

From voice to voices: identifying a plurality of Muslim sources in the news media

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Abstract

This article identifies a qualitative change in the diversity of actors who represent Muslims in British news media. Hitherto, the literature discussing Muslims and the media has tended to characterize media organizations as institutions which portray Muslims in an essentialized, monolithic way. In contrast, I propose in this article that the process of representation is more complex, including greater agency and engaging a wider diversity of Muslims than the prevailing literature suggests. Sociological studies distinguish between official and unofficial sources who help determine the representations that journalists employ in their texts, and I apply this to Muslim communities in Glasgow. Using qualitative methods drawn from media production analysis, including participant-observation and ethnographic interviews, I identify a shift from a ‘gatekeeper’ model of representing the community to that of a plurality of sources, which reveals and insists on the diversity of Muslim communities and voices. I will show why a wider range of actors emerged to speak publicly, what differentiates them and how they position themselves as representatives of Muslims. This focus on producers and on source strategies brings fresh insights into a field dominated by content analysis and a ‘media-centric’ approach.

Keywords

Glasgow, media, Muslims, news sources, production analysis, qualitative methods

Introduction

Since academic scholarship has turned its attention to British media representations of Muslims,¹ its findings have told a consistent story: These representations are flat and undifferentiated. Studies may distinguish between coverage of global and local communities

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(Poole, 2002) or between tabloid and broadsheet press approaches (Baker, 2010; Richardson, 2004). They often highlight the political orientation of the media organizations they study. Despite these variations, scholars conclude that the media construct a limited, negative and monolithic portrayal of Muslims. This seam of scholarship began with content analyses of the British press contemporary with the preparation of the Runnymede Trust's report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* (Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, 1997); subsequent events, including the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States (Poole, 2006) and the UK attacks in London and Glasgow (Moore et al., 2008), have become further crises through which journalists can report on Muslims and, in the view of scholars, misrepresent them.

As consistent as this scholarship has been, it has proved incurious about the conditions in which these representations are formed. Ethnographers of news organizations have used media production analysis to enrich the scholarship of journalism (e.g. Schlesinger, 1987; Tuchman, 1978). In this article, I apply some of their qualitative methods to the reporting of Muslims, injecting a dose of fieldwork research into a body of literature principally composed of austere content analysis. I study Muslim sources who contribute the raw material which journalists craft into the stories they publish. This examination of sources disturbs the orthodox view that news reporting represents Muslims as a monolithic group.

Sources in media scholarship

Sources have received scant scrutiny in the scholarship of Muslims and the media. Richardson (2006) tallied sources in the stories from his 1997–1998 sample of British broadsheet reportage on Muslims. Bureaucratic sources dominated his findings, and less than a fifth of primary sources in stories about Muslims were Muslim; moreover, Muslim sources were criticized more in coverage ‘when the actions of Muslims are perceived and represented as being especially “Islamic”’ (Richardson, 2006: 110). Meer et al. (2010) analysed a more recent sample, focusing on coverage of the 2006 ‘Veil Affair’. Jack Straw, MP for Blackburn and at the time a minister in Tony Blair’s Labour government, wrote a newspaper column expressing his wish that women who wore the niqab or veil covering the face would remove it when visiting his surgery. Meer et al. discovered a widening of perspectives among quoted sources, categorizing three types of responses: angry, ambiguous and approving. Meer et al. (2010) did not suggest that their study encompassed the full range of Muslim voices present in the media, but they expanded what had hitherto been deemed a static, flat representation, and they encouraged more studies to add flesh to these bones (p. 217). For this task, we must apply methods that engage with the producers of those texts.

The focus on ‘producers’ in ethnographic analysis of journalism, however, has been one-sided, limited primarily to the journalists. Gans (1980) determined sources were of paramount importance in the production of news (p. 281), but he failed to include them in his ethnographic research on US national news media. In a hefty footnote in his study’s conclusion, he advocated for more thorough analysis of sources – not as appendages to research on journalists but as a subject in their own right (Gans, 1980: 360, fn3). Schlesinger (1990) found that previous media ethnographies took an instrumental or

'media-centric' view of sources and offered an alternative framework that draws on Bourdieu's concept of fields to theorize journalists and sources in relationship (see Bourdieu, 2005; also Benson and Neveu, 2005).

Schlesinger's attention to this relationship has inspired scholars to view both sources and journalists as producers. Scholars have incorporated this focus in research on fields such as politics (e.g. Davis, 2009) and AIDS research (e.g. Miller et al., 1998), and coverage of Muslims would benefit from such an approach (Munnik, 2015). However, Schlesinger's model for correcting media centrism demands a thorough accounting of the source community in question. In this article, I propose a qualitative delineation of various sources and their relations in the news ecosystem of Glasgow.

Muslim sources in Glasgow

In this article, I trace a shift from a 'gatekeeper' model of representing the community, resembling the monolithic depiction which the media are allegedly guilty of reproducing, to that of a plurality of sources which reveals and insists on the diversity of Muslim communities and voices. I show *why* a wider range of actors emerged to speak publicly, *what* differentiates them and *how* they position themselves as representatives. My research, conducted between August 2012 and March 2014, includes both journalists and sources in Glasgow, a large city with underresearched Muslim populations and a density of news organizations. I did not limit myself to one news organization or one community group but rather engaged with journalists and sources across the city, reflecting the integrated field in which these actors operate. My sample includes 30 formal interviews, supported by participant observation, documentary analysis and the inclusion of my prior professional journalistic experience as an ethnographic resource (Collins and Gallinat, 2010).² I provisionally sort the formal interviews between journalists (12) and sources (18), although these categories are porous. This article focuses on sources, and all interviews with these participants were semi-structured, lasting from 30 minutes to an hour, with one interview lasting for more than 2 hours. All but three were conducted face to face, commonly at the interviewee's place of work. Most participants were willing to be identified for this research, and where useful, I name those I am permitted to identify. Three of the sources identified as non-Muslim. I gathered this purposive sample through targeted contact and snowballing, reflecting the relational focus and the specific problem of the research questions. This sample is neither exhaustive nor representative, but it allows us to ask about practices and examples to better understand the accomplishment of reporting on Muslims in Glasgow.

From gatekeeper to plurality

The history and development of Glasgow's Muslim population are in many ways typical of the United Kingdom. Muslim men came in the late-19th and early-20th centuries as labourers, settled in port regions and tended not to stay long (Dunlop and Miles, 1990; Maan, 2008). The pressures on employment in Britain after the Second World War and on lifestyle in south Asia after the partition of India meant more men migrated

and stayed, eventually bringing family with them. Demographic research notes that after the 1970s, many Muslims came to Glasgow from England, suggesting the idea of better opportunities in Scotland (Mir, 2005: 96–97), a trend reflected in my field data. However attractive Glasgow may have become, barriers of language, culture and class impaired communication between earlier generations of Muslims and institutions, such as the state, the police and the media. One man seems entwined with the social negotiation between these groups: Bashir Maan. Maan came to Glasgow in 1953 to study chemistry. He was already educated and spoke English, and he noticed that fellow migrants from Pakistan were neglected by institutions and unable to articulate their needs. He began translating letters and speaking to officials on their behalf, and soon he had dropped his studies and committed himself to acting as an interlocutor. This service was formalized in 1968 when he was named Justice of the Peace; 2 years later, he was elected to Glasgow city council, and both of these achievements were firsts for Muslims in the United Kingdom. Miles and Dunlop (1986) have noted an absence of the ‘racialization of politics’ in Scotland, and Mir (2005) saw an absence of social and economic disenfranchisement that distinguishes Glasgow from the mill towns of northern England (pp. 191–192). My data reflect these trends, suggesting features that make Glasgow hard to generalize from.

Maan’s social ubiquity and authority made him an easy choice for journalists attempting to contact local Muslims or clarify details. He described himself as a ‘middle man’, but I use the term ‘gatekeeper’. The word was first applied in media studies to the desk editor of a news organization who received information through wire reports, releases and public tips, and decided what would be ‘news’ (White, 1950). Controlling the flow of information is intrinsic to the role of gatekeeper, but this usage applied to the management of access to the *newsroom* rather than the *source organization*. As Ericson et al. (1989) show, however, this process also works in the opposite direction, with sources acting as a buffer between curious journalists and active agents (p. 25). My contrast of the term ‘gatekeeper’ to describe a prior form of engagement with ‘source’ or ‘voice’ to describe the current forms of engagement might occlude the fact that I am describing the same process of controlling information. It is the proliferation of people filling this role that is significant for my argument, and I use the contrasting terms in an historical sense for clarity.

Maan was instrumental in the coverage of Glasgow’s Muslims, providing comment, clarification and contacts for journalists who produced stories ranging from community features to a report about a dispute between a tenant and her Asian landlord – an early example of the ‘odgy landlord’ story that, according to one of my journalist participants, still characterizes much of the tabloid coverage of Muslims in Glasgow. Depictions of Muslims in mid-20th-century Glasgow’s media were largely managed by and filtered through the priorities of Maan. Several participants who have positioned themselves more recently as sources noted the dominance of Maan and, later, Mohammad Sarwar³ in media relations. Aamer Anwar, an activist and lawyer, used the term ‘community leader’ in a sarcastic fashion, and Salah Beltagui, board member for the Muslim Council of Scotland, called journalists ‘lazy: when they get someone, they just go back to him. Bashir Maan was their man for a long time’.

Why voices emerged

This 'gatekeeper' model changed after the attacks of 9/11. The landmark event drove public and media interest in Muslims. Some scholars suggest the publicity of Muslims as *Muslims* (and as a problem) traces earlier in Britain, to the outcry after the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* (e.g. Modood, 1990; Silverman and Yuval-Davis, 1999). Two of my participants discussed the importance of the Rushdie Affair for their public engagement with issues related to Muslims, but most dismissed this and pointed instead to 9/11. Quantitative analyses of news content chart a spike of interest in Muslims from 2001 which has sustained itself since (Baker et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2008). Morey and Yaqin (2011) surveyed media representations in the United Kingdom and United States since 9/11, and they prescribe 'Muslim self-fashioning' as a counter to the negative, imposed representation described at the article's beginning (p. 215). For them, this is best done by creating and consuming 'Muslim media', but self-fashioning can also include participation in 'mainstream media'.

Several participants described to me a meeting about a fortnight after 9/11 – some located it at Glasgow Central Mosque, others the old headquarters of Radio Ramadhan. Those present were worried about how Muslims would fare publicly after the attacks and how they ought to respond. Those described as 'the old guard' recommended a quietist approach, keeping quiet to weather the storm. For other participants, such as Osama Saeed – at the time a student and activist, though he has since run for public office and worked for Al Jazeera in Qatar – the preferred response was to engage with the wider public, 'to explain ourselves' and 'build bridges between ourselves and other communities'. Saeed pitched this second group as both 'younger' and 'born and brought up' in Scotland, and this corroborates what journalists told me in interviews: that they sought comments from Muslims living in Glasgow about the attacks, and that there was a shift in the age of those willing to participate – the so-called second generation. Beltagui, more representative of 'the old guard', said that because of their youth and their British nativity, these people understood the requirements of the media better than their elders.

The degree to which this proliferation of sources emerged on its own or was called into being by the needs of journalists is debatable. Rosengren (1981) proposed the 'interdependence' model to address the sociological question of whether culture influences social structure or vice versa, or more specifically, whether mass media are agents of change or reinforcers of the status quo; rather than take an either/or approach, he suggested the two can be interdependent. This characterizes my assessment of journalist–source dynamics. One editor I spoke with told me his newsroom expands its range of sources on a particular issue when it begins to recur in coverage, giving the example of same-sex marriage. He said fresh voices keep the audience (and the journalists) from getting bored with the 'same old' coverage. This challenges the assertion that 'lazy' journalists return to the same sources, but sustained observation of journalists could compare what I was told in an interview with daily practice.⁴ Arifa Farooq, a journalist with BBC Scotland, recalled sitting with senior producers after 9/11, drafting lists of contacts to include in programming. Farooq had been hired the previous year out of a corporate scheme designed to train and recruit journalists from minority populations. Farooq noted the serendipity of her position: 'as ironic as it is, it [9/11] actually launched me'. The

younger, media-savvy Muslims referred to above presented themselves to journalists, but whether this translated into more diverse representation or the forging of new relationships still depends on journalists' interest. Conversely, without receptivity to media requests on the part of Muslims, journalists would be left with the usual suspects.

What voices have emerged

There are several ways in which the new plurality of Muslim sources in Glasgow is constituted. I differentiate them by institutional affiliation, political orientation and religious disposition as well as age, gender and ethnicity. This does not exhaust the ways these participants identify themselves; again, the purpose of this article is not to fix a typology on the field but to demonstrate a range beyond the limited characterization that has prevailed in the scholarly representation of journalistic practice.

In terms of institutional affiliation, my participants range from official to unofficial sources, which I understand as poles of a spectrum rather than binary opposites. Those closest to the state, who have institutional roles, are more official, and Glaswegians are represented by Muslim politicians at three levels of government: city council, Scottish Parliament and British Parliament. Still on the 'official' side of the spectrum, lawyers have a close relationship to state actors and the ability to influence legal change through courtroom challenges. Glasgow also contains groups offering religious or cultural support – less official but nonetheless conferred with authority by dint of the constituency they represent. Among these are mosques and bodies such as the Muslim Council of Scotland or the Islamic Finance Council. Muslims are also active in the voluntary sector, either with explicitly Muslim functions, such as AMINA – Muslim Women's Resource Centre (Amina), or more general community support. Unofficial groups concerned with niche issues or neighbourhood affairs can similarly work through and with the media.

Glaswegian Muslims also range across political parties. The Labour Party has historically been the natural home for Muslims, Asians and minorities generally throughout the United Kingdom (Messina, 1989). No study isolates electoral politics among Glaswegian Muslims, but comments from my participants indicate the city was no different, and the two named gatekeepers of the pre-9/11 period were elected Labour representatives. This link, however, has been ruptured, as it has for the broad UK population (see Glynn, 2008). Two members of the 2011 Scottish Parliament identified as Muslim: one for Labour and one in the Scottish National Party's cabinet. Labour and Scottish National Party (SNP) Muslims sit on Glasgow council. More research mapping the political affiliations – past and present – of Scottish Muslims would be welcome, but as a simple illustration, Muslims stood as candidates in the 2011 Scottish parliamentary election for the following four 'main' parties: SNP, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative. Journalists have a range of political voices to turn to.

Outwith party politics, political orientation among my participants is differentiated by issues and approach. Five participants mentioned an activist student past, and two of those said they had been members of the Socialist Workers Party. Activist interests also animated cross-party and non-party resistance to the war in Iraq. This diverges from what some of my participants characterized as a quietist approach among the elder generations of Muslims in Glasgow. They said young people are frustrated in their desire to talk

about political issues *as Muslims in a Muslim context*. This division by age, however, is not so straightforward: ‘elder’ gatekeeper Maan spoke publicly about his decision not to renew his membership with the Labour Party in 2004 after the war in Iraq began.

The relationship between political and religious elements of Islam leads to another category of differentiation – that of religious disposition. I discuss religious conservatism and progressivism, although these terms are contested and imprecise. Islam can accommodate many perspectives due to its devolved authority structure: God is sovereign, and the Qur’an is God’s word, but the application and interpretation of its dictates in daily life are contingent and internally contested. Beltagui said he knows people practice their religion at ‘different levels’; yet, in Islam, ‘some issues are yes/no’. In his role with the Muslim Council of Scotland, he has spoken to parliamentary committee and to the media opposing equal marriage legislation. Anwar, meanwhile, said he was asked about his position on that same issue at a public event, and he supported it, challenging other Muslim leaders to do the same. Anwar characterized himself as an outlier, but he was not the only one of my participants to take this stance. Muslims are also religiously differentiated along sectarian lines, although not among my participants, nor did source participants refer to Islamic sectarianism. This may indicate numerical and social predominance of Sunnis in the city, connected to an ethnic predominance of south Asians, as discussed below.

Three other markers distinguish the Muslim participants in my sample: age, gender and ethnicity. The first has already surfaced in this discussion, and both younger and older Muslims are in active media relationships. The gender balance of Muslim spokespeople has poorly reflected the population’s demographic dispersal. The two gatekeepers described above are both men, and Saeed described the typical Muslim with access to the media ‘as a spokesperson, or almost always spokesmen’, emphasizing ‘men’ to highlight the gender imbalance. Although I would not argue that parity has been reached, I will say the absolutism of that characterization belongs in the past tense: Of the 15 Muslim source participants in this study, 9 are women. One is an elected councillor, one is a community activist and the others work with a women’s resource centre, ranging from volunteers to staff, including the director.⁵ Another Muslim woman in this study works as a journalist for BBC Scotland. Whereas gender is a theme that arose during my interviews, ethnicity was less of a concern. Only two participants discussed the ethnic diversity of Glasgow, with Amina director Smina Akhtar saying this was poorly represented in her organization’s staff and volunteer roll, and colleague Samina Ansari noting that despite the diversity of Scotland’s Muslims, the stereotype people (not only journalists) invoke is ‘the Pakistani’. In the 2011 Scottish census, two-thirds of those who identified as Muslim in Glasgow claimed Pakistani ethnicity (National Records of Scotland, 2014). My sample was less diverse: Three of the sixteen participants who identified as Muslim indicated ethnicity other than Pakistani – one from Sudan, one from Egypt and one ethnically English convert.

Without exhausting the range of Muslims in Glasgow who engage with journalists, we can see that the notion of Muslims as an undifferentiated monolith does not pertain. They are politically and religiously diverse, and they span the spectrum of more or less official status. The source pool is wider than a coterie of two first-generation Pakistani men, religiously conservative, politically quietist and elected to public office under the banner of the Labour Party.

How voices emerge

Given the plurality of voices described above, journalists attempting to fit such divergent views into a narrative of uniformity have a difficult task. This task is sometimes made easier by sources who claim representative status, suggesting that their comments assert ‘the’ Muslim view. In this regard, I encountered confused responses from my participants. On one hand, they claimed they did not speak ‘for’ Muslims. On the other hand, they used the singular term ‘the community’ to talk of fellow Muslims in Glasgow.⁶ When sources use such language, journalists are licenced to include it in their representations. There is, then, a gap between content and expression. Alternately, sources who act as conduits, passing journalists onto other Muslims in the city, further diversify the representation of their coreligionists.

Declarations from my participants of their unrepresentative status were typically direct. When asked to describe his status, Anwar said,

I don’t know if I could go down the line of being ‘the Muslim voice’ on these issues, because to a certain extent that’s what used to piss me off twenty-odd years ago when community leaders were standing up and claim[ing] on behalf of the Muslims that they represented the whole community.

Anwar said he is mindful of being ‘one of a number of Muslim voices’ in Glasgow. No participants claimed to speak for all Muslims in Glasgow, and even members of representative bodies, such as the Muslim Council of Scotland, limited the scope of their constituency. Participants also made implicit claims to partial representativity: Fariha Thomas, in her capacity as a community worker on women’s issues, participated in a radio broadcast on the subject of the niqab, ‘just to put across the point of view that, for a lot of women, it’s actually quite an empowering thing to cover their face ... Because that’s the view that a lot of women have’. Her use of the phrase ‘a lot of women’ signalled its partial quality: She did not claim that all Muslim women feel this way or hold this position, nor that it is properly Islamic to do so. Thomas does not wear the niqab, although she does wear the hijab or headscarf. The diversity of Muslim women was implicitly manifest in her language.

The subtlety of language can indicate the opposite, however, just as easily. Every source participant in my study and 7 of 12 journalist participants used the term ‘the community’ in reference to Muslims in Glasgow, with three-fifths of that number using the stronger, more direct phrase ‘the Muslim community’. This implied a singularity to Muslims that belied what were often explicit statements about their heterogeneity. I raised this point with Farooq, the journalist, during our interview, asking about ‘the Glasgow community of Muslims’ but offering her the language of ‘communities’ as an alternative. She said the plural term was more accurate and described why in ways consistent with previous answers. But her awareness of the variance between her language and her content had made her reflexive within the interview, because 2 minutes later, she said this:

So, because Muslims operate on the back foot, the commu- now, I’m going to say ‘the community’, right? It feels it’s under siege; it’s always under the spotlight. It’s public enemy number one.

She laughed at herself for falling into a trap, yet, recognizing her stumble, she continued with the singular pronoun 'it'. This strain between content and expression resurfaced over the remainder of our interview. Saeed caught how his own language contradicted the substance of his argument in a similar move, and he qualified his unifying statement with the vague and unsupported phrase 'large parts of the community'. It may be making too much of linguistic slips to focus on these singular nouns when the content of their conversations with me clearly indicated a belief in the plurality of Muslim voices. However, the critique that some of my source participants level at journalists – that 'they' say 'we' are all the same – is undercut by the way they sometimes spoke about their coreligionists.

The incomplete representativity which participants professed was also manifest in their willingness to direct journalists to others. Participants from Amina described being asked by journalists to find Muslim women who fit a particular profile – for example, wearing the niqab. Journalists used them for their network, making them conduits to the desired source. Anwar said he was phoned by a reporter for *Scotland on Sunday* about the same issue: He offered comment but encouraged the reporter to speak to women who wear the niqab rather than restrict herself to 'community leaders'. By acting as conduits, these sources widened even further the pool of potential sources to whom journalists could turn for comment. Some participants reported a strategic advantage to doing so, as it indicated a breadth of support for issues. Thomas gave the example of a report on child grooming, which the Muslim Women's Network UK released with the cooperation of agencies that were not defined religiously. The strategy of expanding the range of voices speaking to journalists is intended to increase the salience of the issue at hand.

The practice carries a risk, though: Ericson et al. (1989) note the social capital conferred on the one who interacts with the media (p. 393), and if journalists are pleased with the answers the new source gives or the way she speaks (i.e. the tight, expressive speech that suits news writing), the original source could be supplanted. When Maan described his media relations with journalists before 9/11, he talked of introducing journalists to situations and people but remaining the one who represents them, who shares their stories. However, the more devolved practices of sources who have emerged since 9/11 may have influenced Maan's approach: He shared an anecdote of encouraging a young man to speak to reporters at a press conference in 2006. Journalists had reported that the young man's sister had been abducted by their father and taken from Stornoway to Lahore, Pakistan. These reports came from a police press release, which included statements from the girl's Scottish mother. The young man told reporters that his sister had left of her own will, preferring to live in an Islamic environment with her father, and Maan told me that it was the brother's testimony that was compelling for reporters, not his own third-party intervention. Maan is now stepping back from his public role, wishing to relinquish the role of spokesperson because of his age and health. He said he encouraged young Muslims to write letters to newspapers and begin their own engagement with the media, albeit under his mentorship; they had not taken him up on his offer, which he regretted.

Conclusion

The discussion above illustrates how differentiated the participants in this study are. Although they do not exhaust the range of Muslims who do or could engage with

journalists in Glasgow, they show that the notion of one or two privileged community leaders no longer prevails in the field of media relations. They have identified 9/11 as a moment when journalists showed increased interest in Muslims and a desire to speak with a wider range of people and also a moment when Muslims felt it crucial to represent themselves. If these new voices came from roughly the same orientation as the gatekeepers of the past, this might not be so significant a development. But we have seen that these sources are not merely elders and not merely men. They represent a plurality of political interests and social institutions. And, perhaps crucially, given the religious element of the designation ‘Muslim’, they present more than a so-called orthodox view on issues with religious content. In preparing news stories about whether Scotland ought to permit people of the same sex to marry or ban women from covering their face in public, journalists can speak with sources who contradict each other.

This may lead puzzled reporters to ask, ‘What do Muslims really stand for, then?’ That would be a healthy question, guiding journalists to a more subtle understanding of people who identify or are identified as Muslim. The accusation that journalists ‘get’ religion – and specifically Islam – ‘wrong’ presupposes a ‘right’ way to report on Islam. The diversity of sources discussed here suggests ‘right’ reporting may be a chimera and that right and wrong are as subjective as positive and negative. When one source says, ‘Islam says this ...’ another may offer a differing claim. If journalists engage with this diversity and represent it accurately, news coverage will demonstrate that Muslims can stand for many things and still be Muslims.

Scholars are beginning to account for this diversity in their content analyses, but they do not help us understand who these diverse sources are and what factors distinguish them. Moreover, such an approach ignores sources who contribute to news content without appearing in the published versions by clarifying information or acting as a conduit to other sources. Despite their invisibility, these sources influence the shape of the resulting news product and the understanding of the journalists they help. The literature on journalist–source relations has identified this co-creative aspect, and in the context of the representation of Muslims, these hidden points of contact disturb the polarization of journalists and Muslims which scholars have proposed. By adopting the methods of media production analysis, I have provided a thicker description of the plurality of Muslim voices in Glasgow. This is not to say that these sources have equal access to or receive equal treatment from journalists. Further contextual studies that examine the relationship between journalists and Muslim sources will advance this area of research. In this article, I have proposed ways of identifying and making sense of the field of sources and the ways in which its members position themselves, which provides a foundation for such research.

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Notes

1. I use the word 'Muslim' in this article as a religious, cultural and social identification, including people who identify or are identified by others (accurately or erroneously) as adherents of Islam. I make no claims about what it takes to 'be' a Muslim, recognizing that there are competing views regarding what practices or beliefs make one properly Muslim. For more on this problem, see Meer (2012).
2. One journalist and three sources gave formal interviews but later withdrew, and three sources whom I approached declined to take part. Members of one community group negotiated their inclusion in the project but ultimately did not invite me to observe their work or interview them, and two news organizations did not respond to requests for access.
3. Sarwar was the Labour candidate for Pollokshields East in 1987's Glasgow council elections; he ran again and was elected in 1992. In 1997, he was elected as Britain's first Muslim member of parliament (MP), representing the Glasgow Govan constituency for Labour.
4. In my professional experience as a journalist with the Canada's public broadcaster, editors and journalists valued finding new sources and weaning ourselves from 'the usual suspects', but this was mitigated by pressures of deadlines, which often drove us to call people we had already used for comment.
5. The high number of participants from one organization will, of course, distort the apparent balance in the sample.
6. For a brief, clear and well-referenced discussion of the difficulty with 'the Muslim community', see Baumann (1996: 14–20). Baker et al. (2013) analysed the term linguistically concerning British media (pp. 124–129).

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