987). This study contributes towards a wider construction of women of diasporic populations whose presence are always under scrutiny. Through visual analysis, Muslim women are depicted using a distinctive approach to reveal their diversity and hyphenated identity.

The analysis aimed to reveal the egalitarian expressions of Muslim pictorial representation and how the variation of depictions reflects and constructs British Muslim identities. For this reason, the strategic use of methodological and data triangulations illustrates in detail a) the counter-depiction of Muslim women as opposed to the mainstream representation b) consistencies/inconsistencies across visual analysis and focus group discussions and c)

consistencies/inconsistencies across interviewees. By providing consistency in overall patterns of data from visual analysis and interviewees, and by delivering reasonable explanations for differences in data from Muslim and non-Muslim respondents contribute significantly to the overall credibility of the findings. Inconsistencies in findings across interviewees could enhance the research credibility as it provides richer data and offers deeper insight into issues under study (Patton, 2015).

In order to cope with the widespread criticism about the reliability and validity of any qualitative methodology, the thesis has provided a rigorous explanation of how data have been collected and analysed. Concerning the validity, this research design combined visual analysis with focus group discussions in order to have a second method to gather data and validate findings. Specifically, the visual analysis has been useful to understand how Muslim media visually represent women in the context of ideas about Muslim integration in Britain, while the focus group discussions have been helpful to identify participants' cultural assumptions on the images under examination. Hence, this triangulation technique has facilitated an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Islamic visual representation and a validation of data through cross verification from different sources. Patton (2015) states that the use of methodological triangulation provides validity checks. Additionally, combining methods and data sources could overcome inherent bias that comes from lone analyst (Denzin 1989, in Patton 2015), thus promoting reliability and validity (Merriam, 2002).

To summarise, my thesis contributes towards bringing theoretical contribution to media representation and empirical evidence to the study of Islamic visual representations in constructing identity. It provides a redefinition of Muslim female identities in the British public sphere by investigating: 1) the pictorial device of visualising the women and 2) the subversive meaning of the images and its reception. The distinctive visual representation by the image producers and the counter-depictions of Muslim women in various roles thereby invites us to consider the heterogenous identities of the women and the community at large which is compatible with the notion of diversity within a multicultural society. It can be a force to open an inclusive space in British political and social landscapes; and to establish a renewed media discourse on British integration concerning Muslims by recognising differences, accepting similarities, and after all identifying shared values.

7.5 Limitations of the research and recommendations for future research

The comparative perspectives of Muslim and western visuality could contribute to a more analytic discussion of Islamic visual representation in the context of British Muslim identities. However, the absence of this point does not affect my conclusion in demonstrating the diversity of Muslim populations and the subversive meanings of images via the distinctive visual representation by the image producers.

While this research focuses on the image and its audience reception, further research could expand the data by combining an evaluation of representation from the production, the image, and the audience sites (Rose, 2007). In other words, further study could be expanded by researching the production, the content and the consumption of images. By aiming to develop the theory on Muslim visual culture, systematic interviews with the editors, graphic artists, and photographers, combined with the critical visual analysis and the focus group interviews with British Muslim viewers will contribute to producing new knowledge of Muslim visuality. Moreover, interviews with Muslim scholars could provide further evidence and insightful views into the varied interpretation of Islamic visual convention.

7.6 Concluding remarks

This thesis focuses on how British Muslim magazines visually represent Muslim women. My goal has been to assess, through visual analysis and focus groups, the distinctiveness of visual forms as well as the variation of women's roles that inform us of the variegated identities of Muslim women. The analysis of Muslim visual conventions demonstrates the diversity of Muslim identities that subvert the dominant meanings found in mainstream media.

Sisters apparently promotes a more traditional role for women than *Emel*. Women were always depicted within the private domain engaging with domestic tasks and contributing towards the family's well-being. Hands were made salient to symbolize women's role. This can be seen in the many images of the bonding between mother and child. I would say this is related to the belief of the image producer. *Sisters* believes in the fundamental understanding of drawing images that Muslims are refrained from depicting, that is animate objects. This belief is synchronised with the way the magazine perceives how Muslim women should behave. *Sisters* tries to highlight the authentic role of women which does not weaken them or threaten the community. Women have

been idealised to play a significant role in the family upbringing. Women's contributions are mostly delivered in the home and hidden from public. In holding this view, the family is a small social unit and it is the component of a society. A good society depends on a good family. To *Sisters*, this is the major contribution of a woman.

Furthermore, *Sisters* focuses more on self-transformation rather than social transformation and stresses the empowerment within the self in the private sphere. Economically, *Sisters* shows women have control over financial resources within the family that does not alter traditional gender roles. By focusing on the roles of preparing, nurturing, and sustaining domestic resources, *Sisters* stereotyped the image of women as homemakers and limited their function to the private domain. Whenever, women are depicted outside the home, the images appear headless or are taken from the rear. This might be interpreted as implying disengagement with people and they are kept hidden from the public. Therefore, it might be hard for women to be seen in society and to recognise their contributions in social, economic and political spheres.

The traditional role does not align with the narrative of mainstream popular culture of feminism, although it implies emancipation, liberation and individualisation for personal choice and self-inclination. This contradicts the feminist view which fights for the liberation of women. As for *Emel*, feminist values are embedded in the images of female achievement across many fields to show Muslim people who are modern and abreast with social cohesion. The idea of female empowerment in *Sisters* is predicated on the liberation of old customs while maintaining traditional values of marriage and family might not be seen as cohesive with more liberal values. This subversive depiction has its drawbacks as gender equality is always seen from the muscular hegemony of liberalism. The view that traditional role is a subordinate role dominates in popular British culture. The emphasis on traditional roles might therefore validate the association of Islam with traditional values.

It seems that *Sisters* dismantles feminist politics and promotes a return to authenticity through a postfeminist idea. Although it highlights a traditional role of a nurturer for a woman, the view of motherhood as a career is arguably a non-traditional conceptualisation of the role (Perrone, 2009). This view comprises the co-existence of neo-conservative values in relation to gender, sexuality and family life (McRobbie, 2004) with processes of emancipation from customary traditions in regard to choice in marriage and family planning as well as diversity in costume and appearance.

The findings present counter-representations of Muslim women that clearly show the incorporation of Britishness and Muslimness on one hand, that women are already experiencing in Britain. On the other hand, the representation appears communal but embraces individual consciousness without threatening the majority. In fact, Muslims are diverse. Therefore, the assumption that the Muslim community is static and monolithic is totally misrepresented by the mainstream media and eventually misunderstood by the public at large. After all, the London-based magazines are produced by British citizens who use English as a medium and discuss Muslim affairs in British and global contexts. It is shown here that they pursue Britishness in the magazine to be read by their readers who are mostly British and Muslim.

It is difficult to predict whether Muslim diversity and their intersected identity, as represented in Muslim media, will produce the desired outcomes of representing Muslims more fairly in the media. However, it appears plausible to argue that there are shared values within the diversity of the UK to be reconciled; and that there are differences to be recognised, in which values, norms and cultures are to be understood independently from western hegemony, rather than a politicisation of Muslim culture developed by a reaction to an increasing presence of Muslims. But this is possible only if integrationists recognise that British society is based on shared values and reciprocal respect for diversity, and not on a proclaimed superior culture to impose on minorities.

In the context of Muslims in Britain, Muslim media could help to build a hybrid culture that is both British and Muslim, as well as to integrate Muslims within the wider society as proven in previous studies. Muslim media could serve as a vehicle for Muslims to voice their positions and actuality in the context of integration in a non-Muslim society (Ahmed, 2003; Moll, 2007; Lewis, 2010). Henceforth, it is argued that the growth of Muslim media could fill a gap by supplying audiences with a more balanced reporting which they could obtain both from mainstream and minority media. Moreover, Muslim media through its self-representation could challenge the dominant narratives of Muslims in the mainstream media and provide alternatives for media (Holohan and Poole, 2014).

Therefore, the British media should concentrate on similarities and learn to tolerate differences instead of politicising Muslim culture, which requires legislation. Central to this is the construction of an inclusive British public sphere, in which Muslims can participate freely in the wider society without being questioned of their belongingness to any culture, value or belief.

Diversity must be celebrated without being accused of being illiberal, too religious or less westernised. What is important is sharing similarities and recognising differences. In fact, diversity is the major characteristic of the world we live in today, a global and postmodern universe.

Cultural plurality is inevitable if a country wants the economy to progress (Turner, 2007). The current climate of a globalised world in general and Europe in particular has provided a platform to test the extent of cultural plurality. In a modern state, economic growth and national sovereignty are always in confrontation. While the capitalist state needs to achieve economic prosperity and therefore encourage free flow of outside labourers, issues of cultural threats of the outsiders emerge as a major concern of the host country to retain national identity. For some, when the economy wins, the culture loses. To counter this, immigration policy has become more stringent. Cultural diversity is blamed for social disturbances and social inequality, as in reporting of the Northern Riots, 2001 and London Bombing, 2005. Hindering diversity might jeopardise many aspects from economic development to cultural exchange. Brexit is one latest example that illustrates how Britain copes with diversity and global engagement. It leaves a greater impact on the country and the European Union that “creates risks for the UK as it is directly exposed to economic, intellectual, reputational, and cultural damage” (MacDonald, 2017, p.9). Therefore, tolerance and diversity must be cultivated in order to teach how to overcome cultural rifts. Global cultural plurality is promisingly achievable in peace if one society is able to cope with its own internal diversity without prejudice (Samiei, 2010).

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APPENDIX 1 – INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Date:

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER (*INSERT RESEARCH TITLE*)

Organizer: *Name of Researcher*

Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies
Flaxman Building
Staffordshire University
College Road
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 2DE

This session focuses on (*insert focus of session*) and will be facilitated by (*insert names*).

Participation in this session is voluntary and involves a (*insert time commitment*) input to and discussion of the issues associated with (*insert topic*). There are no known or anticipated risks to your participation in this session. You may decline answering any questions you feel you do not wish to answer and may decline contributing to the session in other ways if you so wish. All information you provide will be considered confidential and grouped with responses from other participants. No other people will be present during the session and your name will not be identified with the input you give to this session. Further, you will not be identified by name in the report that the facilitator produces for this session. The information collected from this session will be kept confidentially.

Given the group format of this session we will ask you to keep in confidence information that identifies or could potentially identify a participant and/or his/her comments. If you have any questions about participation in this session, please feel free to discuss these with the facilitator. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the executive summary of the session outcomes, please contact the research leader (*insert name and email address*)

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Should you have comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact (*Director of the Faculty Research Committee*) at (*insert email and tel. no*)

Thank you for your assistance with this project. In appreciation of your time given to this session we will provide you with a (*£15/souvenir/free meals*).

Yours sincerely,

**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER
(INSERT RESEARCH TITLE)**

Agreement to Participate

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the session being facilitated by **(insert name of researcher)**. I have had the opportunity to ask the facilitator any questions related to this session, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I may withdraw from the session without penalty at any time by advising the facilitator of this decision. In appreciation of my time given to this session I am aware that I will receive a **(£15/souvenir/free meals)**.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Committee. I understand that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Faculty Research Committee at **(phone no)** or **(email)**.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this session and to keep in confidence information that could identify specific participants and/or the information they provided.

Signature

Name

Date

Witness

APPENDIX 2 – ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER 5

Illustration 1: SISTERS' depictions of femininity (P1-P6)



Illustration 2: SISTERS's depictions of well-being (P7-P14)



Illustration 3: EMEL's depictions of well-being (P15)



Illustration 4: SISTERS' depictions of participation (P16-P20)

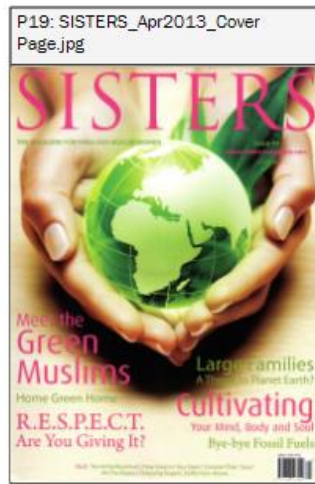
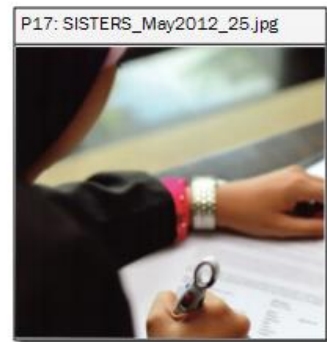


Illustration 5: EMEL's depictions of participation (P21-P29)



Illustration 6: SISTERS' depictions of modesty (P30-P42)



Illustration 7: EMEL's depictions of modesty (P43-P48)

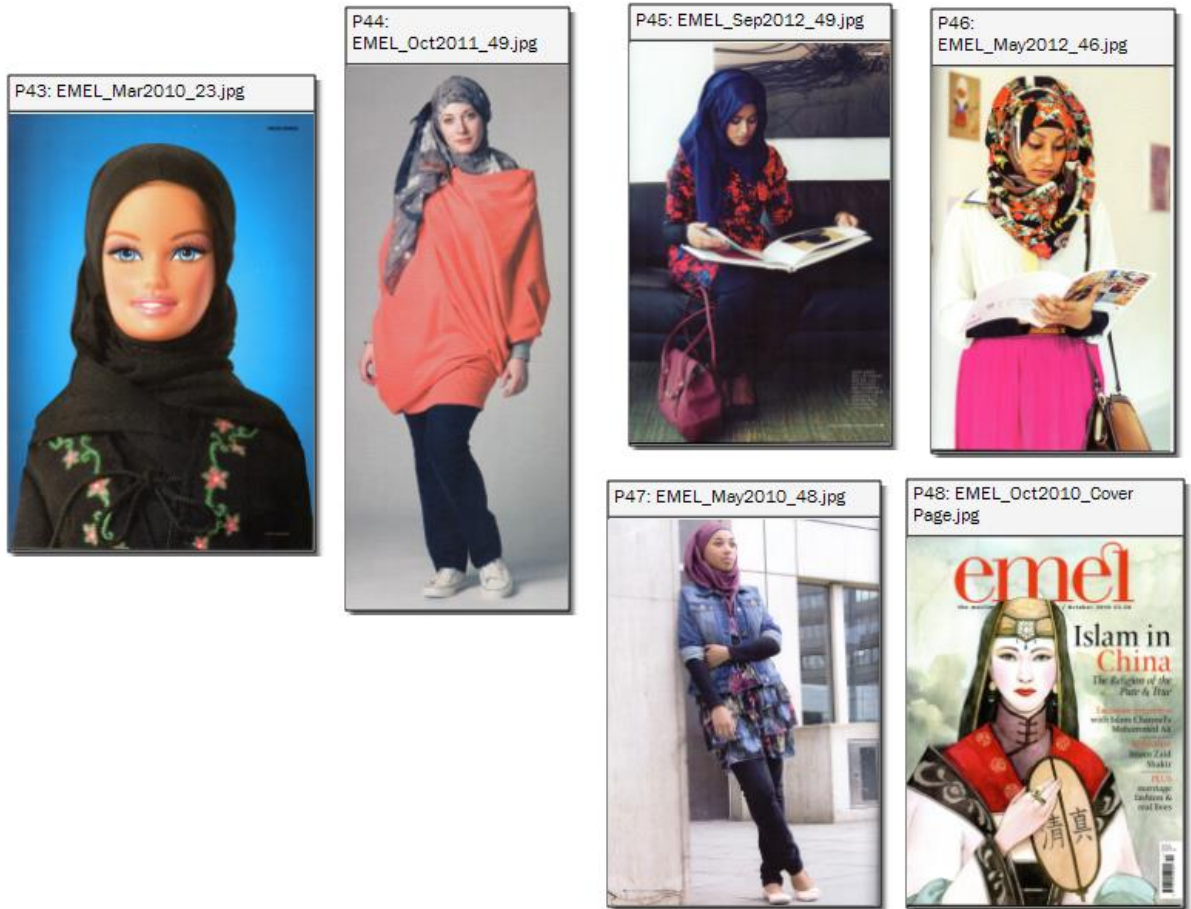


Illustration 8: SISTERS's depictions of consensual act (P49-P52)

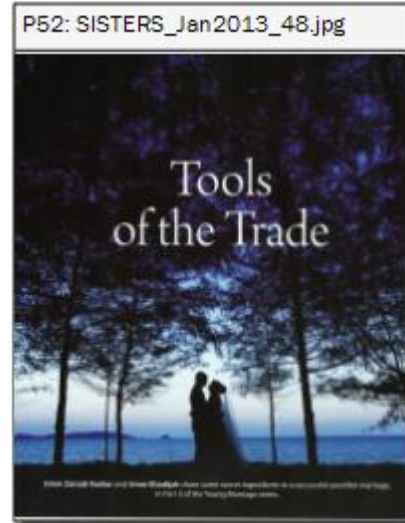


Illustration 9: EMEL's depictions of consensual act (P53-P54)



Illustration 10: SISTERS's depictions of equal function (P55-P58)



Illustration 11: EMEL's depictions of equal function (P59-P73)

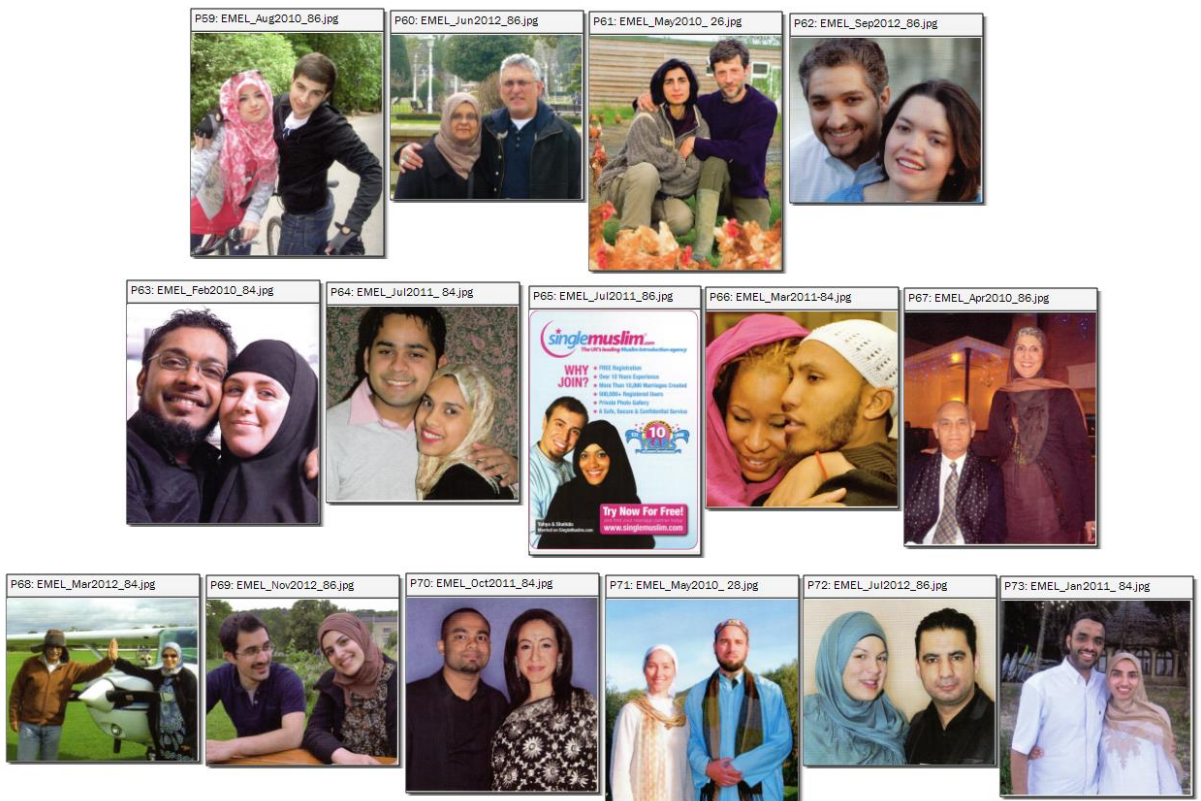


Illustration 12: SISTERS's depiction of nuclear family (P74)

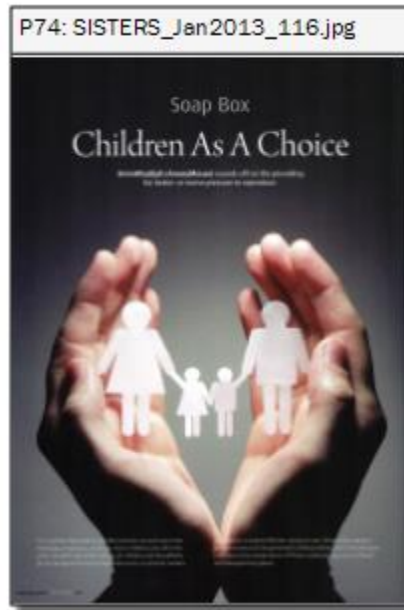


Illustration 13: EMEL's depiction of nuclear family (P75-P80)

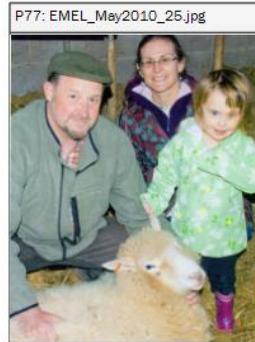
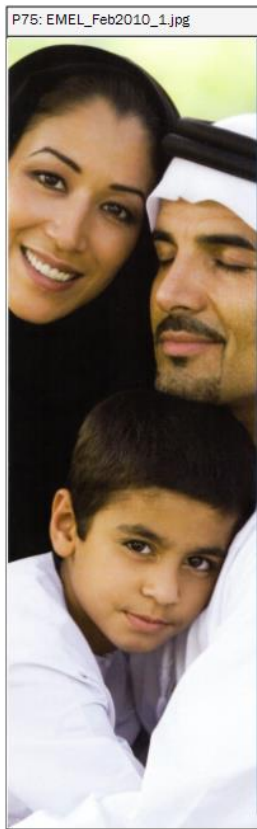


Illustration 14: SISTERS' depiction of special kinship (P81-P89)



Illustration 15: EMEL's depiction of special kinship (P90-P92)



Illustration 16: SISTERS' depictions of community relations (P93-P95)

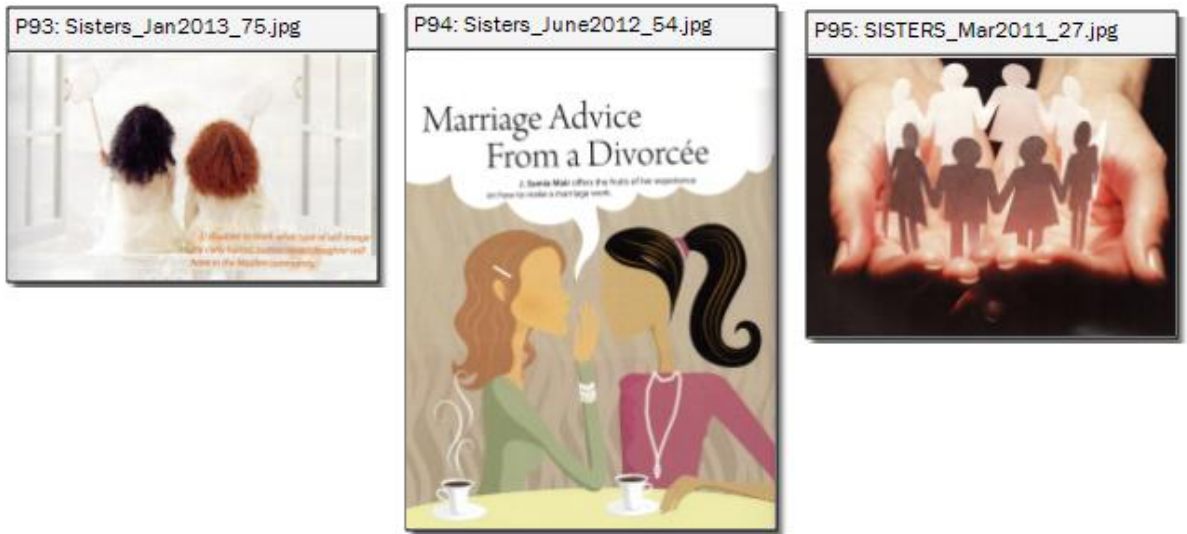


Illustration 17: EMEL's depictions of community relations (P96-P97)



Illustration 18: SISTERS' depictions of social rank (P98)

P98: SISTERS_Jul2012_4

P26: SISTERS_Jul2012_4.jpg

Finally!

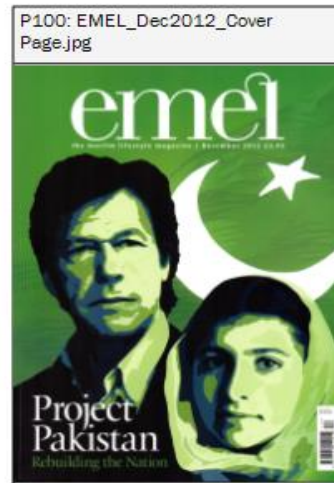
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Illustration 19: EMEL's depictions of social rank (P99-P105)



APPENDIX 3 – QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Questions of focus group discussion are stimulated from 11 selected images (Picture 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, 1F; Picture 2; Picture 3A, 3B; and Picture 4A, 4B).

PART 1: INTERPRETATION (*a process in which participants **make individual meaning** using both previous knowledge and what they are presented with*)

1. Look at the posture and gesture. What are they trying to convey?
2. Based on the image, what can you say about their life?
3. Can you guess the position / status of the people?
4. Are the characters in this picture similar/different to the Muslims you always encounter? In what way?
5. What are the clues from the image that refer to your understanding about Muslim women?
6. Can you link this image with your own experience?
7. How do you feel when you see this beheaded image and this incomplete facial figure?
8. Can you explain the reasons behind this practice?
9. Can you relate this picture with any Islamic tradition?

PART 2: IMAGE CONSTRUCTION (*ideas and components that construct the whole*)

1. Think back over the past years of the media coverage on Muslims. Can you compare and contrast what you see in the mainstream media with these images?
2. What do you think about all these images? Do they represent Muslims in the UK?
3. How do these images contribute to community relations or have an impact?
4. Do you think these images are realistic? Are they positive or negative?

Picture 1A



Picture 1B



Picture 1C



Picture 1D



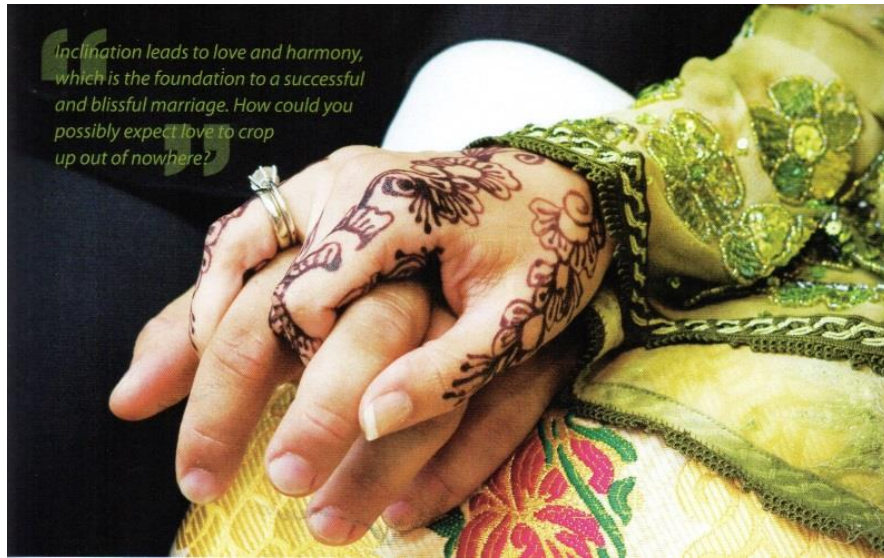
Picture 1E



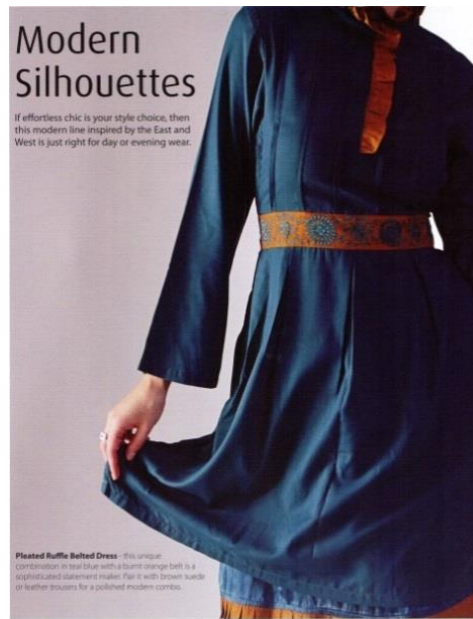
Picture 1F



Picture 2



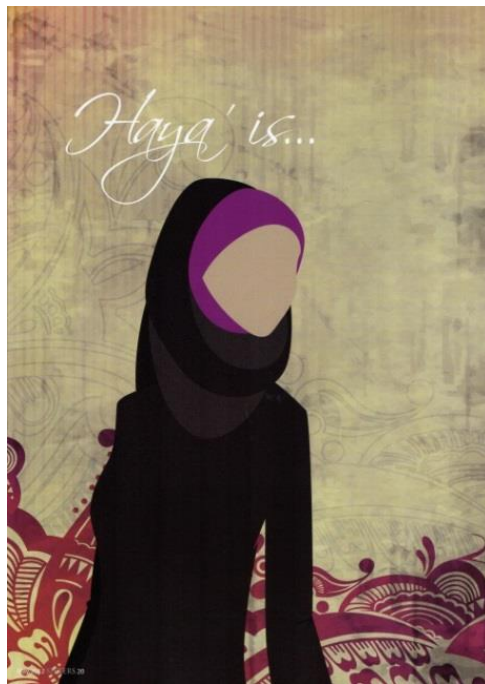
Picture 3A



Picture 3B



Picture 4A



Picture 4B

