Exploring the Impact of Islamophobia on Visible Muslim Women Victims: A British Case Study

Chris Allen

Institute of Applied Social Studies, University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham, West Midlands B15 2TT England
c.allen.2@bham.ac.uk

Abstract

This article presents the empirical findings from a British-based project that sought to explore the nature and impact of 'street-level' Islamophobia on women who are visibly recognisable as Muslim—hereafter referred to as visible Muslim women in this article. Drawing on the findings from in-depth interviews with twenty visible Muslim women, this article highlights how despite the fact that such Islamophobia is largely manifested in low-level ways it has significant impacts on the everyday lives of its victims as also the way in which their identities are both perceived and defined. In doing so, this article considers how the experience of Islamophobia not only affects the daily life of these women and their families, but also affects their sense of belonging to British society while making them re-evaluate how they feel about being British.

Introduction: "it kind of makes you think people hate you because of the way you dress"

The body of scholarly work focusing on Muslim women in contemporary Western spaces is one that has been growing over the past decade and a half. Whilst some of this focuses on the broader experience of Muslim women in

'the West,'[1] much of it tends to be located in specific geographic or national contexts. Indicatively this includes Wing and Smith[2] and Bowen[3] and Fernando[4] in the context of France, Jouli and Amir-Moazami[5] as also Amir-Moazami[6] in Germany, Salih[7] in Italy, Bracke[8] in the Netherlands, Predelli[9] in Norway, Helbling in Switzerland,[10] and McGinty[11] in Sweden among others. Elsewhere, as in the British context, scholarly work focusing on Muslim women has been 'issue-based,' for example the negotiation of Muslim women's identities within a 'Western' setting as seen in the work of those such as Ali,[12] Knott and Khocker,[13]

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1   Abu-Lughod, Lila, "Do Muslim women really need saving? Anthropological reflections on cultural relativism and its others," in *American anthropologist* 104.3 (2002), pp. 783-790.

2   Wing, Adrien Katherine, and Monica Nigh Smith, "Critical Race Feminism Lifts the Veil: Muslim Women, France, and the Headscarf Ban," in *uc Davis L. Rev.* 39 (2005), p. 743.

3   Bowen, John R., "Why the French don't like headscarves: Islam, the state, and public space," in *European Review* 15.3 (2007), pp. 397-400.

4   Fernando, Mayanthi, "Exceptional citizens, Secular Muslim women and the politics of difference in France," in *Social Anthropology* 17.4 (2009), pp. 379-392.

5   Jouili, Jeanette S., and Schirin Amir-Moazami, "Knowledge, empowerment and religious authority among pious Muslim women in France and Germany," in *The Muslim World* 96.4 (2006), pp. 617-642.

6   Amir-Moazami, S., "Dialogue as a Governmental technique: managing gendered Islam in Germany," in *Feminist review* 98 (2011), no. 1, pp. 9-27.

7   Salih, Rubah, "Confronting Modernities Muslim Women in Italy," in *ISIM Newsletter* 7 (2001), p. 2; Salih, Ruba, "Muslim women, fragmented secularism and the construction of interconnected 'publics' in Italy," in *Social Anthropology* 17.4 (2009), pp. 409-423.

8   Bracke, Sarah, "Subjects of debate: secular and sexual exceptionalism, and Muslim women in the Netherlands," in *Feminist review* 98.1 (2011), pp. 28-46.

9   Predelli, Line Nyhagen, "Interpreting Gender in Islam A Case Study of Immigrant Muslim Women in Oslo, Norway," in *Gender & Society* 18.4 (2004), pp. 473-493.

10   Helbling, Marc, "Islamophobia in Switzerland: A new phenomenon or a new name for xenophobia?" in *Value change in Switzerland* (2010), pp. 65-80.

11   McGinty, Anna Mansson, "Formation of alternative femininities through Islam: Feminist approaches among Muslim converts in Sweden," in *Women's Studies International Forum.* 30.6. (2007).

12   Ali, Yasmin, "Muslim women and the politics of ethnicity and culture in Northern England," in Sahgal Gita, & Nira Yuval-Davis, *Refusing holy orders: women and fundamentalism in Britain*," (London: Virago Press, 1992), pp. 101-123.

13   Knott, Kim, and Sajda Khokher, "Religious and ethnic identity among young Muslim women in Bradford," in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 19.4 (1993), pp. 593-610.

Afshar et al.,[14] Dwyer,[15] Brown[16] and Haw.[17] Significant in this has been the issue of the visibility of Muslim women especially in relation to 'veiling'—typically used to refer to the wearing of the hijab or niqab—for whom Dwyer,[18] Tarlo[19] and Afshar[20] have offered particularly insightful studies.

Trying to explain the significance of this growing body of work is Kapur.[21] For her, the growing interest is a consequence of the fact that the 'visibility' of Muslim women in contemporary Western spaces is increasingly unnoticeable. As she notes, the mere presence—and subsequent recognition—of the Muslim woman in contemporary Western settings is such that it disrupts the order of normality that typically exists within them. In today's Western societies therefore—Britain included—the identity of Muslim women is both seen and understood to be problematic. Such identities are far from homogenous or fixed however. As Maleseic is right to note, identity is a fluid and protean, somewhat theoretically thin and unarticulated concept.[22] Thijl,[23]

14   Afshar, Haleh, *Muslim Women in West Yorkshire*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1994).

15   Dwyer, Claire, "Contradictions of community: questions of identity for young British Muslim women," in *Environment and Planning* 31.1 (1999), pp. 53-68; Dwyer, Claire, "Negotiating diasporic identities: Young british south Asian Muslim women," in *Women's Studies International Forum* 23.4 (2000).

16   Brown, Katherine, "Realising Muslim women's rights: the role of Islamic identity among British Muslim women," in *Women's studies international forum* 29:4 (2002), pp. 417-430; Brown, Katherine, "The promise and perils of women's participation in UK mosques: the impact of securitisation agendas on identity, gender and community," in *British Journal Politics and International Relations* 10:3 (2008), pp. 472-491.

17   Haw, Kaye, "Being, becoming and belonging: Young Muslim women in contemporary Britain," in *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 31.4 (2010), pp. 345-361.

18   Dwyer, Claire, "Veiled Meanings: young British Muslim women and the negotiation of differences," in *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 6.1 (1999), pp. 5-26.

19   Tarlo, Emma, "Hijab in London: metamorphosis, resonance and effects," in *Journal of Material Culture* 12:2 (2007), pp. 131–156.

20   Afshar, Haleh, "Can I see your hair? Choice, agency and attitudes: the dilemma of faith and feminism for Muslim women who cover," in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31.2 (2008), pp. 411-427.

21   Kapur, Ratna, "The tragedy of victimisation rhetoric: Resurrecting the 'native' subject in international/post-colonial feminist legal politics," in *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 15:1 (2002), pp. 1-38.

22   Malesevic, Sinisa, *Identity as ideology: understanding ethnicity and nationalism*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006).

23   Sunier, Thijl, "Constructing Islam: places of worship and the politics of space in the Netherlands," in *Journal of contemporary European studies* 13.3 (2005), pp. 317-334.

like Baumeister,[24] Handler[25] and Bauman[26] before him, acknowledges that the concept of identity is largely a modern one, which social scientists have only really been interested in for the past few decades. But as Thijl goes on to explain, not only do identities develop in relation to others—as opposed to the self and the process of self-definition—but so too do they and their recognition by others become ever more closely related and important. Identities therefore are constructed out of dialogical processes where sharp disparities and divergences can exist between the chosen identities of the self and the constructed identities of the perceived.[27]

This is evident in an embryonic group of British-focused studies exploring the relationship between Muslim women's identities and the phenomenon of Islamophobia, including Franks,[28] Afshar et al.,[29] Allen,[30] Chakraborti and Zempi,[31] and Moosavi.[32] As Chakraborti and Zempi put it, Muslim women's identities have been reduced—and subsequently essentialised—to the mere recognition of outward manifestations including the hijab, niqab or other recognisable form of Islamic attire (abaya, jilbab or burqa for example). For them, it is the recognition of these outward (visible) manifestations that have come to contemporarily symbolise Muslim women's identity, in turn prompting the association with a whole range of constructed notions that are inherently and undeniably 'other' and which embody all that is perceived to be wrong, problematic and threatening about Islam and Muslims. This is what Allen refers to as the 'normative truths' about Muslims and Islam.[33] As Chakraborti

24   Baumeister, Roy, *Identity: cultural change and the struggle for the self*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

25   Handler, Richard, "Is 'identity' a useful cross-cultural concept?" In John R. Gillis (ed.) *Commemorations: the politics of national identity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 27-40.

26   Bauman, Zygmunt, *Identity*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).

27   Taylor, Charles, Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 34.

28   Franks, Myfanwy, "Crossing the borders of whiteness? White Muslim women who wear the hijab in Britain today," in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23.5 (2000), pp. 917-929.

29   Afshar, Haleh, Rob Aitken, and Myfanwy Franks, "Feminisms, Islamophobia and identities," in *Political Studies* 53.2 (2005), pp. 262-283.

30   Allen, Chris, *Islamophobia*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

31   Chakraborti, Neil, and Irene Zempi, "The veil under attack Gendered dimensions of Islamophobic victimization," in *International review of victimology* 18.3 (2012), pp. 269-284.

32   Moosavi, Leon, "The racialization of Muslim converts in Britain and their experiences of Islamophobia," in *Critical Sociology* 0896920513504601 (2014), pp. 1-16.

33   Allen, *Islamophobia*.

and Zempi note, such is the impact of this that contemporarily Muslim women are perceived to be more threatening than Muslim men not least because they cannot be mistaken, denied or concealed. In reiterating Kapur, it is this which causes disruption in public spaces,[34] a point which resonates with existing research that shows how women who are visibly Muslim are more likely to become victims of Islamophobia in public 'street-level' spaces than anyone else.

   Chakraborti and Zempi argue that in spite of this recognition, there remains a paucity of evidence about the experience and impact of Islamophobia on visible Muslim women. Drawing upon the findings from a small project that sought to engage with visible British Muslim women who had experienced Islamophobia in the public spaces, this article provides some new insights which seek to contribute towards better understanding not only the experience of visible Muslim women victims of Islamophobia but also how this subsequently impacts on their everyday lives. As part of this, the role of identity—both perceived and self-defined—is given some consideration. Beginning with an overview of the methods and approaches employed, this article offers a critical overview of Islamophobia before setting out new empirical findings gleaned from interviews with twenty visible British Muslim women. Considering how their experiences of becoming victims of Islamophobia became manifested and impacted, this article concludes with a reflection on the existing body of scholarly work in the light of any new learning to have emerged.

Engaging Muslim Women: Making Visible the Invisible

Identifying and engaging visible Muslim women victims of Islamophobia would appear to be one of the main barriers for there being a paucity of evidence providing relevant insights into the experience and impact of Islamophobia on visible Muslim women.[35] As research undertaken at the European level suggests, this is because the majority of Muslim women who experience Islamophobia tend not to report this to either the police or indeed any other

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34   Kapur, Ratna, "The tragedy of victimisation rhetoric: Resurrecting the 'native' subject in international/post-colonial feminist legal politics."

35   Allen, Chris and Jorgen Nielsen, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*, (Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2002); Choudhury, Tufyal, *Muslims in the UK: policies for engaged citizens*, (London: Open Society Institute, 2005); Allen, *Islamophobia*.

statutory agency.[36] Consequently, both Muslim women and the Islamophobia they experience remain relatively absent within official data and monitoring processes. One method of overcoming this in the British setting has been the provision of community-based third-party reporting mechanisms and services.[37] Building upon the success of according third-party reporting status to the Community Security Trust in 2001 with whom Britain's Jewish communities report their experience of anti-Semitism, the British Government recently funded a similar service for Britain's Muslim communities. Known as 'Tell MAMA' ('MAMA' being an acronym for 'measuring anti-Muslim attacks'), the service offers support to victims of Islamophobic hate crimes at the same time as providing them with an opportunity to record details of their experience. If the victim agrees, MAMA also logs the incident with the victim's local police force.

From University of Teeside[38] verified data, MAMA recorded 584 Islamophobic incidents between 1 April 2012 and 30 April 2013. Of these, around a quarter (26 per cent) took place in public spaces. 58 per cent were recorded as being perpetrated against Muslim women of whom four fifths (80 per cent) stated they were visibly identifiable as 'Muslim.' This data resonates with analyses undertaken elsewhere in Europe, where visible Muslim women repeatedly emerge as the most likely targets for street-level Islamophobia.[39] The type of Islamophobia the British Muslim women encountered also reflects that which occurs at the European level. As Allen and Nielsen noted in their monitoring of Islamophobia in the European Union post-9/11, the vast majority of Islamophobic incidents experienced by visible Muslim women was 'low level,'[40] namely that which occurred in ordinary and everyday settings and was likely to be manifested as verbal abuse, spitting, having headscarves or face veils removed, harassment and similar. Whilst high level incidents were recorded—

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36   Allen & Nielsen, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*; Fundamental Rights Agency, *Data in focus: Muslims*, (Vienna: FRA, 2009).

37   Iganski, Paul, "Too few Jews to count? Police monitoring of hate crime against Jews in the United Kingdom," in *American Behavioral Scientist* 51:2 (2007), pp. 232-245.

38   Copsey, Nigel, Janet Dack, Mark Littler and Matthew Feldman, *Anti-Muslim hate crime and the far-right*, (Middlesbrough: Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies, 2013).

39   Commission on British Muslims & Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*, (London: Runnymede Trust, 1997); Allen & Nielsen, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*; Fundamental Rights Agency, *Data in focus: Muslims*; Allen, *Islamophobia*.

40   Allen & Nielsen, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*.

for example threatening or aggressive behaviour, violence and physical harm—
these were relatively rare. This was the case with the MAMA data also.

Working with MAMA enabled some of the barriers to identifying and engag-
ing Muslim women victims of Islamophobia to be overcome. Given the rela-
tionship of trust MAMA had forged with those reporting their experience of
Islamophobia, its staff were best placed to act as a bridgehead between vic-
tim and researcher. Having contacted a number of women who had used the
service, MAMA's staff explained the proposed research to them and answered
any questions they had at the same time as offering reassurance about con-
fidentiality and anonymity if they chose to participate. MAMA's staff, having
obtained the consent of those women who were interested, connected them
with the research team who proceeded to undertake in-depth interviews with
them. In total, 20 interviews were completed between March and June 2013.
Of those interviewed, 15 said they normally wore hijab or some other form of
headscarf on a day-to-day basis; four, the niqab or other form of full-face cov-
ering; one, another form of 'Islamic' attire she described as making her 'look'
Muslim. Visible Muslim women, as opposed to all Muslim women and Muslim
men, were identified to participate given they reflected the majority of female
victims reporting into MAMA and because it was here that the relationship
between identity and recognition was most likely to be evident and therefore
best explored.[41]

In terms of the ages of interviewees, the youngest was 15 when she became
a victim of street-level Islamophobia (16 when interviewed); the oldest was
52 years old. Most however were between the ages of 20 and 40 (six between
the ages of 20 and 30, a further six between the ages of 30 and 40). As regards
ethnicity, the interviewees reflected the primary ethnic groupings found within
today's British Muslim communities including Pakistani (seven women),
Bangladeshi (four), Arab (three), Somali (three) and White British (three). One
ethnic group that was not accessed were Black British converts but this is a
reflection of the type of people using MAMA rather than anything else. Because
investigations into a number of incidents were ongoing by the police, all iden-
tifying features including details relating to location or individual people were
completely removed at the time of transcription. However, in trying to chal-
lenge Chakraborti and Zempi's observation that 'veiled' Muslim women are
neither seen nor heard,[42] all of the women interviewed were attributed with

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41   Chakraborti & Zempi, "The veil under attack: gendered dimensions of Islamophobic
      victimization."

42   Chakraborti & Zempi, "The veil under attack: gendered dimensions of Islamophobic
      victimization."

pseudonyms to encourage the reader to associate the experience with a 'real' person as opposed to a faceless (invisible) participant.

One final point relates to the use of the term 'victim' not least because the term is not without problem. In reflecting on this, it is worth reiterating the premise adopted by Chakraborti and Zempi[43] who employ the term but counter this by acknowledging that not every visible Muslim woman will become a victim of Islamophobia. In line with this therefore, this research does not seek to either promote a victim culture or suggest, whether implicitly or explicitly, that all Muslim women—visible or otherwise—either do or indeed will, experience Islamophobia. However, whilst the term is problematic and is not always appropriate when referring to the lived experiences of all Muslim women, in the context of this article and in line with existing scholarly work, it continues to function as a useful descriptor and so retains legitimacy in terms of usage.

Critical Islamophobia: Beyond Mere Fear

One of the challenges faced by those such as MAMA—as indeed those undertaking resonant research—is how to appropriately define Islamophobia and how to frame what might constitute an Islamophobic experience or incident. This is not least due to the fact that Islamophobia remains a complex and at times, contested concept. Most definitions—including those preferred at the European level[44]—appear to have evolved out of literalist interpretations, many from the definition posited by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia. For it, Islamophobia was rather simplistically seen to be a fear or dislike of Islam and by consequence, all Muslims also.[45] In many populist and public discourses, this literalist interpretation remains in circulation, reflected in the arguments put forward by critics and detractors of Islamophobia who contend that there is little discrimination or hate in being 'fearful' of Islam. Shyrock acknowledges this when he suggests that usage of the term tends to

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43   Chakraborti & Zempi, "The veil under attack: gendered dimensions of Islamophobic victimization."

44   Allen & Nielsen, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*; Allen, *Islamophobia*.

45   Commission on British Muslims & Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*.

be overly simplistic and somewhat impervious to nuance.[46] For Sayyid[47] and Readings et al.,[48] such criticisms require differentiation: between the analytical, where Islamophobia is a contested and nebulous category and the polemical, where it is more typically located in the discourses of those venting grievances, smugly pontificating, or canvassing politicians and policymakers.[49] As Vakil[50] adds, it is far more important to be clear about is meant when Islamophobia is used rather than what it means in any essential sense.

Within an academic context, Klug argues that the term has recently 'come of age,'[51] a point Moosavi[52] rightly understands as meaning that Islamophobia is no longer a concept to be contested but more importantly to be understood. As he explains, academic studies must now knowingly avoid literalist interpretations in the same way that those researching homophobia and anti-Semitism have, neither of which were ever suitable or functional as literal descriptors. One way of doing so is to engage with those adopting a more critical approach to understanding Islamophobia, for instance those such as Allen,[53] Esposito and Kalin,[54] Taras,[55] Sheehi,[56] and Lean.[57] For all, Islamophobia is necessarily understood to be far more than a mere phobia or fear. For Allen[58] and Sheehi,[59]

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46   Shyrock, Andrew, *Islamophobia Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend*, (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 2010), p. 9.

47   Sayyid, Salamn, "Thinking through Islamophobia" in Sayyid, Salman & Vakil, AbdoolKarim, (Eds.), *Thinking trough Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*, (Hurst: London, 2010), pp. 1-4.

48   Readings, George, James Brandon and Richard Phelps, *Islamism and language: how using the wrong words reinforces Islamist narratives*, (Quilliam Foundation: London, 2011).

49   Sayyid, "Thinking through Islamophobia."

50   Vakil, AbdoolKarim, "Who's afraid of Islamophobia?" in Sayyid, Salman & Vakil, AbdoolKarim, (Eds.), *Thinking trough Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*, (Hurst: London, 2010), pp. 271-279.

51   Klug, Brian, "Islamophobia: a concept comes of age" *Ethnicities* 12:5 (2012), pp. 665-681.

52   Moosavi, Leon, "Orientalism at home: Islamophobia in the representations of Islam and Muslims by the New Labour government," *Ethnicities* 14:3 (2014), pp. 1-23.

53   Allen, *Islamophobia*.

54   Esposito, John and Ibrahim Kalin, *Islamophobia: the challenge of pluralism in the 21st century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

55   Taras, Raymond, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

56   Sheehi, Stephen, *Islamophobia: the ideological campaign against Muslims*, (Atlanta: Clarity Press Inc, 2011).

57   Lean, Nathan, *The Islamophobia industry: how the right manufactures fear of Muslims*, (London: Pluto, 2012).

58   Allen, *Islamophobia*.

59   Sheehi, *Islamophobia: the ideological campaign against Muslims*.

Islamophobia is and indeed functions as an ideology, conceived and embedded within the individual, communal, social and global patterns of thought and meaning about Muslims and Islam. For them, that which becomes known—and subsequently understood—about Muslims and Islam does so through systems of signifiers and symbols which pertain to influence, impact upon, and inform the social consensus about Muslims and Islam as an undeniable 'other.'[60] It is worth noting that for Allen, the visible outward manifestations of Muslim women's identity are a key way in which this occurs, Muslim women's visibility functioning as signifiers that are socially constructed to embody Islamophobic meanings and understandings. Islamophobia is therefore not restricted to any specific action, practice, discrimination or prejudice but exists in the process of identification and recognition that in turn results in such meanings and understandings being unquestioned and accepted as natural and normative of Muslims, Islam or both.

For Clarke,[61] this supports the construction of forms of order about who 'we' are and, through processes of stigmatisation, marginalisation and intolerance, who 'we' are not. In doing so, Muslims become reduced to an undeniable 'other' for whom a myriad negative and stereotypical attributions become irremovable and eternally fixed: the opposite to the notion of identity as suggested previously. As Allen puts it, these become what he terms the 'normative truths' about Muslims and Islam.[62] These 'truths'—the meanings and understandings that ideologically inform Islamophobia—are made known through a vast array of different actions, utterances, images and texts that function symbolically through being recognised, meaningfully understood and subsequently utilised to shape, inform or indeed reinforce, opinions, attitudes and prejudices. For Allen, this is no more evident in the way in which visible Muslim women are conceived and understood than in the way they are vilified and attacked in the expression of physical Islamophobia. This does not mean that all recipients to such 'truths' are Islamophobic, far from it. Instead, such truths are able to be deployed in order to rationalise and justify exclusionary practices and actions against Muslims if the recipient is so inclined. More so however, that shape and duly inform that which might be described as 'Islamophobia-thinking.'

One important and routinely overlooked aspect of Islamophobia's exclusionary practices are those perpetrated through the subjection to, or threat

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60   Allen, *Islamophobia*; Allen, Chris, "Between critical and uncritical understandings: a case study analyzing the claims of Islamophobia made in the context of the proposed 'Super-Mosque' in Dudley, England," in *Societies* 3:2 (2013), pp. 186-203.

61   Clarke, Simon, *Social theory, psychoanalysis and racism*, (Palgrave: London, 2003).

62   Allen, *Islamophobia*.

of violence. So whilst Githens-Mazer and Lambert,[63] and indeed Moosavi,[64] are right in noting that violence against Muslims is a minority activity, where it is deployed it is likely that the normative truths of Islamophobia will be informing the motivation, rationale and justification of those behind such actions and practices. And this would appear evident in the way in which MAMA seeks to conceive of and define what they term an Islamophobic incident. For MAMA, an Islamophobic incident includes any malicious act directed at Muslims, their material property or organisations where there exists evidence that the victim or property was targeted because of Muslim identity. In other words, an Islamophobic incident is one which would appear to be motivated, rationalised or justified by the normative truths in circulation about Muslims and Islam. In doing so, a clear and coherent understanding of what an Islamophobic incident is can be not only be defined but so too applied to research into that which is experienced by visible Muslim women as indeed others. In line with Vakil,[65] it is therefore far more important to be clear about is meant when Islamophobia is used rather than what it means in any essential sense. MAMA's understanding clearly fits with this approach and is utilised here.

Experience: "Take that fucking thing off"

The majority of incidents involving visible Muslim women recorded by MAMA were low-level. Most however centred on the expression and manifestation of verbal abuse being directed at the Muslim women involved. In all, this was experienced by 13 of the women interviewed. For some, the abuse was direct and seemingly one-dimensional. Maryam for example spoke about how she was called a *"fucking Muslim"* while sitting in her car at traffic lights. Naureen too was abused in her car although her experience was perpetrated by parents at the school her children attended. Shaken by the encounter, she said her first thoughts were about the safety of her children not least because she had to leave them at the school. A recurrent feature in the type of verbal abuse experienced was the accusation of the women being a 'terrorist' or the implication

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63   Githens-Mazer, Jonathan and Robert Lambert, *Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime: a London case study*, (Exeter: University of Exeter European Muslim Research Centre, 2010).

64   Moosavi, "The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of Islamophobia."

65   Vakil, "Who's afraid of Islamophobia?"

that they were either supportive or capable of terrorism. Shagufta experienced this while travelling on a busy train to university during the morning rush hour. Sitting on her own, she recounted how two men boarded the train and sat next to her. Soon after, she said they began laughing at her before one loudly referred to her as *"a terrorist."* Deciding to move seats, she said one of the men then *"tapped me on my head, making remarks about my hijab…"* before announcing to the rest of the train that she had a bomb in her bag.

Alia's experience was similar. Having been called *"a terrorist,"* her male accuser then loudly complained that she was intimidating him. When asked by Alia how she was intimidating him, he explained that it was because she was *"a Muslim."* On reflection, Alia said *"I found it hilarious and annoying… I'm kind of small and he was a huge guy, I don't look terrorising or intimidating yet he does."* For her, it was inconceivable that she could ever have physically intimidated him. One way of trying to explain such a view held by the perpetrator might be to consider the observation made by Chakraborti and Zempi about how contemporarily Islam is perceived as being little more than a 'terrorist religion.'[66] Applying this to Allen's notions of normative truths would therefore seem to suggest that even though there was no evidence whatsoever that Alia was involved in—or even supported—any form of terrorism, the mere recognition of her being Muslim meant that she was perceived by the perpetrator as being exactly that. As the normative truths suggest, all such stereotypical and entirely Islamophobic views are signified—and justified—by the recognition of the outward, visible manifestations of Muslim women's identities. Such would also seem to fit with Chakraborti and Zempi's observation about how the visibility and subsequent recognition of Muslim women was also increasingly being seen to be threatening. As such, the perceived threat posed by the recognition of Alia as Muslim therefore was enough to make the perpetrator feel—as he put it—'intimidated.'

The visibility and significance of Muslim women was a prominent feature of the experience of many of those interviewed. For many, their hijab, niqab or other recognisable feature of being 'Muslim' appeared to be the thing that prompted the perpetrator's ire. This was the case for 27 year old Fatima. She spoke about how during her lunch break from work a man she had not previously met suddenly began tugging at her hijab in the street while shouting, *"take that fucking thing off."* A few weeks earlier, she explained that she had again experienced something similar. This time it was a woman that she did not

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66   Chakraborti & Zempi, "The veil under attack: gendered dimensions of Islamophobic victimization," p. 277.

know. She explained how while attending the hospital, the woman grabbed at her hijab as she walked by, aggressively shouting *"yuck"* in her face. While both the perpetrators were unknown to Fatima, Deborah's experience was perpetrated by a group of women she claimed she saw twice every week at her local gym. Explaining how she was at the gym and waiting for her yoga class to start, Deborah said she noticed that one of the group appeared increasingly agitated, aggressively pointing and directing comments at her. Eventually, the woman walked over to Deborah followed by the rest of the group. When in front of her, the aggressive woman addressed Deborah as *"Mrs Ussama bin Laden,"* before adding how the group of women *"...do not like your clothes...go back to Afghanistan, go and eat some pork."* Deborah explained how the way she looked had not seemed to have been problematic before that particular incident.

Deborah found these comments particularly jarring because as she explained, she would have described her ethnicity as being White British, something she said would have been apparent from being able to see her face. Deborah's comments about this raise a number of interesting issues about ethnicity, and consequently identity, as perceived by others in comparison to how one might self-define it. First, it would appear that from the point of view of the perpetrators, Deborah was recognised as Muslim first and foremost through the identification and recognition of the visible 'otherness' of her clothing. In doing so, this prompted the association of her identity with certain practices of Islam, evident in the fact they made reference to eating—or not as the case may be—pork. Underpinning this definition of a Muslim woman, there appeared to be two of the normative truths that are widely circulated about Muslims and Islam: the first being that all Muslims are violent, the second that all Muslims are a homogenous entity without any internal differentiation or difference. This could be seen in the way in which the perpetrators spoke about the need for Deborah to 'go back to Afghanistan' whilst also addressing her as 'Mrs Ussama bin Laden.' For the perpetrator, not only was Deborah the same as Muslims in Afghanistan but she also seemingly had all of the traits and qualities attributed to them. For the perpetrators, her Muslim identity was therefore that which defined what she was more so than anything else.

This was also evident in the second issue Deborah's experience raises about identity as perceived by others in comparison with self-definition. As the comments of the perpetrators highlight, there would appear to have been a complete lack of recognition of Deborah's White British ethnicity. Indeed from the comments made, it would seem that her actual or at least self-defined ethnic identity was rendered irrelevant, superseded by the identification and recognition of her as Muslim. Such is not without precedent. According to Moosavi,

it is a common feature of the Islamophobia experienced by White British con-
verts to Islam.[67] For him, this relates to processes of essentialisation that do
not merely racialise victims but more accurately, re-racialise them. Because of
the conflation of Islam 'non-Whites'—another identified normative truth—all
White Muslims therefore duly become reduced to being recognised as either
'not-quite-white' or just 'non-white.'[68] While Moosavi argues that this can be a
discreet process, here that process was rather more explicit as indeed was the
experience of another of the White British converts interviewed. For Rachel,
alongside the more Muslim-specific abuse she experienced, she spoke about
how a driver shouted *"Fucking Paki bastard"* at her. Again, her visible White
British ethnicity would appear to have been invisible or at least rendered irrel-
evant. Resonating with Moosavi's findings, she explained: *"it doesn't matter how
white you are . . . he gave me a really dirty look and said 'fucking Paki bastard.'"*
Clearly some essentialisation occurs but more so, the mere recognition of one's
Muslim's identity—via the recognition of the visible, outward manifestations
of the Muslim women's clothing and appearance—by the perpetrators of
Islamophobia would appear to be such that Muslim markers of identity com-
pletely subsume all other markers of identity. How the victim might choose
to self-identify would therefore appear secondary at best, irrelevant at worst.

For some of those interviewed, verbal abuse was a precursor to somewhat
more high-level experiences of Islamophobia. Yara spoke about how having
dropped her children at school, she was followed home by a woman pushing a
child in a pram who repeatedly shouted *"fuck off"* at her every time she turned
to see if she was still being followed. Just as Yara went to enter her family home,
she said the woman quickly rushed towards her and screamed, *"why do you
look so ugly . . . why are you covering your face?"* Yara explained how the woman
then spat at her. Two nights later, Yara went on to tell about how her house had
been attacked by a group of people who threw stones and rocks through the
windows. As she put it, *"we were very frightened . . . we had lots of pieces of glass
on the bed [and] I had some bruises as a result."* In her mind, there was no ques-
tion that the two incidents were linked.

Halima had a similar experience when she and her family moved into a new
area. Noticing a large group of local youths regularly congregating near her
house, she said that within a few weeks the group had begun to shout abuse at
her about wearing the niqab every time she left her house. Over time, Halima

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67   Moosavi, "The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of
      Islamophobia."
68   Moosavi, "The Racialization of Muslim Converts in Britain and Their Experiences of
      Islamophobia."

said that not only did the abuse increase in volume but it also became increasingly threatening. As she explained, this culminated in two men from the group arriving at her home one evening at which point they violently attacked both her and her brother with bicycle chains. Despite the police subsequently arresting the men, Halima said they were soon bailed and while given court orders banning them from going near her home, she said that she often saw them loitering nearby along with group who continued to be abusive and threatening towards her and her family. She explained how she felt the motivation behind her being the target of this behaviour was such that it was not necessarily against her as an individual but because of her being Muslim. As she put it, *"these people hate us for no apparent reason, they hate us because of our background and our religion."* For Halima, her recognition of being Muslim was most important. Being Halima, was irrelevant.

Something similar was apparent from interviewing another of the women. Lubna spoke about how on waking one morning, she discovered that a number of decomposing pig's heads had been positioned around the outside of her house including one on a window ledge and another on the front doorstep. Somewhat defiantly she said, *"... they must have thought that this kind of thing will intimidate us because we are brown and do not eat pork ... it was done to intimidate us but these were just idiots trying to shock us."* The recognition of Lubna as Muslim would again appear relevant, not least in her acknowledgement of the association of her Muslim identity with the religion of Islam, as before in the recognition by the perpetrators about restrictions on pork being haram. Potentially more interesting though was the self-awareness shown by Lubna in suggesting that her experience of Islamophobia had been a direct consequence of the murder of serving British serviceman, Lee Rigby, by two Muslims on the streets of south London in May 2013. Whilst there was no evidence to suggest a direct link, Lubna expressed little doubt about interlinking the two quite separate incidents. Given that the incident took place in the immediate aftermath of Rigby's murder so the connection was, for her at least, unquestionable. Initially describing the incident as *"ridiculous,"* she went on to explain how she felt it was more about *"revenge"* against Muslims rather than anything else. As she went on, her and her family were targeted because in the minds of the perpetrators Muslims were indistinguishable from each other thereby making all Muslims in some way responsible or accountable for Rigby's murder. Maybe going beyond that which had been expressed and understood by a number of the other women interviewed, Lubna appeared to be inadvertently acknowledging the function of the normative truths; informing and shaping Islamophobia and Islamophobia-thinking in such ways that all Muslims become fixed as a homogenous and unchanging whole.

Consequently, all Muslims become seen to be equally responsible, accountable and culpable for all that is done in the name of Islam or by any individual Muslims anywhere in the world. 'Revenge' therefore can be seen to acquire a fake legitimacy that also becomes 'common sense,' something that Lubna clearly understood.

Impact: "it kind of makes you think people hate you because of the way you dress"

When asked about the impact of being a victim of Islamophobia, the women interviewed initially identified a range of emotions that were caused by their experience. Unsurprisingly, these were typical of the emotions experienced by victims of other, similar types of hate-motivated crime. As such, these were typically complex and multi-layered and included such feelings as anger, annoyance, shock, fear, vulnerability and anxiety.[69] As Mahmooda put it, her experience of being verbally abused left her *really shaken . . . scared and fearful and vulnerable."* Rehana too spoke about how the impact was immediate, such that she experienced a range of emotions as soon as she had been abused. As she explained, *". . . I cried in the middle of the street . . . I did not feel safe . . . I felt fearful and worried about my life."* Other emotions prompted by the experience included feelings of humiliation, isolation, embarrassment, disgust and sadness, all of which were expressed as having had a hugely detrimental impact on the women's everyday lives and wellbeing.

Fear however was the most common emotion expressed by the women interviewed. For some, this significantly impacted on their day-to-day activities and behaviours. As Halima put it, becoming a victim of Islamophobia made her too scared to go shopping. She went on to say that she no longer felt able to go out as normal and so instead, she began to go out in *"a secretive way"* in order to avoid all of the people she thought might want to abuse or attack her. Similarly, Rehana explained how the experience had made her feel that she was no longer able to go out *"walking on my own or in the evenings."* Feelings of fear and its subsequent impact was not restricted to the victims themselves however. As some of the women explained, fear and a sense of being increasingly vulnerable impacted how the victims saw their own families as also how their families saw them. For Mahmooda, she explained how she felt increasingly anxious for *"my family and friends."* For Yara, it was similarly evident in

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69   Chaplin, Rupert, John Flatley and Kevin Smith, *Crime in England and Wales 2010/11*, (London: Home Office, 2012).

the fact that she no longer felt that it was safe to let her children play in the garden or go to friends' houses. For Kelly, her experience of Islamophobia impacted her family in another way with them becoming increasingly concerned about her safety and wellbeing. As she explained, when her parents heard she had been a victim of Islamophobia, they pleaded with her to stop wearing the hijab. Their argument for this was because they no longer wanted her to 'look' Muslim because they felt that this made her more vulnerable to attack and abuse. For them, if she no longer looked Muslim then the likelihood of her being a victim would be reduced. For them also, there was a clear understanding that Kelly being recognisably Muslim was directly linked to the likelihood of her experiencing Islamophobia.

For some of the women interviewed, the impact of Islamophobia was grounded in their experiences and understandings of society and their place in it. For them, this meant that they became more suspicious, not just of British society per se but more so of ordinary people; for some, of everyone. This was apparent in the comments of Shareefa. Having been repeatedly abused by a group of young people, some of whom had called her *"ninja"* and put fireworks through her letterbox, Shareefa said the experience made her fear for her own safety and the safety her seven month old baby. As she explained:

> It made me feel very scared . . . I was scared to go out on the street or into the area on my own. It made me think continuously that I need some sort of self-defence class so I know how to defend myself and protect my children . . . you start to think that something is going to happen. It kind of makes you feel like somebody is ready to attack you in the street . . . it kind of makes you think people hate you because of the way you dress. And then you start linking everything as being anti-Muslim and that may well not be the case. For example, some people give you a look which may be nothing . . . but

It is the *"but"* at the end of her comment however that is maybe most telling, highlighting the fact that while Shareefa was aware that the vast majority of ordinary British people were unlikely to be Islamophobic and thereby want to attack her, her experience had nonetheless cultivated a very real sense of doubt and suspicion in her mind to the extent that she genuinely feared that not only would something similar happen again but more so that anyone was capable of attacking her.

This was similar for Iffat who after being verbally abused while walking through a train station explained how experiencing Islamophobia *"makes you paranoid . . . you start to think that everybody has the potential to insult you."*

This was the case for Maryam too who explained how her personal experience made her reflect on Muslims more broadly:

> I didn't feel that way before [the incident]…before I used to think that everyone is ok with us [Muslims]. But now something like this happens and it challenges what you think. I don't think they understand just how it all feels. They've got no idea. They don't understand…

This was similar for Alia also, who responded by explaining how experiencing Islamophobia:

> kind of makes you think people hate you because of the way you dress. And then you start linking everything as being anti-Muslim and that may well not be the case

Whilst few directly acknowledged it, what would seem to have been underpinning these comments was how experiencing Islamophobia changed how they felt about who they were; how their self-defined identity made them question who they were within wider British society. This was likely to be initiated by feelings of being 'different' and being visibly seen—and more importantly, recognised—as Muslim. As such, one of the greatest impacts of their experience would appear to be the fact that Islamophobia has the potential to make its victims become more aware of their differences, demarcating them not only as Muslim but more so as Muslim 'others.'

Around half of those interviewed not only spoke about reflecting on their place within British society but also on their sense of belonging. While feelings of anger, shock and fear were at times quite immediate, these particular impacts—of belonging in terms of individual, community, society and Britain more broadly—seemed to occur after the incident. As Alia put it, *"it makes you think about integrating…you just put your boundaries up."* For Naureen however, the response was much stronger. As she said, *"my husband does not want to stay in this country. He does not feel we belong here…we do not feel that we are welcomed…they see us as strangers who do not belong."* Such feelings were relatively common and were evident in the comments of Halima also who spoke about how *"we now see a totally different aspect of British society…I feel that I do not belong to England, I just want to move away and never look back."* Unlike Halima, Maryam did not want to move away. Nonetheless her comments resonated. For her, the experience of Islamophobia prompted her to question not just herself and her place in Britain but also the position and place of all Muslims in Britain. As she put it, *"maybe we are hated…I feel we're*

not going to be accepted as British, like we're always going to [be] seen as an out-sider." Again, the demarcation of the 'us' and 'them' featured significantly albeit without necessarily being specifically referred to.

From the interviews alone, it would be extremely difficult to draw any con-clusions about the extent to which the impact of the women being victims of Islamophobia might have on their self-defined identities as Muslim women. Whilst it would appear that their experiences were clearly relatable to identity, seen in the way in which many of the women spoke in terms of their personal and individual experiences having resonance with all Muslims more broadly, it might have been that their experience had merely accentuated or increased awareness of their potential demarcation on the basis of difference that, in time, might change or return to any pre-incident understandings. An interest-ing perspective however did emerge from the somewhat poignant, reflective observations of Samina. As she put it:

> I know my background is Bangladeshi but I would not know how to live there. I do not feel that I belong to Bangladesh. But when things hap-pen to you then the identity crisis comes in and you feel that you do not belong to anywhere. You start to question your identity: am I a British Muslim or a Bangladeshi Muslim?

For her, the impact of Islamophobia was undoubtedly significant. Not only did it seem to bring about a change in the way in which she understood her own identity but so too did it make her question the positioning of that iden-tity within contemporary Britain and British society. As the Runnymede Trust report noted almost a decade and half ago, British Muslims routinely felt that their values, loyalties and commitments were being questioned as a conse-quence of experiencing Islamophobia, something that in turn made them question their own identities as British.[70] What is interesting is that such expe-riences would seem to suggest that it is not the 'Muslim' part of the women's identities that are thrown into question or prompt a process of re-negotiation as a consequence of Islamophobia but instead the 'British' part. Given that none of the Muslim women interviewed even referred to a change—however minimal—to their Muslim identity, maybe it is possible that some aspects of identity can indeed be fixed and unchanging.

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70   Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all.*

Conclusion: "... then the identity crisis comes in"

Responding to the observations of Chakraborti and Zempi[71] therefore and positioning this within the context of wider scholarly work into Muslim women in contemporary Western spaces, the aim of this article was to contribute towards improving understanding about the experience and impact of Islamophobia against visible Muslim women in the British setting as well as the experience and impact of Islamophobia more generally. In doing so, this article sought to begin the process of ensuring the voice and experience of Muslim women no longer remained 'invisible' and that their experiences, feelings, emotions and responses to such incidents were given the consideration they rightly deserve. Nonetheless, the experience of those women interviewed cannot be seen to be representative or generally applicable to all British Muslim women or indeed Muslims without differentiation.

From interviewing 20 visible British Muslim women, 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 doing so, their visibility seemed to be able to catalyse a negative response or reaction in the typical normality of various public spaces. Some of the Islamophobia experienced was opportunistic and ad hoc, some appeared to be rather more pre-meditated and measured in terms of targeting an identifiable 'Muslim.' Indeed all of the incidents embodied a recognition of Muslim identity that also subsequently became the focus of the Islamophobic incident. Consequently, none of the women interviewed would have been able to take comfort in the knowledge that their experience "could have happened to anyone."[72] They could not have; all of the incidents were precipitated on the identification and recognition of Muslim identity. As such, the perpetrators targeted the women because they were able to be visibly identified as Muslim: to stress, visibly identifiable as 'Muslim' rather than being identifiable as 'a Muslim.' This is important as the latter would have required an acknowledgement of the victims being individuals, something that was far from evident in any of the interviews undertaken.

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71   Chakraborti & Zempi, "The veil under attack: gendered dimensions of Islamophobic victimization."

72   Chakraborti & Zempi. "The veil under attack: gendered dimensions of Islamophobic victimization," p. 272.

From these, a relationship between the visibility and invisibility of Muslim women began to emerge. In terms of visibility, and in reiterating Kapur,[73] it would seem true that the visible Muslim woman cannot go unnoticed in contemporary public spaces. Despite claims that Muslim women are invisible therefore, in reality they are not and most likely cannot be. As Allen and Nielsen rightly noted,[74] given their visibility embodies difference so the mere presence—let alone identification and recognition—of Muslim women in public spaces will be such that it will clearly demarcate 'them' from 'us'; demarcating Muslims and Islam to 'us' and 'our' way of life, 'our' values and so on. In the wake of events such as the brutal murder of Lee Rigby—as well as 9/11 and 7/7 beforehand—that demarcation of difference thus has the capacity and capability to attract and be associated with ever greater detrimental attributes, those which through the attribution and association with terrorism, among other things, have codified a perceived threat against 'us' that is as physical and violent as indeed it is social and cultural. All duly become normative truths.

As experienced by some of the women, all Muslims therefore are seen to present such a threat. Given the visible Muslim woman is *the* contemporary signifier of Muslims and Islam, so she becomes the physical embodiment of this. As Klaus and Kassel put it,[75] the visible and outward manifestations of Muslim women go beyond the mere material and physical, and are transformed into something that is rather more ideological. Resultantly, that visibility feeds into, and is indeed understood through, Islamophobia-thinking thereby becoming easier to justify and legitimise Islamophobic exclusionary practices. For the perpetrators therefore, it is likely they believe that the Islamophobia being manifested against individual women is in fact justified and rationalised on the basis that in reality, they are attacking Muslims and Islam per se. As before, they are attacking them for being 'Muslim' as opposed to being 'a Muslim.' As Deborah put it, *"the whole Muslim community is held collectively responsible for what happens."*

And this is where the link between visibility and identity becomes important. Because visible Muslim women signify all Muslims and Islam without differentiation, so their individualities and particularities become reduced. Irrespective of what is visible and known therefore, visible Muslim women become essentialised through the symbolic attribution of various stereotypical

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73   Kapur, Ratna, "The tragedy of victimisation rhetoric: Resurrecting the 'native' subject in international/post-colonial feminist legal politics."

74   Allen & Nielsen, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001.*

75   Klaus, Elizabeth and Susanne Kassel, "The veil as a means of legitimisation: An analysis of the interconnectedness of gender, media and war," in *Journalism* 6:3 (2005), pp. 335-355.

and ideological universalities, many of which are inherently Islamophobic.[76] Muslim women's identities therefore—more appropriately, the recognition of them—can be argued as being both embodying of and the target for which Islamophobia is manifested. And the consequence of this is that the visibility of Muslim women's identities renders the individual invisible and irrelevant, leaving all visible Muslim women de-individualised and de-humanised. Drawing on the observations of Sayyid writing about the process and impact of the essentialisation of Muslims and Islam, as he rightly puts it, the outcome is little more than 'erasure.'[77]

As regards the self-defined identities of the visible Muslim women interviewed, something quite interesting was apparent. Whilst Samina spoke about how, after becoming a victim of Islamophobia, *"... the identity crisis comes in ..."* that 'crisis' was not about those women's Muslim identities but instead about their ethnic, hyphenated or national identities and by consequence, where and how they felt they belonged. This can be seen in the reflections of Rachel and Deborah and how they spoke about the impact prompting them to re-evaluate their ethnic identity and to what extent they were seen to be White British by others. For others such as Halima, Maryam and Naureen, the response was far more acute with some wanting to move to another country or speaking in terms that questioned the likelihood of British society ever being accepting of Muslims as an integral and more importantly, 'normal' part of it. Without doubt, the experience of Islamophobia made a number of the women interviewed feel as though they no longer belonged. Most poignant in this respect was Samina: *"You start to question your identity: am I a British Muslim or a Bangladeshi Muslim?"*

Given the centrality of their Muslim identities in the process of identification and recognition as well as the experience of becoming victims of Islamophobia, it is interesting therefore that none of those interviewed gave any indication that their experience made them question or re-evaluate their self-defined Muslim identities in any way whatsoever. A few did speak about changing the way they looked but this was solely in relation to the way in which their families had sought to pressurise them to do so. None spoke about the need to change the way they looked—their visible identity as Muslim— as something they themselves had at any time contemplated or considered. For them, despite clearly understanding that their visible Muslim identity was potentially problematic—something they knew and acknowledged as ear-

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76   Allen, *Islamophobia*.

77   Sayyid, Bobby, *A fundamental fear: Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism*, (London: Zed Books, 2003).

marking them as potential targets for further Islamophobia—there remained a sense that their self-defined Muslim identities were in some ways unmoveable and fixed. This offers an interesting juxtaposition given that ideological manifestations of Islamophobia seek to construct Muslims—especially visible Muslim women—as being an undeniable 'other' for whom a myriad of negative and stereotypical attributions become irremovable and eternally fixed. This research therefore clearly supports the view that sharp disparities and divergences can and indeed do clearly exist between identities that are chosen and self-defined and those which are attributed or perceived by others.[78] However, whilst scholarly work would seem to suggest that identities are far from fixed, the findings from this research seem to begin to intimate that whether in the process of construction or self-definition, some aspects of an individual's identity would appear to be able to remain unquestioned and unchanging. In both instances, it was the 'Muslim' part of this which appeared to be rather less prone to change than those relating to ethnicity, nationality and so on. Might it be possible therefore that certain facets of one's identity can indeed be and remain fixed? Maybe, but to fully substantiate this answer further investigation would be necessary. But maybe it is the process of Islamophobia that has the capability to fix identities that go beyond the self-defined as also those that are rather more perceived and attributed.

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78   Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition*.