Understanding Islamophobia: Conceptualizing and Measuring the Construct

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Abstract

This paper aims at exploring the negative sentiments that historically exit between Muslims and non-Muslims, and attempts to figure out the present state of hostility towards Muslims/Islam which may be labelled as Islamophobia in the contemporary media dominated world. For this study, it is assumed that Islamophobia is a mediated construct and its epistemic/symbolic dimension has different connotations. As such, its construction is rendered in a pluralistic manner; hence, it appears as a corpus constituted of Islamophobias. This paper is exploratory in nature, and attempts to test an instrument for measuring Islamophobia in the epistemological spheres by finding its nexus with media and other social antecedents.

Keywords: Islamophobia; Racism; Media effects; Social Identity Theory; Media Constructivist Theory; Quantitative Analysis.

1. Introduction

Intolerance to 'others' has provided a huge literary substance to the disciplines of social sciences, and elicited many new grounds of intellectual discourse. Discourses (for there are many constructions of this phenomenon) of Islamophobia is one of such fields of investigation which has generated a colossal literature in the last ten to fifteen years. The phenomenon has been discussed and researched from many perspectives with considerable input on identifying its antecedents. However, although the questions of its nature and antecedents have been discussed at length, there has been a notable absence of quantitative analysis of these issues. At the same time, while there can be little doubt that attacks on Muslims, mass media generated processes of mythologisation, or even demonization are occurring. The concept of Islamophobia covers a complex range of subjective, social and mass mediated constructions and we shall examine these further in this paper.

Anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia constitute a few of the constructs which find their place in the ambit of 'intolerance to others'. Hostility, hatred, prejudice and fear/threats towards out-group are some of the observable outcomes of such 'intolerance to others'. Almost all constructs have some identical manifestations and latent grounds, of course towards or between the groups in variance. Islamophobia also stands in the same line which is under the strong influence of 'intolerance to others' menace in the present day world. The stereotypes associated with the phenomenon portray Muslims as 'alien and foreign to western society' (Lowe 1985, pp.55-62), 'backward, uneducated, vulgar, and violent' (ICNSW 1989, p.26) which has resulted in an immense tension between Muslims and non-Muslims. But, these are surely the stereotypes at the extreme end of the spectrum. As risk lies in putting too many categories into one pot, it would be better to use Islamophobias in the plural – many discourses, many manifestations, and many realities.

'Islamophobia is a new word for an old fear'[1]. It is a form of religious intolerance, of which manifestations can be found in historic wars spread long over centuries, crusades and genocides. Islam as a religion posed a great danger to other religions and its rapid spread in a short span of time made it appear as a 'problem' to the world (Crone & Cook 1977; Fahlbusch 2001, pp.758-62; Hamilton 1985, p.67; Southern 1962). It was seen as 'a theological heresy at the level of morals and practice in 14th century' (Sardar 1999, p.23). Even before the 14th century, as Karen Armstrong said, Islam was regarded as evil and 'absolutely alien to God'[2]. The 15th Century also witnessed the mounting differences between Islam and non-Muslims. It can be viewed, for example, in the shape of Giovanni Da Modena's controversial painting "The Last Judgement" where the holy Prophet of Muslims was attacked[3] or in ideology such as in the surfacing of racial indignation observed in the phenomenon of *La Raza* in Spain[4].

Contemporary literature on hostility towards Islam and Muslims, in fact, supplements what has been common in the past; however, it appends many new dimensions to the discussion. Growth of social psychology discipline opens up new vistas to understand the phenomenon, to trace its history from social psychological and anthropological perspectives besides focusing on the axiology (the study of value and value judgments)[5] and ontology (study of the nature of being, of reality)[6] of the subject. Meanwhile, new braches of knowledge and perspectives emerged such as '*Orientalism*', which does exist in the archaic literature but hardly anywhere in an 'ism' form[7]. *Orientalism* used to be perceived as a 'realm of stories, fictions and fables but now appears to be a perspective to study Islam and its relations with other civilizations' (Sardar 1999, pp.1-5).

Said (1978), the author of one of the most celebrated book *Orientalism,* confirms the 'subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arabo-Islamic people and their culture' (p.56). He imaginatively divided the world into 'orient' and 'occident' or the West. Prior to Said's view and refinement of the notions of 'Orient' and 'Occident', Norman Daniel (1960) crystallized the differences between these opposing forces. He commented on how Islam had been viewed by the Christian orthodoxy over recorded history (Daniel, 1960). His work was reviewed by James Kritzeck (Kritzeck 1961, pp.139-140) to a great applaud and has also been referred to by Poole (2002, p.33) to argue that anti-Islam polemic was used as a tool for limiting the growth of Islam chiefly by posing Islam as a 'threatening other' to the West.

Esposito (1992) has also been critical and clear in recognizing the ideological differences between Islam and West in his renowned work *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* Similarly, Bhabha (1994), following the footsteps of Said, attempted to refine his work and presented overlapping binary oppositions like 'centre-margin, civilized-savage, enlightened-ignorant' etc. between the West and other cultures.

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[1] Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid, Chairman Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony, UK used this phrase while presenting his paper in "Osce Conference On Anti-Semitism And On Other Forms Of Intolerance" in Cordoba, 8 and 9 June 2005, his paper can be retrieved from http://www.osce.org/documents/cio/2005/06/15198_en.pdf. We retrieved the paper on September 23, 2008.

[2] Karen Armstrong said this in a speech in Pakistan on February 01, 2008 on "Tolerance in Islam: A Historical Perspective" jointly arranged by Iqbal International Institute of Research, Education and Dialogue (IRED) and International Islamic University (IIU), Islamabad.

[3] http://neveryetmelted.com/?cat=456, retrieved on September 15, 2008.

[4] La Raza was an effort to mix the races in conflict overtime and make it appear as a completely new race having all attributes of dominant cultures, but no differences. Dr. Junaid Rana, an assistant professor of Asian American Studies and Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, thinks that Spain, for better or worse, is the home of the concept of race, while referring to La Raza (http://groups.google.com/group/soc.culture.usa/browse_thread/thread/67206651d554a591/359663d2b49a9312). Interestingly, he connected Columbus's voyage to American content with racial stigma as large portion of the salves that he brought with him were Muslims.

[5] Retrieved from the website http://www.wordreference.com/definition/ontology on October 10, 2008.

[6] *Penguin English Dictionary*, (2nd Ed.). London: Penguin Books, p.977.

[7] An insight on the origin and use of 'Orient' and 'Orientalism' is available on the website http://www.answers.com/topic/orientalism, which we retrieved on September 10, 2008.

Halliday (2003, 1999), a contemporary of Huntington (1998), whose famous work '*Clash of Civilizations'* appeared parallel to Edward Said's thesis, also presented Islam as a threatening 'other' for the West. Huntington's thesis that a new cold war would take place not on the basis of economics or politics but based upon culture and civilization marked by epistemic orders and religions. This reflects the academic and intellectual endeavours of Hall (1992, p.298) who replaced the biological notion of race by cultural definitions labelling it 'cultural racism' associated as much with ethnicity as race.

Succinctly, it is argued that Islam has been viewed as a contra religio-political force which is capable of posing grave threats to the West. It has been viewed as the 'new enemy' of the West, often justifying arguments for 'heavy hoarding of ammunitions and the West's desire for expansionism' (Tibi 1993, pp.126-7). Some other titles given to Islam are: 'cultural anomie' (Bishara, 1995, p.87), 'opposing cultural ecologies' (Mowlana 1993, pp.9-17), a 'challenge' and 'threat' to the Western world' (Ahmed 1993; Rodinson in Schacht 1974, p.9; Savory 1980, p.25), 'threat to Western security' (Djerejian 1997, pp.32-3), 'present terror of the world', and 'the Other' (Sayyid 1997), and 'fifth column' (Runnymede Trust 1997). Strangely enough, it is not Islam and any other religion they have contrasted, or the East and the West, but Islam, a religion, and the West, a geographical area (Hippler 1995, p.21).

Analysis of the historical depictions of Islam generates quite interesting discussion. It appears that Islam posed itself as a 'powerful' socio-politico-religious force of the medieval age when followers of other religions were in deep slumber, passing through the 'Dark Age'. Hostility towards Islam and Muslims was the net outcome of the subjugating-subjugated relationship between the West and Islam, which finally resulted in the Crusades – an effort to create a balance of power between dominant socio-politico-religious forces of the times. Strangely enough, centuries long prevalence of the hostility turned into racial and cultural anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments during contemporary times. Extremists among Muslims and Islamism: 'political' or 'active Islam'[8], augmented the cultural and racial prejudices with fear threats from Islam and Muslims.

Interestingly, racial and cultural prejudices against Islam and Muslims are visible and have been stereotyped in different ways, but hardly any traces of Islam as threatening 'other' can be found in literature; yet could be seen in abundance after the demise of communism. Until recent changes in the world politics, communism used to pose immense 'threat' to the West and the rest; Islam replaced communism as a threatening 'other' (Nonneman 1996, pp.3-24). Could it be taken that one threatening 'ideology' is being replaced with 'another' having a historical background of being a 'problem' for the world's peace and normalcy? Quite interestingly, there are plenty of events of terrorism, subjugation, subversion and animosity to prove Islam and Muslims as 'threatening others' on the basis of religion in the contemporary world.

How and when did Islam and its followers become subject of racial or cultural prejudice? Probably, it was Islam's 'expansion across the continents in a short span of time which constituted theological, political and cultural challenges to the West' (Esposito 1992, p.25). 'Mass conversion of people from other religions to Islam' (Humphreys 1992, p.250) added insult to injury, as a result of which the 'West found it easier to demonize Islam and Muslims than to understand' (Esposito 1992, p.38). This demonization labelled Islam and Muslims with different demonizing stereotypes which were meant to create hatred against the religion and its followers. Centuries long Crusades based on hostility between the warring factions furthered the hatred by giving it an institutionalized outlook – 'us and them'. The contemporary world carried these prejudices and stereotypes against Islam and Muslims which has historical justifications and the situation has become further aggravated due to the growing unrest and rise of 'Jihadi' movements in and across the Muslim world. Hence, a new terminology developed to name the difference that was there historically and seems to have continued for considerable time – Islamophobia!

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8 Further discussion on 'Islamism' or 'active Islam' can be found on the website http://www.pwhce.org/islamism.html, which we retrieved on September 10, 2008

2. Literature Review

Islamophobia as a social construct is a relatively new phenomenon. However, the components which constitute the construct have been discussed, researched and analysed at length in different social science disciplines. Islamophobia as mediated construct has been (theoretically) reviewed heavily in the last decade; nevertheless, we do not find sufficient literature studying it in a quantitative fashion.

The Pew Research Centre regularly conducts 'Global Attitude Projects' to measure people's attitude on various issues and people across the globe. Its latest survey on Muslims and Jews has been released on September 17, 2008 which says that unfavourable opinion against Muslims has notably increased comparative to what it was in 2005 in Great Britain, France and Spain. Negative opinion about Muslims is also widespread in parts of Asia: 61% of Japanese, 56% of Indians, 55% of Chinese and 50% of South Koreans have negative impression of Muslims. Although unfavourable opinions towards Muslims are on the rise all across Europe and the United States, but in Latin America, France, and Spain are notably more negative than in other parts of the world[9].

The Pew Research Center's conducted surveys are mostly based on phone or face-to-face interviews[10]. While, conducting face-to-face interviews in the course of research on such a sensitive issue, we felt that respondents were not comfortable in responding to the questions which ask their opinions about some particular group of people with some specific religious identity. Perhaps, they were wary of being stamped as racist or prejudiced about people they find in large number around them.

Dekker and van der Noll's work on Islamophobia titled *"Islamophobia and its Origin"* is a seminal study[11]. They have tried to view and explain the construct from many different perspectives. Our study has been greatly assisted by this research endeavour which attempts to explain Islamophobia and measures it quantitatively.

Dunn opted for a telephone survey to measure Islamophobia in Australia in 2003. To collect data, measure and evaluate Islamophobia, he categorized the construct into different threat perceptions; viz, cultural, political and terror threats[12]. He associated the intensity of these threats with the knowledge about Islam and the respondents contact with Muslims. We also have tried to operationalize Islamophobia by incorporating some of his concepts into the present study.

Saeed (2007) suggests that British Muslims are portrayed as an 'alien other' within the media and this misrepresentation can be linked to the development of a kind of 'racism': Islamophobia, that has its roots in cultural representation of the 'other' (p.443). His focus has been to see how Muslims and different races have been portrayed by the media and cited some useful references in his research. Seemingly, he observes Muslim minorities from a race perspective and attempts to evaluate their representation in the media which is 'biased and at times overtly racist'.

Islamophobia has also been seen as a form of racism or 'Islamic-racism' or 'anti-Muslim racism'[13] in many studies. Nonetheless, it is appropriate to determine which kind of racism refers to

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[9] Pew Research Center released its report on "Unfavourable views of Jews and Muslims on the Increase in Europe" on September 17, 2008, which can be retrieved from http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=262. For this paper, it has been retrieved on September 25, 2008.

[10] The report mentioned in above reference explains about its method of data collection on page no.42.

[11] Henk Dekker and Jolanda van der presented their paper at the Annual Meeting of the ISPP, 31st Annual Scientific Meeting, Sciences Pro, France, July 08, 2008, which can be viewed and retrieved from http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/4/6/3/1/pages246313/p246313-1.php. We retrieved it on September 29, 2008.

[12] The PDF of Kevin Dunn's work can be retrieved from http://www.bees.unsw.edu.au/school/staff/dunn/E13.pdf. We retrieved this on September 20, 2008. An attempt has been made to seek to his permission to include the results and to know the exact reference of his research paper; however, we could not contact him. Our e-mail was responded with an automated response indicating that he had moved to the University Of Western Sydney, Australia from the University of New South Wales.

[13] William Dalrymple quoted in Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, "The Language of Islamophobia". Paper presented in a Conference on *Exploring Islamophobia*, jointly organised by FAIR (Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism), City Circle and Ar-Rum at the University of Westminster, London, 29 September 2001.

Islamophobia: symbolic racism (Sears & Kinder 1971, pp.51-88) which was initially defined in reference to black Americans, or ethnocentrism (Sumner 1906) which creates a differentiation between the in-group and out-groups, or biological racism (Myrdal 1944) which says that differences between the ethnic groups are innate, or aversive racism (Kovel 1970) where contact with out-group is threatening or a social problem. In this wake, Hall (1992, p.298) replaced the biological notion of race by cultural definitions labelling it 'cultural racism' associated much with ethnicity as race.

Islamophobia is a complex bundle of epistemes and discourses; therefore, it would be over-simplification or schematization to label it with only racism. It stems from a powerful religious ideology. According to Buchanan[14] who wrote in 1990 in the *Sunday News* that the US is 'searching for a new enemy...after the death of communism, Islam is the preferred antagonist'. Similar thought has been pronounced by Esposito (1992, p.5) who said that 'transnational Islam might increasingly come to be regarded as the new global monolithic enemy of the West'. In his renowned book *Seize the Moment*, Richard Nixon also posed Islam as a major challenge to the West and he expected that 'West will be forced to form a new alliance...to confront a hostile and aggressive Muslim world' (Nixon, 1992, p.194-95).

As said earlier, Islamophobia is a heavily mediated/mediatised construct. The phenomenon has taken birth in 'a global media environment where media hold a power position capable of representing or misrepresenting a social group or minority' (Cottle 2000, 2006). Said also highlights this delicate aspect on media when he says that if knowledge is power, then those who control mass media are the most powerful people (Said 1997, pp.135-73). Even those who work in relatively high positions in media recognize this fact. They themselves feel feeble with regard to their personal control over what the masses should be given. So much so, John Swinton, the former chief of staff, *New York Times,* says that 'we are intellectual prostitutes'[15].

2.1. Contemporary Islamophobia

It's now just over a decade that Islamophobia as a construct has been in use. It has different connotations and its use is situation specific; thus, giving various interpretations of the construct in different scenarios. An accepted definition of what Islamophobia stands for is awaited. However, some organizations that are working on Islamophobia conceptualize Islamophobia with some variations. The following lines shed some light on the definitions given by these organizations and various researches for the sake of measuring the phenomenon.

The Runnymede Trust in the UK was the first to use[16] the term Islamophobia in print in 1997 in its report titled "*Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All*". The Runnymede Report itemized the different attributes of Islam and Muslims, more in a binary fashion to the West.

Similarly, the Mayor of London launched a project to study Islamophobia in 2007. The project report titled "*The Search for Common Grounds: Muslims, non–Muslims and the UK Media*" revisited the Runnymede definition and defined it as 'a shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam - and, therefore, to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims' (Greater London Authority, 2007, p.110).

There is hardly any dictionary which clearly defines Islamophobia. We could not find it in the printed Oxford English Dictionary, however, the website[17] of the dictionary defines Islamophobia as

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[14] Buchanan, P.L. wrote an article titles "Is Islam an Enemy of the US?" in *Sunday News*, New Hampshire, December 22, 1990.

[15] This is one of the most famous sayings by John Swinton. This is available on the web site: http://www.thetruthseeker.co.uk/article.asp?id=90. However, Google search engine returns many sites if we put "we are intellectual prostitutes" on search. We retrieved it on Setmeber 29, 2008.

[16] Zaid Shakir (http://www.mereislam.info/labels/Islamophobia.html, retrieved on September 26, 2008) finds its first use in 1980, Walter Laqueur (http://www.laqueur.net/index2.php?r=2&rr=4&id=49, retrieved on September 26, 2008) who attempted to find origin of not only Islamophobia but also Fascism, Islamic Fascism and Anti-Semitism and Mohammad H. Tamdgidi (Tamdgidi, 2006) notes its first use in French in the 1980s, while Abdul Jalil Sajid (Sajid, 2005) finds its first use in 1991.

[17] The draft entry for the definition was made in September 2006.

'hatred or fear of Islam, esp. as a political force; hostility or prejudice towards Muslims'[18]. We can find the definition of 'phobia' in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Wehmeier 2005, p.1132) which says that 'phobia' is a 'strong unreasonable fear or hatred of something'. Islamophobia in the light of this definition will appear to be the 'strong unreasonable fear or hatred of Islam'.

Encyclopaedia of Race and Ethnic Studies (2003, p.215) explains the construct as 'an outlook or world-view involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims, Which results in practices of exclusion and discrimination'.

A web based organization[19] declares Islamophobia as 'a neologism used to refer to fear or prejudice towards Muslims and Islam'. Another organization FAIR (Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism) recognizes 'Islamophobia as a form of racism'[20]. CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations) agrees that 'Islamophobia refers to unfounded fear of and hostility towards Islam, which results in discrimination against Muslims'[21].

Heitmeyer & Zick have conceptualized Islamophobia as 'a form of group-oriented enmity and a general attitude of rejection of Muslims and all that stems from Islam' (Heitmeyer & Zick 2004)[22]. While, as mentioned earlier, Hall (Hall, 1992, p.298) introduced another facet to the conceptualization of Islamophobia by describing it as a 'cultural racism'. Nevertheless, Raold (Roald 2002, pp.101-20) characterizes Islamophobia as 'a fear of the religion of Islam and Muslims' and contends that 'Islam as a religion is not only unacceptable but a threat to the Western world'.

From the above discussion on the definitions of Islamophobia, we find some visible variables which constitute the definition. These are fear/threats, hostility and prejudice towards Islam and Muslims. For the sake of conceptualization of the construct, we further refine these variables by changing fear/threats into perceived threats in cultural, political and security domains, while hatred as an observable form of hostility. Prejudice is taken as cultural prejudice to form a nominal definition of the phenomenon. However, it is pertinent to mention that we have assumed Islamophobia as an attitude; hence, it is required to be seen at three different components of an attitude: cognitive, affective and conative/behavioural.

Thus, we conceptualize Islamophobia as an essentially negative cognitive, affective, or conative posturing of individuals and social orders towards Islam and/or Muslims. Here, Islamophobia has been taken as an audience attribute by assuming it an attitude. Furthermore, the construction of Islamophobia as a social phenomenon relates to the dynamics of a society and moves away from the scope of this research.

2.2. Media Framing of Muslims/Islam and the Construction of Islamophobia

'Media images, representations and discourses relating to Islam/Muslims in the mainstream Western media are negative and hostile' (Poole & Richardson 2006). There are exceptions in the mainstream media and the picture is far more complex than what Poole and Richardson suggested, yet, such a representation provides the masses a great amount of material for political discourse and helps them shape their opinions and view on minority communities and worlds far from them. Of course, the opinion formation process would have the same tenor that the media have set for its audience/readers. This process continues due to 'significant effects' of media on masses which eventually results in the construction of a social reality that's based on media framing of a reality 'in a predictable and patterned way' (McQuail 1994, p.331).

Nevertheless, it's not only the media frame which contribute to building a social reality, but individuals' own internal frames – 'information-processing schemata', also play a vital role in the

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18 http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/20003214?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=islamophobia&first=1&max_to_show=10, retrieved on September 10, 2008.
19 www.Islamophobia.org, retrieved on September 10, 2008.
20 www.fairuk.org, retrieved on September 10, 2008.
21 http://www.cair.com/issues/islamophobia/islamophobia.aspx, retrieved on September 10, 2008.
22 Also available on http://www.efc.de/ftp/public/minorities/heitmeyerreport.pdf, retrieved on September 10, 2008.

process (Entman 1991, pp.6-27). In other words, the ultimate opinion or response of an individual is a synthesis of media frames that they are exposed to and their individual frames. In this regard, the work of Berger & Luckman (1966, pp.51-55) and Tuchman (1978) is highly recognized and focuses on the social construction of reality debate. Even Lippmann (1922, p.3) recognised the significance of individual schemata many decades from now and labelled it 'the pictures inside our heads'. He probably wanted to pronounce that 'meanings are in the minds'.

Then what do media do if we have all in mind? Why is media framing so critically objected to? Entman (1993, p.55) responds to this question in the following manner:

> Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to set some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in the communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. Frames then, define problems – determine what a causal agent is doing and costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of cultural values; diagnose causes, identify the forces creating the problems; make moral judgements – evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies – offer and justify treatments for the problem and predict their likely effects.

For our research in terms of media as an active antecedent for formation of Islamophobia is based on Constructivist Media Effects Model which explains a 'reality built from personal experience, interaction with peers, and interpreted selections from mass media' (Neuman et al. 1992, p.120). This interactive model of construction of reality has significant implications for conceptualizing framing as a theory of media effects.

McCombs, Shaw and Weaver (1997) also suggested that agenda setting and framing effects are related, rather, they concluded framing as an extension of the agenda setting. They used the term 'second-level-agenda-setting' to describe the impact of the salience of the attributes of the issue.

Tuchman (1978, p.ix) asserts that mass media actively set the frames of reference that the audience use to interpret the significant events taking place around us. However, this interpretation is a complex process which undertakes and bases the new experiences on pre-existing meaning structures or schemas as used by Luhmann (2000) in *The Reality of Mass Media.* Entman (1991, p.7) defines the pre-existing schema - 'information-processing-schemata', as individual frames as compared to media frames or '*self-reference'* as defined by Luhmann (2000)**.** Abandoning the corresponding theories of realist epistemologies, Luhmann (2000) argues that mass media functions are not determined by external values of truthfulness, objectivity or knowledge, but it is regulated by the internal code information/non-information for selection of news and communication. Nonetheless, the other side of the picture predicts the active role of audience in opinion formation and attitude building as the 'meanings are in mind'.

2.3. Antecedents and the Construction of Islamophobia

Other than media, two possible key perspectives comprised of a considerable vast array of variables are considered instrumental for studying the public attitudes on Islamophobia. These are: Direct Contact (personal experience), and Indirect Exposure (Observation).

Social scientists (Watson 1947; Williams 1947; Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1971) have theorized that inter-group contact prove to be the most influential in reducing/producing prejudice by specifying the critical situational conditions for inter-group contact. Inter-group theory has proven useful in applied settings, such as racial desegregation/segregation and integration/integration in schools (Pettigrew 1975). With certain exceptions, this theory has been taken as a frame of reference for studying the formation of Islamophobia attitudes and the testing of our hypotheses in Direct Contact (Personal Experience) perspective.

Indirect Exposure or Observation Perspective is based on Social Identity Theory (SIT) which was developed by Tejfel & Turner (1986) in 1979. SIT attempts to identify minimal conditions under which an individual discriminate the out-group in favour of in-group. This prejudice takes birth when

an individual attempts to strongly correlate himself with the group self he belongs to. Usually, 'significant others' for individuals (i.e. parents, peer group, teachers etc.) and their experiences shape an individual's behaviour towards out-group: 'the others' (Hogg & Vaughan 2002, pp.353-4). Our study is also based upon this theory in testing the hypotheses constructed in the Indirect Exposure perspective. Moreover, opinion of generalized other as 'hearsay' has also been taken as an assumed antecedent for the formation of Islamophobia in this research.

In the conceptualization of Islamophobia, it has been pronounced that the construct (which is a complex bundle of epistemes) also affects social orders which may appear in various institutionalized forms like ingroup-outgroup differences. As Grant (2007, p.84) explains by referring to Habermas and Luhmann (1972) that the society has a tendency to reduce and simplify the complexities of subtle and complex phenomena. This study embraces a limited version of these complexities to identify whether Islamophobia as a mediated construct has any bearing upon the antecedents mentioned in the above paragraphs.

2.4. Measuring Islamophobia

Methodological operationalization is 'a process of breaking a concept or idea down into issues and questions which are measurable' (Wisker 2001, p.117). Thus, we do need to transform the abstraction of the concepts in our conceptualization of Islamophobia into instance which can be observed and measured. However, before moving to the question of measurement of Islamophobia, it is pertinent to bear in mind that our rudimentary assumption is that the construct is an attitude.

As enunciated earlier, Islamophobia is essentially negative cognitive, affective or conative/behavioural posturing of individuals and social orders towards Islam and/or Muslims. In this research, we have categorized Islamophobia into two main dimensions – epistemic/symbolic dimension and antecedent or social mediated dimension. To make it lucid and understandable, these dimensions are explained together in relation to each other with the objective of seeing antecedents' meaning not in isolation but with reference to the meaning of the construction.

Our conceptualized form of Islamophobia can better be explained in the epistemic/symbolic dimension which has two further sub-dimensions: threats sub-dimension and hatred sub-dimension. Here, threats stand for perceived threats at attitudinal level of an individual. As highlighted earlier, we have further categorized the perceived threats into cultural, political and security domains. Each threat domain has a set of indicators which measures the threats at cognitive, affective and conative/behavioral levels using a Likert scale.

Similarly, hatred has been taken as another constituent of the formation of Islamophobia which emanates from racial and cultural prejudices. We have tried to measure hatred in three heuristic steps ranging from 'mild hatred' to 'strong hatred'. Mild hatred includes avoidance from Muslims, while middle level hatred includes negative emotions and ridiculous attitude/behaviour towards Muslims. And, strong hatred includes rejection, insult and contempt of Muslims and Islam as a religion and civilization. Last but not least is the cultural prejudice, wherein we asked questions on Muslims civilization and culture in a binary fashion.

In the social/mediated dimension, there are three main sub-dimensions: mass media, interpersonal contact (direct contact) and indirect contact. The 'indirect contact' sub-dimension has been studied in further two categories: contact through significant others (like parents, teachers, community, friends, favourite leaders etc.) and hearsay contact.

As we have assumed the construct is a (mediated) attitude, thus, it should be measured on three basic postures of an attitude: cognitive (knowledge/beliefs), affective (feelings) and conative (actual actions) (Spooncer 1992, p.116). This can be done by asking questions of varied nature to collect data at different attitudinal levels. For instance, to test the cognitive domain of the attitude on Islamophobia, the question formed may be "Islam is a threat to world peace". Intensity measured using a five point Likert Scale with responses/intervals as "Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree".

3. Hypotheses

The above two-dimensional approach has been devised to study the nexus between the epistemic/symbolic dimension and social/mediated dimension. This has been so as to test the following hypotheses:

H1a: Frequent positive direct contact with the Muslims and Islam decreases Islamophobia.

H1b: Frequent negative direct contact with Muslims and Islam increases Islamophobia.

H2: Frequent negative exposure of 'significant others' (in-group individuals, e.g.; parents, family, peer group, favourite teachers etc.) results in negative attitude towards the target group (out-group minority, in this case, Muslims) (Socialization Theory, Sears 2003; Oskamp & Schultz 2005 and Social Identity Theory, Hogg & Abram 1988, Tajfel & Turner 1986) and vice versa.

H3: Strong negative perceptions of 'generalized others' towards Muslims and Islam results in negative attitude towards them.

H4: More exposure to negative media portrayal of Islam and Muslims increases Islamophobia.

4. Method

This study, primarily, is exploratory in nature. Thus, no huge collection of data was intended. It tests the theoretically refined instrument we have developed to study Islamophobia as a complex mediated construct, and attempts to explore the nexus between epistemic/symbolic and social or mediated dimensions of the construct. To refine the variable involved in the conceptualization of the construct, we conducted a focus group study in the University of Surrey to understand how young students think about Muslims and Islam. The variables surfaced from the focus group discussions supported by the literature and helped us to conceptualize the construct.

Survey methodology of research has been selected for collection of data on the variables explained in the methodological operationalization and measuring Islamophobia section. As the subject under study explores psychological propensities of individuals on sensitive issues, we have found in the preliminary testing through questionnaire distribution that the respondents were unwilling to share their true feelings. This is likely due to participants wary of being stamped as racist or biased towards Muslims and Islam. Hence, we decided to collect data by floating our questionnaire on an internet website.

This method has proven to be extremely constructive as we could see a truer reflection of participant's internal beliefs. The respondents while filling in the internet questionnaire were satisfied that they were completely anonymous.

The initial sample was selected from the University of Surrey, with majority having postgraduate or above degrees, which of course is not a true representative of the local population. Using snowball sampling technique, we requested all those who were filling in the questionnaire to forward it to all on their contact list. This sampling technique generated a good representative sample of all ages, occupation and religious identities. However, questionnaires on the web have their own limitations in terms of loose control on the selection of sample, the respondents' orientation to the issue etc. besides the data from only those who have easy access to computer technology and internet.

The questions were presented in the form of statements and the respondents were asked to click the response which they feel most suited their feelings/knowledge towards Muslims/Islam. Five-point (Strongly Agree, Agree, Feel Neutral, Disagree, & Strongly Disagree) Likert Scale has been used to measure the responses which were asked at three attitudinal levels: cognitive, affective and conative/behavioural. In coding, negative tendency has been labelled with negative numbers while positive tendency has been given positive numbers in an increasing trend with zero as the state of ambivalence or feel neutral in the scale. The pattern of questions was a mix of negative and positive statements. All statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS.

The collected data have been analyzed to see the relationship between variables within one dimension and across their domains. In this regard, it is significant to test the reliability of the scales

used in the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is considered to be the most commonly used indicators of internal consistency and its value should be above 0.7 (De Vellis 2003). The reliability factor of the instrument used in this study on Cronbach alpha coefficient has been reported at 0.916 for the 35 items.

5. Findings / Results

Data of some 106 respondents have been selected for analysis, testing of our methodology and the instrument used for data collection. Some 83% of our respondents have Christianity as their religious identity who were predominantly from the UK, and more than 85% were highly educated individuals (masters or above). Majority of our sample (72%) was over 26 years of age but below 40, and participation of females (56%) was slightly more than males (44%). With a small exception, all were either students or lecturers of the University of Surrey, and some lecturers and students from the University of Glasgow [23], Scotland also participated in the study.

In the threat perception domains, the responses were segmented into binary division of positive and neutral or negative responses. We have recorded slightly over average negative tendency at cognitive and affective levels for cultural (cog:34%, aff:60%), political (cog:25%, aff:81%) and security (cog:60%, aff:29%) threats. This tendency predicts either the denial of existence of any threat or people suffer from a state of ambivalence. Nevertheless, threat perceptions at conative/behavioural level indicate a positive tendency for cultural (conative:59%), political (conative:50%) and security (conative:77%) threats. Conative level response is somehow aggressive when it comes to addressing the maintenance of a democratic system, religion-based political activities and opening up of opportunities for Muslims to service/work. The strongest results lie at the conative level of security threat perceptions where the respondents have shown strong reservations towards Muslims and Islam, supported pre-emptive measures to contain the Muslims influx to their society, and insisted to initiate diplomatic measures to restrict the entry of Muslims into their system. However, it is quite interesting to note that the conative level threat perceptions have not been sufficiently supported by the cognitive and affective domains, which may indicate the existence of a strong behavioural tendency of an irrational or unfounded nature.

Further, there has been found a strong correlation between political and security threat perceptions at conative/behavioural level. The following table (Table-I) reflects the positive relationship:

Table I: Correlations between Conative/Behavioural Component of threat perceptions

		Total CT Conative	Total PT Conative	Total ST Conative
Total CT [24]Conative	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.570**	.680**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	106.000	106	106
Total PT [25]Conative	Pearson Correlation	.570**	1.000	.672**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	106	106.000	106
Total ST [26]Conative	Pearson Correlation	.680**	.672**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	106	106	106.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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[23] Professor Greg Philo, Media Research Group, Department of Sociology, University of Glasgow was also contacted for discussion/deliberation on the epistemic and mediated aspects of Islamophobia.
[24] Cultural Threats
[25] Political Threats
[26] Security Threats

It is quite interesting to find that all conative level threat perceptions (especially political and security) are positively correlated (as indicated in the table) with a relatively high degree at a significance level of 0.01. Individual interpretations of conative level threat perceptions indicate the same trend.

Though threat perceptions in cognitive (40%) and affective (50%) domains do not sound very high, overall threat perceptions indicate positive correlation among all facets of threat.

From the above picture, it is evident that only conative level (72%) threat perceptions are positive and high. It is pertinent to note that most of our questions (n=7) in the conative domain were at system level with the exception of two which were asked at an individual level. For instance, system level premises included that the Muslims/Islam have/has appeared to be threatening so pre-emptive measures are justified and diplomatic restrictions be increased. As these perceptions were not substantiated by any other attitudinal domain (e.g. cognitive or affective); it can be said that these attitudes are either irrational or unfounded on the part of the individuals.

Pejorative behaviour may or may not be rational in nature. It may occur with or without any cogent reasons. Usually, people have a tendency to view their own way of doing things or thinking as rational and founded while they see others as irrational if they present a contrary opinion. Hence, one may have some reasons to believe one's own behaviour as rational; whether weak or strong, at cognitive level or affective level, but at times people do not find any internal support to their behaviour. They find substantiating evidence from outside, from the system they live in, to find a rationale for their actions and to avoid attitudinal dissonance. Considering this aspect, we expect that the respondents who do not find any support from within them try to see their behaviour in consonance to their environment (predominantly mediated) in order to give rationality to their actions. This seems to be the case with the respondents towards Islam and Muslims.

Another dimension of the epistemic/symbolic of Islamophobia is hatred, which has been studied at three heuristic steps ranging from mild to strong. At the mild level, it includes avoidance from Muslims/Islam. At middle level, it includes negative emotions/feeling and ridiculous attitude towards Muslims/Islam. At strong level hatred, it includes rejection, insult and racial contempt attributes. These variables were measured at the ordinal level.

Hatred seems to exist at strong level only. The measures indicate (Mild:6%, Middle:30%, Strong:83%) that there are only a few people (15%) who have mild level hatred towards Muslims and Islam. The majority (85%) of respondents have shown strong hatred towards Muslims/Islam. It has also been found that 'Hatred' does not seem to have any strong relationship with cultural (r=.075, n=106), political (r=.041, n=106) and security threat (r=.235, n=106)[27] perceptions.

We have attempted to measure cultural prejudice as another component of Islamophobia in this study. Respondents were asked some questions (about 6) to see how they rank Muslims /Islamic culture and civilization as compared to their own culture (value system) and civilization. The measures do not reflect Muslim/Islamic culture as inferior or subdued in relation to Western civilization and culture. In terms of relationship, cultural prejudice has a positive Pearson correlation (r=0.511, n=106, p<0.05) with the political threat perceptions.

There are some highlights of social/mediated domain before proceeding to testing of hypotheses.

Direct contact of the respondents with Muslims has been measured at the ordinal level, which indicates that most of them were at some level in direct contact with Muslims. And, about 70% of the respondents viewed their direct contact with Muslims as positive.

Indirect contact has been measured in two categories: contact through significant others (i.e. parents, peers, teachers, ideal political leaders etc.) and general hearsay about Muslims/Islam. Surprisingly, a big chunk of respondents (42%) did not like to respond to as how their 'significant others' view Muslims. It might mean that either they are unclear about the feelings/thinking of their significant others towards Muslims/Islam, or they avoided answering this question. It is quite evident

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[27] Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

from the data that a relatively smaller proportion of respondents (39%) have positive or very positive impressions about Muslims in general. It can further be interpreted that they do not want to indicate that their 'significant others' have negative opinions about Muslims or they don't know at all about their opinion towards Muslims. Interestingly, we have also found the same level of responses in threat perceptions at cognitive and affective levels where the respondents either tried to hide their opinions or were suffering from a state of ambivalence.

Regarding the general approach of people towards Muslims/Islam, the majority of people (67%) think that Muslims are seen negatively by the masses. This has been inferred from the measures of opinion/feelings of the participants about Muslims in the 'generalized others' or in the 'hearsay' variable. Primarily, these measures cover the social/mediated domain of the construct in a social system. Our study does not heavily focus upon this side of the construction of Islamophobia, we have however attempted to make our instrument exhaustive, leaving fewer vacuums for the respondents while opining about Muslims/Islam.

It has also been found that media (72%), friends (57%) and community (53%) are the main sources of information for most of the people in our sample. While, from a vast array of media sources, most of the respondents feel that television (74%), newspapers (74%) and internet (72%) are their main sources of information about Muslims. The respondents were given the option to select multiple sources of information about Muslims/Islam.

Interestingly, only TV as a media source is positively correlated (r=0.27, n=106, p<0.01) with cultural threat perceptions. While, our data do not support any significant correlation between newspapers and any threat perceptions, hatred or cultural prejudice[28]. Internet as an antecedent also does not seem to have any positive correlation with any threat perception, hatred or cultural prejudice[29]. Here, another relevant factor is the media exposure of the respondents which is 1-2 hours on average.

A general question on media representation of Muslims in respondents' view indicates that most commonly attributes associated with Muslims are: they are culturally different (72%), anti-women (68%), critical to West (55%), intolerant (53%), extremist (49%), they follow an aggressive ideology (45%) and Muslims are rigid (43%). The questions on representation offered an array of 15 different negative attributes.

5.1. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses have been tested using binary logistic regression which includes chi-square, Cox & Snell R Square, Nagelkerke R Square and Hosmer and Lemeshow test. Following are the results of the hypotheses:

Hypothesis H1a predicted that frequent positive direct contact with the Muslims and Islam decreases Islamophobia. Here, direct positive contact with Muslims is an independent variable, while low Islamophobia is the sequel of the contact. Contrarily, H1b predicts increased Islamophobia as a result of negative direct contact with Muslims. As Islamophobia had three dimensions, thus, the results are also presented in each dimension separately.

Binary logistic regression has been performed to assess the impact of direct contact (either negative or positive) with Muslims. In threat perceptions dimension, cultural threats do not seem to emanate as a result of either kind of contact with Muslims among the respondents, with chi-square (1, N=106)=1.65, recording a minimum odds ratio of 1.00. The same is the case with other sub-dimensions of threat perceptions with the direct contact.

In terms of hatred as a component of our dependent variable, chi-square (1, N=106)=8.29 with slightly higher Cox and Snell R square and 67.9% correctly classified cases. It can also be interpreted

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[28] Pearson Correlation of Newspapers with threat perceptions (r=.075, n=106, p<0.01), with hatred (r=.113, n=106, p<0.01) and with cultural prejudice (r=.009, n=106, p<0.01).

[29] Pearson Correlation of Internet with threat perceptions (r=.050, n=106, p<0.01), with hatred (r=.147, n=106, p<0.01) and with cultural prejudice (r=.054, n=106, p<0.01).

as an insignificant predictor of hatred as a constituent of Islamophobia. The results on cultural prejudice (third constituent of Islamophobia) are not any different than others. Thus, it can be inferred from the statistics that Direct Contact of whether negative or positive nature does not significantly impact any constituent of Islamophobia, in the given sample.

The hypothesis H2 predicts that frequent negative exposure of 'significant others' (in-group individuals, e.g.; parents, family, peer group, favourite teachers etc.) results in negative attitude towards the target group (out-group minority, in this case, Muslims) and vice versa.

In the threat dimension, the statistical tests (chi-square (1, N=106)=0.923, 1.133, 0.909 at cultural, political and security threats respectively) do not support the hypothesis. However, threat perceptions in the political side indicate relatively positive trend.

The same was seen in the cultural prejudice dimension[30] of Islamophobia in relation to negative or positive exposure of 'significant others' (e.g. parents, family, peer group, favourite teachers etc.) with Muslims as a predictor.

Regarding the perceptions of 'generalized others' towards Muslims and Islam and its impact on generation or degeneration of Islamophobia in hypothesis H3, only security threat sub-dimension seems to have a positive correlation. It can be inferred from the following table (Table-II) that those who claim to receive an opinion about Muslims from their surrounding have security threat perceptions as high as 2.50 than those who do not seem to have been effected by the opinion of people around them.

Table II: Logistic Regression Predicting Security Threat Perception

	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Generalized Others	.930	.693	1.801	1	.180	2.533
Constant	.405	.645	.395	1	.530	1.500

The statistical analysis does not predict any positive relationship with the hatred and cultural prejudice as the constituents of Islamophobia in relation to the opinion of generalized others.

The last hypothesis (H4) predicts the impact of mass media on the construction of Islamophobia in a direct proportional manner. We have found that most of our respondents use television, newspapers and internet as a source of their information about Muslims and Islam. Thus, we have attempted to analyze the hypothesis by taking these three media as our predictors. In the threat perception dimension, the relationship is explained between 15.5% (Cox and R Square) and 37.5% (Nagelkerke R Square) of variance in the data which is classified 92.5% of the cases with chi-square (3,N=106)=17.883, p<.001. The following table (Table - III) indicates that cultural threats are about 14 times higher among those who have relatively heavy TV viewing (about 2 or more hours a day), as compared to 3 times higher among the internet users. However, we did not find any significant relationship of newspaper reading with the generation of cultural threats from Muslims and Islam.

Table III: Logistic Regression Predicting Cultural Threat Perception

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I.for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Media_TV	2.684	.892	9.052	1	.003	14.637	2.548	84.076
Media_NP	-19.609	6930.693	.000	1	.998	.000	.000	.000
Media_Internet	1.083	.851	1.618	1	.203	2.953	.557	15.667
Constant	19.619	6930.693	.000	1	.998	3.314E8		

However, political threat perceptions are less likely to be affected (chi-square (1, N=106)=2.389, 1.066 & 0.722 for TV, newspapers and internet, respectively) by the mass media

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[30] Chi-square (1, N=106)=0.324

overall. Among the selected media, television seems to have relatively stronger correlation with the threat perceptions. And, security threat perceptions (chi-square (1,N=106)=1.266) are more likely to be affected by the use of internet among the respondents.

Similarly, hatred and cultural prejudice as the constituents of Islamophobia have not been observed to be strongly correlated with mass media as their predictor in the statistical analysis[31]. However, the use of internet among the selected media seems to have relatively stronger effect on these dimensions of Islamophobia.

6. Discussion

Though this exploratory study did not intend to collect an extensive data body to assess the construction of Islamophobia in the UK, nevertheless, it was destined to assist in defining the nature of the construct. The study tests an instrument for measuring Islamophobia by developing its nexus with an array of social and mediated antecedents. The results obtained seem to have been based strongly on the constructivist media effects model which says that audience rely on "a version of reality built from personal experience, Interaction with peers, and interpreted selections from the mass media" (Neuman et al 1992, p.120). Our data on Islamophobia, though collected from a highly educated class, overall support this version of the construction of reality.

The study poses high conative/behavioural level threat perceptions towards Muslims/Islam. One of the interpretations might support the premise that increased media coverage of terrorism following 9/11 episode increases threat perceptions[32], without sufficiently affecting the individual schema (cognitive) and beliefs (affective). Secondly, heavy media coverage of terrorism indicating Muslims as the central part might leave a 'mark' on the perceptions, which requires further reflections by the personal experience, peer group orientation and change in cognitive and affective structures of the attitudes. An individual unconsciously makes an effort to avoid becoming a victim of an irrational behaviour. Thus, he tries to find reasons for his behaviour from his environment. Additionally, Noelle-Neumann in her famous theory of 'spiral of silence' asserts that a person is less likely to voice an opinion on a topic if one feels that one is in the minority for fear of reprisal or isolation from the majority (Anderson 1996, p.214; Noelle-Neumann 1993). This state does not require any attitude change at cognitive or affective level, but conative/behavioral stance correlates with the climate of opinion in the social system.

In the threat perception domain, political and security threat perceptions have been seen to correlate strongly with each other, albeit also having a weaker link with cultural threat perceptions. Such dominance and relationship between political and security threat perception should be viewed from within the contemporary Muslim world perspective and the media portrayal of the events taking place there. The work of Poole (2002), Said (1997), Ahmed (1993), Field (2007), Mescher (2008), Saeed (2007) and many others indicates that the media representation of Muslims and Islam has clearly been negative in the recent past. It has been quite noticeable that this negative representation has heavily been describing issues of political and security nature. Thus, the construction of threat perceptions in political, terror and security dimensions appears to be quite logical.

Finally, as this research is primarily destined to assess the construction of Islamophobia and measure its nexus with social and mediated antecedents, we did not venture to see the flip side on the measurement scale, i.e., the attitudes of people with no negative sentiments who rejected the fears and threats posed. This is another arena which requires further investigation in the future.

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[31] For hatred, chi-square (1, N=106)=1.052, 1.535 & 1.809 for TV, newspapers and internet, respectively. For cultural prejudice, chi-square (1, N=106)=1.076, 0.973 & 1.600 for TV, newspapers and internet, respectively.

[32] This is one of the findings of Gadarian, Shana. *"The Politics of Threat: The Effect of Media on Foreign Policy Attitudes"* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Palmer House Hotel, Chicago, IL, Apr 12, 2007. Its abstract is available on http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p198033_index.html. We retrieved it on October 01, 2008.

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