Article

Dismantling the Deadlock: Australian Muslim Women's Fightback against the Rise of Right-Wing Media

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Abstract: In Australia, as in other multicultural countries, the global Islamophobic discourse linking Muslims to terrorists to refugees results in the belief of an "enemy within", which fractures the public sphere. Muslim minorities learn to distrust mainstream media as the global discourse manifests in localised right-wing discussion. This fracturing was further compounded in 2020 with increased media concentration and polarisation. In response, 12 young Australian Muslim women opened themselves up to four journalists working for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). They engaged in critical journalism research called Frame Reflection Interviews (FRIs). The process gave journalists important knowledge around the power dynamics of Islamophobia and empowered participants to help shape new media discourses tackling Islamophobia. This paper proposes that the FRIs are one method to rebuild trust in journalism while redistributing risk towards the journalists. These steps are necessary to build a normatively cosmopolitan global public sphere capable of breaking the discursive link between refugees and terrorism and fighting back against the rise of the far right.

Keywords: Islamophobia; journalism; public sphere; trust

1. Introduction

The fusion of refugee movements, terrorism and Islamophobia in public discourse impacts the citizenship status of Muslim minorities in Western countries. In Australia, in 2020, this was seen during a COVID-19, human-rights-violating, police-enforced lockdown of 3000 residents in nine public housing estate tower blocks (BBC 2020).

Many of the tower residents were former refugees and asylum seekers. The brutal speed and strong police, as opposed to health worker, presence, raised questions about the underlying racism and classism at work—it highlighted that the global media and political discourse of separation does not stop in refugee camps and warzones. At a global scale, the separation of "us" and "them" is entangled with the separation of "here" and "there":

> media and political discourse defines 'us' as white, non-Muslim bodies notably in Europe and America and 'them' as brown, Muslim bodies who come from and should remain notably in the Middle East and Northern Africa. These understandings often reinforce colonial discourse that Muslims do not belong in these countries: their presence is conditional and their communities are considered suspect. (Najib and Hopkins 2020, p. 452)

Existing as both an institution and the modern space in which much everyday culture is formed, the media is a key instrument in Islamophobia which exists through the force of institutions and everyday culture and practices, what Foucault would label governmentality (Finlay and Hopkins 2020, p. 553). In some cases, the media purposefully amplifies Islamophobic discourses for ideological or commercial gain, and in other cases, it simply does a poor job of considering the perspectives of Muslim minorities.

Australian research has highlighted that disadvantaged groups have a long history of marginalisation within the public sphere (Jakubowicz and Seneviratne 1996; Richards

2014; Thomas et al. 2019; Waller 2010). Rodrigues and Paradies (2018) found that alienation drives multicultural minority audiences away from Australian mainstream news but this disengagement only leads to worse representation. In an increasingly desperate and concentrated mainstream media market, organisations such as Sky News, News Corp and The Daily Mail are accused of making "hate speech part of their business model" (McKinnon, cited in Wallbank 2019; see also ATN 2020). Social media adds to the distrust of the public sphere for Muslim minorities, with its role in fostering xenophobia and hate crimes clear and disturbing (Zhuravskaya et al. 2020, pp. 426-7).

As a journalism academic from a practice background, I engage in seeking critically informed practical methods that serve the complementary goals of high-quality journalism, and public sphere inclusion of those most on the margins. The research described here is a small pilot study which sought to test a particular method for improving journalism practice in the context of Islamophobia. Twelve young Australian Muslim women took the brave step of opening themselves up to four journalists working for the Australian national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Each journalist was assigned three community participants and given pre-set questions. The small number of participants in the study reflects the exploratory nature of the work. The journalistic research method in this study demands a high level of commitment in terms of time, from a profession that is notoriously time-bound and increasingly time-poor. Widespread adoption is unlikely to occur without multiple trials proving the value of the method.

This paper first explains two key aspects highlighted in the literature which have helped to make Islamophobic discourse so resistant to challenge: its ability to negatively entwine global and local politics, and its ability to hide in plain sight, with the existence of Islamophobia (and its violent repercussions) not accepted as truth. It then reports on promising results found in this pilot—that is, an increased understanding of how the global discourse of Islamophobia manifests in, and through, the media and the building of social capital. The analysis and conclusion then puts these initial promising results into the broader context by discussing the possibility of a global communicative public sphere built on the principles of normative cosmopolitanism. An inclusive public sphere, built up from the local to global level, could tackle the destructive global Islamophobic discourse linking Muslims to terrorists to refugees, creating new terms of public-sphere engagement, both internationally for refugees and nationally for Muslim minorities.

2. Global Discourses, Local Disconnections

Journalist A: "One last question. Do you think the way that Islam is covered in Australia effects how Australians relate to foreign affairs?"

Participant A: "Yes." [definitive tone]

Journalist A: "In what way, can you talk about some examples?"

Participant A: "So, this is like a personal experience. I was working in retail at one point last year and yeah, I had a woman come in, she was raised here, she started chatting about stuff and politics and what not. So foreign affairs, I think there are two ways, migration policy, you know that's a kind of different aspect but it definitely plays into I think foreign affairs. There was this one way in which she discussed one of the viewpoints that she was saying was: 'look I'm all for helping people but you don't know who's carrying a bomb under their thing, what if they come from a war country and they want to shoot up this whole place . . . ' and you know there is this fear that has been instilled into the Australian public."

In the above transcript, from the very first interview, the widespread penetration of the Islamophobic discourse linking refugees to terrorism is readily apparent. As noted by Ghani and Fiske, this discourse finds purchase in part because of the vagueness of the terms of discussion—a feature of Orientalism that has continued into modern Islamophobia, allowing a sliding of meaning between "Muslims", "refugees" and "terrorists" (Ghani and Fiske 2020, p. 117). This imprecision of terms, and sliding of meaning, is visible in the

clothing store customer's discussion, above. It reflects not just a poor understanding of Islam—it also relates to a lack of understanding of the dynamics which have led to today's crises of people movements. Ulrich Beck (2009), in his book *World at Risk*, argues that we are living in an era of global crises and this creates a world risk society which forces cosmopolitanism on us: "the condition humana of the irreversible non-excludability of those who are culturally different" (p. 56). But, as Beck points out, that does not mean that we have recognised the other. Fear is one possible response—this is the response identified by Participant A as being created through the media's fostering of the Muslim–terrorist–refugee nexus. The other response identified as possible by Beck is the creation of normative (or embraced) cosmopolitanism, which recognises others as equal. This could also be fostered through the media (p. 57).

Media scholars argue for the importance, in a globalised world, of journalism with global sensibilities (Berglez 2013; Cottle 2009; Ward 2013). Journalism cognisant of a global public sphere would be a modern corollary of the work done by the media in fostering national imagined communities (Anderson 1983) and would give an expanded spatial and moral definition of "us". Of course, for the most part, this is not happening. In contrast, the journalism of today divides the global community by showing us "a world full of incomprehensible and unsettling dangers from which we must withdraw for our own protection" (Bourdieu cited in Hannerz 2004, p. 27). Sections of right-wing media actively foster an anti-immigrant and anti-refugee climate based on spurious terrorism concerns (Sajir and Aouragh 2019, p. 561).

Duffield (2007) argues that since decolonisation, new racism has been coupled with attempts to hold victims of war and poverty in situ. However, a qualitative difference has been observed since 9/11 as external discourses around military interventions and internal discussions around multiculturalism and citizenship have fused:

> Islamic fundamentalism and the threat of terrorism have the strategic ability to interconnect and mobilize all aspects of the international security architecture linking immigration, internal social cohesion and external social reconstruction. (Duffield 2007, p. 214)

It is this ability to mobilise both formal/institutional and discursive powers at both global and local levels which makes Islamophobia so dangerous. The clothing store conversation above was not just about politics, it was about humanity. Unending wars erode a sense of shared humanity. Muslim populations are judged guilty simply for existing in the west. This divisive rhetoric was seen in action when an Australian politician described the murderous white supremacist attack in Christchurch as an unsurprising response to New Zealand's support for refugees (Bourke 2019). One may argue that this response was not representative of the majority in Australia, and certainly not in New Zealand, but I suggest only because of the shocking nature of the attack, which led most people to have sympathy with the victims.

On normal occasions, most white majority populations living in the west are unaware of the pervasive form that the governmentality of Islamophobia takes. In everyday interactions, like the clothing store discussion, and in government policy, the presumption of guilt until proven innocent has been established post 9/11 as Islamophobia has framed Muslim minorities as the "enemy within" (Alimahomed-Wilson 2020; Duffield 2007; Finlay and Hopkins 2020; Ghani and Fiske 2020; Heffernan 2008).

This "enemy within" discourse begins at the level of border protection—hence, the "I'm all for helping people but . . . " comment from the shopper. In Australia, anti-refugee sentiment heightened considerably in 2001 thanks to an orchestrated public election campaign by the conservative government supplemented with new temporary categories of visas for refugees with reduced citizenship status (Fiske 2006). This new visa category signalled to the rest of the Australian population a sense of distrust, and because many of today's refugee populations are Muslim, this distrust is extended to the Muslim–Australian community more broadly. Britain has similarly seen a fusing of informal and formal functions of Islamophobic governmentality. Post-9/11 Islamophobia started with heightened

media and police surveillance and a questioning of multiculturalism (Heffernan 2008). More recently, this has been formalised in the UK government anti-terrorism Prevent strategy. Research interviews conducted in Scotland in 2016 found "the Prevent strategy has been the primary institutional process of regulating and scrutinising the behaviour of Muslims" (Finlay and Hopkins 2020, p. 562). However, this is not a one-way, top-down process. Rather, formal and informal mechanisms reinforce each other "with the media and general public frequently regulating, monitoring and judging young Muslim behaviours" (Finlay and Hopkins 2020, p. 562).

For many Muslim-minority young people in the UK, Prevent is a major barrier to participation in the public sphere—paradoxically, for others, it is a galvanising force sparking resistance (Finlay and Hopkins 2020). For example, Alimahomed-Wilson (2020, p. 662) interviewed female Muslim activists in the UK who helped to develop the response "students not suspects".

The burden of being guilty until proven innocent, and the burden of resistance to that presumption of guilt, is a key component of the governmentality of Islamophobia in Muslim-minority countries. However, this double pressure faced by young people (the pressure of Islamophobia and the pressure to resist) is poorly understood by non-Muslims. To return to the transcript above, let me tell you what happened next. The journalist was shocked that such a conversation, directed at a Muslim woman, would happen in a clothing store. She asked several follow-up questions trying to understand the interaction. The participant explained that the conversation had evolved from an innocuous one; both participant and shopper were praising the clothing brand for being inclusive in terms of sizes and body shapes. It was at this point that the shopper highlighted the limits to her support of inclusivity and the participant was forced to go into a defence of refugees as not terrorists (with the presumption of terrorist being Islamic-fundamentalist terrorist).

The journalist's shock at the pervasiveness of Islamophobic discourses is significant. It highlights the way that media is experienced differently by different people. This particular journalist is highly attuned to the level of Islamophobia in Australian media, yet the situation described made a significant impression on her. The participant, the shopper and the journalist experience media differently to each other, yet all three rely on media reports to discuss global currents during everyday socio-political interactions. As noted by Silverstone (2013, p. 26), media is the public space necessary for global civil society. However, Silverstone also insisted that media be understood as "environmental . . . tightly and dialectically intertwined with the everyday" (2013, p. 5). It is this power to create disconnections at the level of everyday interactions, human to human, which makes the global, media-supported Islamophobic discourse of "terrorist–refugee–enemy within" so dangerous.

3. Facts Are Not Enough—Finding Purchase for New Narratives Amidst Islamophobia

> *Participant B: "You know what's really funny, is that lots of people have a problem with Islam and they think it's going to take over and they're scared of it, when actually, in the real world, there is not one place that Muslims exist safely. Every country in the world Muslims are targeted and oppressed and there are two places in the world right now where Muslims are experiencing genocide, the Uyghurs in China in the Xinjiang region, and in Myanmar what's happening to the Rohingya Muslims, are both genocide to the point of Nazi Germany, but have you heard anything about that?*
>
> *It's such a weird phenomenon that even despite all this, and probably this is what's creating it, this thought that Islam is so incompatible with Western culture, that we actually want to take over and we want to abolish it and it makes absolutely no sense because we are the weak ones in here, we are the ones that are being persecuted we are the ones that feel most unsafe."*

In 1984, two years after the Israeli army invaded Lebanon, as the narrative of that war was still being contested into historical record, Edward Said wrote "Permission to Narrate" in the Journal of Palestine Studies. Drawing on the work of historian Hayden White, Said

(1984) argued: "Facts do not at all speak for themselves but require a socially acceptable narrative to absorb, sustain and circulate them" (p. 34). To illustrate his point, Said takes Chomsky's 1983 work *The Fateful Triangle* to task. While calling it a "great and important book which must be read by anyone concerned with public affairs" (p. 42) and praising the author for stating "facts as widely, as clearly, as completely as any person alive" (p. 46), Said charges Chomsky with failure to pay enough attention to the questions of "What makes it possible for us as human beings to face the facts, to manufacture new ones or to ignore some and focus on others" (p. 47).

This intellectual argument made by Said is lived by Participant B in her media life. The challenge implicitly thrown to the journalist is by what method can the widespread violence of Islamophobia come to be accepted as fact? And indeed, how can this take place when the media itself is often part of the governmentality of Islamophobia, making those facts of persecution counter-intuitive in political discourse? I wish to apply here the same argument made by Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) in the context of cultural relativism, anthropology and the invasion of Afghanistan, namely: "it is too late not to interfere" (2002, p. 786). Journalists have been complicit in Islamophobia and in doing so have shaped the lives of these young Muslim women so that their narratives have no authority. The challenge now, for those of good will, is not to abandon the field of battle but reconstitute it through solidarity and listening—really listening.

Ghani and Fiske write:

> Islamophobic political discourse around asylum seeking renders Afghan (and other Muslim-majority) refugees doubly silenced—by their non-citizen legal status and their popular representation as only quasi-human. Their confirmed status as outsiders makes speaking for themselves and telling their own stories a difficult task indeed. (2020, p. 122)

This difficulty in telling their own stories is true and, if by some chance, overcome, there is still the challenge of being heard. In today's networked global media, Cottle (2010, p. 482) makes the point that "an expanded array of voices—global-local-West-rest, elite-ordinary, expert-lay, military-civilian—can now sometimes enter the frame and challenge the parameters and preferred terms of public discourse"; however, these voices do still have "differing degrees of access and possibilities of success" (Cottle 2010, p. 482). Similarly, Silverstone (2013, p. 90) writes: "The presence in one social or cultural space of hundreds of thousands of individual voices does not imply dialogue between them".

This difficulty of being heard and understood can be seen in the limited success of attempts to decentre privilege by opening speaking spots for non-whites. As pointed out by Australian journalism academic Tanja Dreher, this may seem like a worthy goal but, in practice, it has not always worked out well for the sources involved and neither does it necessarily shift patterns of power. She points to the example of Muslim women in Australia "who have become highly visible in public debate during the 'war on terror' but have also found it extremely difficult to shift news agendas and to be heard on their own terms, instead being asked to constantly respond to the concerns and stereotypes of 'mainstream' audiences" (Dreher 2009, p. 4).

Dreher, building on the work of feminist scholar Krista Ratcliffe, argues that the more ethical position is "eavesdropping with permission" (2009), that one should seek to gain access to discourses in a way that redistributes risk and discomfort towards the researcher. Taking the concept back to its lexical roots of standing under the eaves in an attempt to gain knowledge (possibly in the uncomfortable position that includes getting wet!), this "choosing to stand outside ... in an uncomfortable spot ... on the border of knowing and not knowing ... granting others the inside position ... listening to learn" (Ratcliffe in Dreher 2009, pp. 12–13) becomes a tactic for receptivity to the discourses of others. The semi-structured interviews in this program were a type of critical journalism research which embraces this idea of eavesdropping with permission.

The advantage of a morally argued focus on listening (rather than simply ensuring appearance in media texts), according to Silverstone (2013, p. 81), is an inevitable appre-

ciation for diversity, between, but also within, communities. This is because listening is "an orientation to the dynamics of mediation that addresses culture and cultures and their representation in the plural". Recognising communities in the plural is particularly important because "a core aspect of governmentality is it subjectifies people to certain identities" (Finlay and Hopkins 2020, p. 560). This means "Islamophobic political debates and media coverage often deny the plurality and humanity of Muslim populations" (Najib and Hopkins 2020, p. 450). For women, this is even more the case. They have become unwilling standard bearers of "otherness", visually cued by the scarf (whether present or absent) and "narrow and monolithic representations of Muslim women contribute to their daily challenges" (Alimahomed-Wilson 2020, p. 669).

A key aspect of seeding a narrative to accept the fact of Islamophobia is the breakdown of the monolithic "Muslim". This is well understood by Muslim minorities themselves. During the interviews, both participants and journalists discussed the possibility of being called upon in the creation of future news stories not as "Muslim women" but as professionals or activists. In Scotland too, Finlay and Hopkins (2020, p. 559) found that their interviewees wanted to engage in various issues in Scottish life to challenge Islamophobic stereotypes. On the flip side, however, Alimahomed-Wilson (2020, p. 668) found that female Muslim activists felt fear in building a public profile in their professional lives in case they ended up as fodder for right-wing British tabloids.

So where does this leave us? There is a clear need to seed new narratives that go beyond superficial appearance and emphasise the diverse humanity denied by Islamophobia. In highlighting the fact of diverse humanity, the governmentality trying to deny that fact can be exposed, which in turn can lead to recognition of the wider fact of Islamophobia. Yet how can those narratives be seeded when the media is distrusted? There is no immediate answer. However, what is known is that as polarised media, and the danger of right-wing extremism grows, so too do other journalists take on more responsibility to tackle racism. If done well, these acts of solidarity can have powerful impacts of trust and hope.

4. Method

> *Participant K: You just being here in this project or program is already in itself showing that regardless of the clout that you see in journalism towards more negative stories there are still people out there trying to get the good work done and trying to improve situations and stories.*

This research was a pilot study which sought to test a particular method for improving journalism practice in the context of reporting on Muslim minorities. This project involved two sets of volunteers, 12 young Australian Muslim women and four journalists working for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), who came together to share knowledge via a particular form of structured interview.

The study was opportunistic in that it responded to the needs of anti-racism work already taking place in the community. The 12 women were already participating in a leadership program run by anti-racism charity All Together Now and the Islamic Sciences & Research Academy (ISRA). This program identified one of the responsibilities of leadership as potentially involving requests to speak to the media and participants had already undertaken some media training before the interviews. From the point of view of contributing to the leadership program, the interviews gave the young Muslim women participants an opportunity to help define media discourses and gain practice in talking to journalists.

The leadership program was open to "enthusiastic, community-minded Muslim women aged 18 to 30 based in Sydney" (ISRA 2020). In the end, the age range was 19–30; professions included a midwife, a lawyer, a teacher, a halal auditor and eight were university students. One participant was establishing her own not-for-profit youth organisation. The interviews took place towards the end of the six-month leadership program during the month of October 2020 and the average interview time was an hour. The four journalists in the program self-selected after receiving information about the opportunity. There were three women and one man; two were Muslims and two were

non-Muslims and two held editorial decision-making responsibilities (as opposed to only reporting responsibilities).

The fact that the journalists self-selected after learning of the opportunity (via a newsletter call out and through word of mouth) shows that they were already actively concerned about poor representation of diverse communities in the media. From the journalists' point of view, involvement gave them a chance to contribute to the leadership program and the chance to better understand Islamophobia, including how to report effectively so as to minimise their contribution to Islamophobic discourses.

Each journalist was randomly assigned three community participants and they conducted semi-structured interviews, with questions designed by the university researcher, who also facilitated the connection between journalist and community member. Each interview covered general discussion around media consumption and representation and each interview examined specific pieces of journalism dealing with issues related to Islamophobia. The full list of thirteen questions is provided in the Appendix A.

Journalists are skilled interviewers and researchers; however, they generally conduct interviews with an end-goal in mind—to quickly gain quotes, which become the building blocks of reportage. Therefore, their interviewees become means to an end. These were not those sorts of interviews. The program specifically highlighted that any discussion was not for publication. Instead, the purpose was sharing and building each other's skills and knowledge to tackle Islamophobia.

This focus on frames and discourses, and on research separate from story creation, is a new critical journalism research method called the Frame Reflection Interview (FRI) which, until this project, had been mainly used in foreign correspondence. The technique takes a theory described in *Frame Reflection: Towards the resolution of intractable policy controversies* by Schön and Rein (1994) and transfers key principles into the design of the semi-structured interview. Schön and Rein describe situations as becoming intractable because actors have different story-making processes, which consist of naming and framing different elements which have been selected for attention. They suggest that policymakers should engage in a process of codesign with stakeholders which involves "situated frame reflection, to invent new features of policy objects or practices that synthesise elements of their conflicting action frames" (1994, p. 172).

FRIs were developed as a decolonising method first used to improve the author's own reporting from the Mugunga refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Giotis 2017). In that case, former refugees from the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo were the community participants. In a second test case, FRIs were used with Indonesian–Australian community participants by a foreign correspondent tasked with re-establishing her organisation's Jakarta bureau. This is the first time that the FRIs have been used by professional journalists other than foreign correspondents and the first time partnered with a community organisation. The project evolved organically via conversations about overlapping concerns regarding the media between anti-racism activists and academics.

FRI questions do not ask participants about their lives, only their media consumption. However, as has already been seen, because of the enveloping nature of media, stories from the lives of the participants come out through the interviews. There were also informal chats during most of the interviews where some biographical information was shared on both sides.

The focus on the condition of Islamophobia rather than the life story of the participant is deliberate. Philosophers have argued that true solidarity requires identification with the condition of others without knowing them (Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2003) and also a recognition of the asymmetry of power in the relationship (Chouliaraki 2011). This was not an exercise in building friendship but in building knowledge of, and solidarity against, the Islamophobic discourse.

The FRI method is also conducive to the creation of trust. Risk is widely theorised as an important element in trust (Blöbaum 2014; Fray et al. 2018, p. 9; Jones 1996). Blöbaum (2014) pays particular attention to this element in the relationship between journalist and audience;

however, most of the risks conceptualised are on the side of the audience. By contrast, in the Frame Reflection Interview process, both journalist and community participant become vulnerable in a situation of controlled risks. As noted by Participant I, the interview "was on an even playing field" and this helped to lead to her feelings of empowerment post-interview. A key part of the process is also discussion of the three examples of journalism. In a debrief focus group of the experience, several of the participants mentioned that this process gave them a sense of validation, that their opinions were genuinely being sought and heard. Participant B pointed to the fact that even though she had very different lived experiences to her interviewer, they were able to connect over discussion of the journalism artefacts.

Zoom was chosen as the platform for all FRIs and pre- and post-discussions due to COVID-19 restrictions. Participation of the researcher in the FRIs was limited to starting the zoom recording, reminding participants and journalists of the voluntary nature and to withdraw if feeling any discomfort and also specifically giving the injunction "have fun" before exiting. The researcher was then informed when the interview was over and came back in to the zoom for a quick check-in of the mood at the end of the interview.

In line with the exploratory nature of this pilot study, results of the program were measured qualitatively. Participants were given the chance to discuss their experiences through formal feedback questions, either through a focus group conducted on zoom or through email. Four participants attended the focus group, which started with two set questions and then became a broad-ranging discussion, and two participants provided email feedback. The four journalists participated in a group debrief zoom—this covered their experiences and ideas for future changes in practice.

5. Results, Community Participants: Trust and Empowerment

> *Participant D: I felt very comfortable, it was like speaking to a friend, for someone you were meeting for the first time, and someone just meeting over zoom so it's not face to face, I felt very comfortable, I didn't expect it to be like that, I expected it to be quite formal, which just meant I was able to say how I felt quite easily. So comfortable, and connected is the second word, I guess because afterwards I felt like I had a connection in the media industry, someone I could probably contact regarding anything media related.*

The first question asked in the participant focus group and over email was: *"What one or two words would you use to describe your feelings post interview?"* The responses, alphabetically listed, were: affirmed, blessed, comfortable, connected (nominated by two participants), empowered (nominated by two participants), hopeful, related to, surprised, validated.

Participants were next asked about their feelings of trust towards the media in general, before and after, the FRIs. The four participants in the focus group noted the biggest changes in emotion from untrusting before the interviews to trusting afterwards. The high levels of trust were directed at the specific journalist they had been paired with; however, there was also greater trust felt towards the media in general.

Participant C noted that by the time she was asked by the journalist to do a second interview, this time on the record for a story, she forgot to take the precautionary measures that she had been taught in her media training. When prompted on her trusting attitude by the researcher, who suggested that this trusting response was only appropriate for this particular journalist, Participant C said:

> *Yes definitely. But I would definitely say, even with any journalist now, I would be a lot more open, I wouldn't be so judgmental, if that makes sense, before I would be 'OK, this person might twist and turn what I say', I wouldn't assume that. I would still try and be more precautionary. But I guess it's like a totally eye-opening experience because I never met a journalist who was like we actually care about the things you care about. It was really interesting. And the stories I heard of the other journalists, from the other girls as well, seeing as they had just similar experiences, that was the cherry on top of the cake,*

*that just contributed so much more to having a more open view of journalists and more
trusting.*

The researcher again probed this attitude of trust, noting, particularly, that one of
the pieces of journalism given to them during the FRIs was highly Islamophobic—so how
could that not leave them untrusting of the media? What emerged from all participants
in the focus group was that having the opportunity to express the impact of right-wing
journalism was in fact empowering—as was discussing issues around the nuances of
representation. Again, one might criticise this finding of increased trust by noting that
the ABC is consistently found to be the most trusted news organisation in Australia (Roy
Morgan 2019)—so the trust probably applies specifically to ABC journalists. However,
the average national feeling towards the ABC is not representative of this group's media
consumption (as will be discussed further below). Participant G particularly noted in
her email feedback that she was happy to see *the ABC* involved in the project because
"whilst the ABC may not use highly charged language", there was still visible "an implicit
bias through omission". She gave an example in the media at the time of revelations of
Australian army atrocities in Afghanistan, and the fact that there were far more ABC stories
covering the distressed response of the Australian Defence Force community, compared to
the distressed response of the Afghan–Australian community. Participant G added that
after seeing the ABC show (through this project), "a more unbiased approach to journalism
[it] has restored my faith in journalistic integrity".

This statement highlights two key points about the nature of trust. First, it seems to
support the argument made by (Blöbaum 2014, p. 43) that trust in journalism is reliant on
trust in the "journalistic programs and practices of research, selection and presentation".
Secondly, it highlights that trust is reliant on certain preconditions. Jones (1996, p. 4) argues,
"trust is an attitude of optimism that the goodwill and competence of another will extend
to cover the domain of our interaction with her". In other words, simply the fact of seeking
to do these research interviews, connecting with the community, gives greater confidence
in the competence of the journalist, which in turn allows for an attitude of optimism that
empowers the participants. Moreover, the women agreed to participate despite high levels
of trepidation and fear. Doing so demonstrated hope, which is another important aspect of
trust. McGeer (2008) argues that hope "both empowers us in our trust—making it possible
for us to think and act in trustful ways" (p. 242) and it empowers others:

> Our hopeful investment of trust in others can often elicit—or, better, empower—
> trust-responsive behaviour of the sort we seek . . . others draw motivational
> energy for enacting and elaborating their own powers of agency from our hopeful
> vision of them. (McGeer 2008, p. 250)

In this way, "substantial trust acts as both a demand and a gift" (McGeer 2008, p. 249).
When participant B said during the FRI "I really feel seen, and it's really nice" and Journalist
A responded "Thanks, that's really flattering!", the clear role (demand) for the journalist is
to act well on the trust (gift) that has been put in her.

It is important not to overstate the trust effects among participants or forget the
larger climate of media Islamophobia. While overall being extremely enthusiastic about
the project, Participant B also described feelings of anger and frustration regarding the
Islamophobic right-wing journalism example she was shown; her feelings heightened
as the preceding media example was journalism she regarded as very well researched—
so she knew that better journalism was possible. She said that it was important to be
knowledgeable about agendas and she would describe her trust as "researched trustedness".
Participant K appreciated the efforts of the individual journalists, and the project itself, but
said: "I don't feel trust with the media. I feel like there needs to be way more done for me
to feel heard and for the media's view on us to change."

Finally, two further points need to be briefly made. The first concerns social capital—
that is, the form of capital identified by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu that comes through your
networks—especially by recognising each other as members of a group (Bourdieu 2011).
Social capital is an aggregate of the number of your networks and also the power behind

each of your contacts—something relevant in the group created through this project as ABC journalists have a high level of cultural capital, and these young Muslim women may, in the future, access that capital. The focus group discussion highlighted that participants now felt that they had an ally in the media industry. Participant B noted that during the FRI, she did not feel the "imposter syndrome" usually associated with her activist engagements. Moreover, this was not just in relation to Muslim issues but all issues. Participant B said: "I felt validated, like someone whose voice would be useful in different articles". This then leads to the final point, that this feeling of belonging is crucial to be able to position oneself in the public sphere. This "politics of belonging" by Muslim minorities has been identified by researchers as having been achieved through high-risk acts such as political participation (Finlay and Hopkins 2020, p. 559). By contrast, FRIs share the risk between journalist and participant while still contributing to the politics of belonging.

6. Results, Journalists: Greater Understanding of the Challenge, and New Storylines

> *Journalist B: I can't say we wouldn't have commissioned that story anyway but it was definitely top of mind for me to be thinking . . . no one has really gone and talked to the people at the coalface.*

As highlighted in the opening two sections of discussion, the way in which Islamophobia in the media is translated to everyday life is a key source of insight for understanding the governmentality of Islamophobia—and this is what the journalists felt too. Particularly, the non-Muslim journalists felt that they had a much-heightened understanding of the impact of right-wing media and the challenges that this posed in the lives of the participants. This included the fear of attack if speaking out on an issue, and the distrust of the media more generally. The Muslim journalists were not as shocked by the levels of fear and distrust. However, all journalists shared a real concern regarding how to deal with the depth of distrust. This was made clear to them through discussion of the participants' media consumption habits. This revealed that the fractured public sphere, and the individual curation of news consumption, meant that even if the ABC did produce well-written stories relevant to the participants' lives, these stories were unlikely to show up in the participants' news feeds.

The FRIs highlighted the extreme problems of distrust and disconnection in the media environment, yet all journalists also reported feeling inspired by the discussions. This again seems to reinforce the idea that the trust put in the journalists by the participants, in sharing their stories, can be understood as a "demand and a gift" (McGeer 2008, p. 249). There is the demand to listen, and moreover to understand, but also the gift of knowledge and inspiration.

One of the examples of actions taken as a result of the interviews was a story written about the successful containment of a COVID-19 outbreak in Melbourne, in a highly multicultural area and, in particular, the role of community leaders and Imams in fighting misinformation and supporting testing. Journalist B, who was the commissioning editor of the story, had already completed two of her FRIs at that stage and said that she felt a heightened consciousness in wanting the story to be done. Politicians had learned the lesson from the towers lockdown and this time were not demonising the community—and this was being mimicked in media coverage. However, Journalist B said that she was conscious that this was still excluding the voices of the Imams themselves and she wanted to rectify this.

The FRIs heightened Journalist B's consciousness of the need to do the story and made her more aware of the difficulty that journalists would face in gaining trust from the community so as to be able to complete the story. Journalist C, who was one of the two journalists commissioned, said that the support from his editor (Journalist B) to take that extra time was crucial. It allowed him to spend two days on the story and have multiple conversations about the story creation with the story sources until that trust was achieved. Journalist B said that, going forward, she would like to see newsroom practices change to acknowledge the extra time that is required to gain trust in misrepresented communities.

Both journalists B and C described an excellent payoff to the story in terms of positive responses from the Muslim community. This was not just in relation to the topic matter but also in response to the diversity of Muslim voices within the one story. This recognition of diversity within the Muslim community, which, according to Silverstone (2013, p. 81), might be a natural result of the FRIs focus on listening rather than representing, was one of the key topics of the journalists' debrief session. Journalist D, a Muslim herself, noted that after the interviews, she was doubly resolved to always remind the newsroom of the diversities of Muslim-minority perspectives.

Among the pieces of positive feedback to the story described were comments from some Muslim community members that they had a mistaken perception of a particular Imam and were pleased to have been given more insight into his character. Conveying information about one part of a community to another part of that same community should not be seen as exceptional—this is what journalism does. Unfortunately, in the context of the monolithic stereotypes created by Islamophobia, and the attendant distrust of the mainstream media, which closes off communities, these examples of journalists doing their job well do not happen often enough. If journalists do a good job of conveying information, this tends to be the building block that leads to the other crucial journalistic function of holding power (any sort of power) to account. Yet, here, again, the distorting power of Islamophobia makes quality journalism difficult. For example, there were some strong feminist discussions during the FRIs and this sparked understanding, and discussion in the journalists' debrief, of the difficulty faced by community members in trying to challenge all sorts of power structures in their community. It has long been acknowledged that there is a gendered dimension to Islamophobia in which "women activists walk a tightrope [as] their work can be co-opted to bolster gendered Islamophobia" (Alimahomed-Wilson 2020, p. 669).

The problems of how to serve the Muslim–Australian community with good journalism, holding power to account, when the structures of Islamophobia make the risks of entering the public sphere so high, was a major theme of the debrief session. There is no easy answer to this question; however, a proper appreciation of the problem is a necessary starting point. Relatedly, the journalists also came to appreciate how the governmentality of Islamophobia, in creating the "enemy within", forced Muslim minorities to question their identities "to separate parts of yourself" (Heffernan 2008, p. 133). In coming to understand the importance of that issue, there was also discussion that it should be reported on more by the ABC. This was also something specifically recommended in one of the FRIs. Participant B highlighted that stories about the identity crisis faced by minorities filled her niche media consumption but were absent from mainstream media. This is surely another reason to distrust, another bias by omission, that can be seen as signalling to Participant B that she does not belong to the mainstream public sphere anchored by Australia's national broadcaster.

Earlier, it was argued that the global Islamophobic discourse of "terrorist–refugee–enemy within" is particularly dangerous because of its power to create disconnections at the level of everyday interactions, human to human. However, could the opposite also hold? Could the fostering of strong human-to-human connections, in and through local media discourses, cause disruptions in the global Islamophobic narrative? Every human being on this planet has at some point struggled with some aspect of their identity. There is a chance that through mainstream representation of the particular identity crisis faced by Muslim minorities, non-Muslim audiences could connect to young Muslim–Australians and, at the same time, learn about the governmentality of Islamophobia.

Finally, it is worth briefly mentioning that all the journalists discussed ongoing connections and conversations with at least one of their interviewees which they intended to use for future stories and ideas. Thus, like the participants, the journalists too gained social capital.

7. Analysis: The Fight for the Global Public Sphere

There is a need to be self-reflexive in this research and acknowledge a bias towards hope. This project was conceived as something helpful for the women on the leadership program and enlightening for journalists; everyone involved wanted it to work. The bias towards hope also relates to me as a researcher trusting that the base principle of journalism is sound—that woven into the very nature of telling other people's stories is social solidarity formed through identification with the condition of unknown others. I have hope that a global communicative public sphere built on the principles of normative cosmopolitanism is possible. This hope exists because I have cultivated a tendency to hope in the capacity of others, which is necessary for trust (Jones 1996, p. 22). Of course, this "is not to say that we blind ourselves to their liabilities and limitations—at least if we're trusting well" (McGeer 2008, p. 248).

The breakdown of trust in the media is real and multi-faceted. One need only look at the way in which former US President Donald Trump weaponised the term Fake News to rupture trust in democratic processes. While the principle of journalism may be sound, there are deep problems in its processes. This includes the tendency to be directed by elite sources, first identified by Stuart Hall in *Policing the Crisis* (Hall et al. 1978) and still too evident today in the way right-wing commentary has been given air-play. Furthermore, in the US and the UK, alarm bells are ringing about growing elitism in the journalistic cadre (McGill 2016; McNeil 2020; Ruddick 2017). This leads to poor coverage of issues of injustice (McNeil 2020; Ruddick 2017) and separates journalists further from the working-class communities where the majority of recently arrived migrants and refugees are housed.

Islamophobic discourse will not go gently into the night. In 2020, right-wing extremism was finally recognised as a real threat in Australia. This led to calls to modernise counter-terrorism processes to specifically focus on right-wing extremism. The right-wing Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton could not allow this to go unchallenged. He interfered to reframe the terms of the inquiry to terrorism in general (Rachwani 2020). He would not allow the "Islamic fundamentalist–terrorist–refugee–enemy within" chain to be tampered with.

Against this sort of right-wing pressure, the media's only hope for changing to a more moral framework is to follow Silverstone's (2002, p. 283) injunction and understand how "we are seen by Others". This is the shift in power dynamics necessary to dismantle the governmentality of Islamophobia. The FRI process is part of this and also responds to another point made by Silverstone (2013, p. 103): "being heard requires not just sound but meaning. It requires understanding." Drawing on Charles Husband, Silverstone suggests that the right to communicate is replaced by the right to be understood (p. 103).

Like all rights, the right to be understood is not something that can be "given". Indeed, the right to be understood cannot possibly be achieved in a top-down manner, for where would that understanding come from? By educating journalists on the power dynamics of Islamophobia, through discussion of their media lives, it is the young women participants themselves who create the conditions for this right to be realised. In doing so, they also fight against the destructive elements of distrust. Discussing nuances of representation with the journalists allows participants to have faith in the competence of the journalist and this then creates the "demand" and "gift" of substantial trust (McGeer 2008, p. 249).

This project would not have been possible without both sets of participants. However, I am highlighting the catalysing role of the young Muslim women because it is important, ethically, to constantly remember the power dynamics at play. There is a danger that the media industry reckoning that has come with the #blacklivesmatter protest becomes less about victims of racism and more about white actions. Drawing on examples from humanitarian and disaster communication, Chouliaraki (2011) warns of the neo-liberal tendency for the vocabulary of justice to become an individual choice for self-improvement. Journalists of good will are needed for the FRI process, but for true change to occur, this cannot be reduced to an individual's professional preference.

In an age of extreme right-wing media and the fracturing of the public sphere, the notion of the whole is still vital to the public sphere—but we must build back better. Bourdieu famously argued that navigating any field well requires an understanding of the "logic" of the field—explained under the concepts of illusio and doxa. Doxa can be understood as the "rules of the game", a shared "universe of tacit presuppositions that organise action in the field" (Neveu and Benson 2005, p. 3). What the FRIs helped to highlight is that journalists do not share with participants an understanding of just how rigged the rules of the game are for Muslim minorities. This can change.

In the focus group feedback from the participants, when asked about the potential for the Frame Reflection Interviews to be expanded, the young women concluded that it would probably be most useful for journalists "in the middle" who had not thought about these issues and in helping journalists of good will report with more nuance. This response clearly signals a belief that the game could be played better by journalists if only they became deeply aware of the way that the field operates in reinforcing Islamophobia.

The second element of the logic of the field is illusio, the idea held by any agent that the game is worth playing. It is here that the issue of trust in the media becomes so important, for without trust in mainstream media, how can Muslim minorities hold onto the idea that a unified public sphere is worth playing for? Helpfully, Bourdieu highlights that illusio is not just the idea; it also encompasses "an agent's emotional and cognitive 'investment' in the stakes involved in any particular field" (Neveu and Benson 2005, p. 3). Therefore, for Muslim minorities to share with journalists the belief that the game is worth playing, they need not only admittance but stakes in the field. The FRIs gave the Muslim women emotional and cognitive investment. This is one small pilot but the results suggest that the FRIs are one method of pushing against Islamophobia to a more unified, cosmopolitan global public sphere. For structural change to occur, the next step is for more FRIs to be conducted and more methods to be found.

8. Conclusions

This project was a small drop in the ocean in terms of numbers but nevertheless a drop with its own inalienable integrity and worth. It helped to highlight the key power dynamics at work in reinforcing the Islamophobic discourse by denying the right to be understood. It also shows that the notion of a common public sphere is still important and can be recaptured via a greater understanding of its constituent parts in the media:

> the notion of integrity, of the whole as perhaps more than the sum of its parts [is] significant. For without an idea of the whole there can be no examination of the relations of its parts, and without a shared understanding of what might constitute publicness there is no possibility of adequately recognizing the politics and dynamics of consociation which the media both represent and enable but also misrepresent and disable. (Silverstone 2013)

Working together, discussing, listening, understanding—the notion of the whole—the global public sphere, comes into being. The role of the media in the destructive discourse of Islamophobia, which denies the rights of refugees outside national borders, and the belonging of Muslim minorities inside, is tackled by journalists of good will through investing time to build the demand and gift of trust and, as part of that, the capacity for a much more nuanced understanding of the global–local power dynamics involved.

Appendix A. Questions for the FRI Semi-Structured Interviews

Q1. How do you find out news about your community?

NB—Participants noted willingness to share podcasts, news pages, blogs, etc. Explore why they are drawn to these sources and how they could be valuable to covering their community.

Q2—What are your main sources of news in general (including social media)?

NB—Journalist to prompt to see if there is a difference from question 1 and if so, why.

Q3—I want you to think specifically about when you see stories about your community by mainstream media in Australia. Do you have any feelings or opinions about the way the issues and the people are shown? What words would you use to describe the reportage?

NB—Journalist to clarify what the respondent means by 'their community'. Could relate to their ethnicity, religious belief, etc.

Q4—Do you feel like the way your community is shown in Australian media represents you and your experiences? What stories are missing, if any?

Q5—Do you think the media depiction of your community effects your everyday life?

Q6—Please watch this two minute video on cases of Islamophobic attacks in Australia (*All video links have been removed for publication of this appendix as per ethics requirements protecting journalists' reputations*)

- What did you think of the journalist's reporting?
- Where there any particularly good points?
- Where there any particularly bad points?

Q7—Please watch this four minute video on a proposed 'female welcome zone' in a suburb with a high Muslim population

- What did you think of the journalist's reporting?
- Where there any particularly good points?
- Where there any particularly bad points?

Q8—Please watch this two minute video on a stabbing attack by a man suffering from schizophrenia who was 'self radicalised'

- What did you think of the journalist's reporting?
- Where there any particularly good points?
- Where there any particularly bad points?

Q9—Thinking specifically about the style of all three videos, do you have a preference? Can you tell me why? How did that one make you feel compared to the others?

Q10—Have you ever been interviewed by a journalist? If yes, please describe the experience. If no please describe what you think the experience might be like, any hopes, fears or concerns? NB—Opportunity for journalist to explain journalistic practices, assuage or address any concerns expressed.

Q11—If a journalist said to you I want to do the best job possible when I interview people about (journalist to choose up to three key topics based on upcoming or previous reporting assignments)—could you offer them any advice?

Q12—Do you think the way in which Islam is covered in Australia effects how Australians relate to foreign affairs? NB—Journalist to prompt participant to cite examples of coverage or suggest relevant events.

Q13—Is there anything else you would like to say?

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