The Affinity between Online and Offline anti-Muslim Hate Crime: Dynamics and Impacts

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Abstract

Following the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and Tunisia in 2015, and in Woolwich, south-east London where British Army soldier Drummer Lee Rigby was murdered in 2013, there has seen a significant increase in anti-Muslim attacks. These incidents have occurred offline where mosques have been vandalized, Muslim women have had their hijab (headscarf) or niqab (face veil) pulled off, Muslim men have been attacked, and racist graffiti has been scrawled against Muslim properties. Concurrently, there has been a spike in anti-Muslim hostility online, where Muslims have been targeted by campaigns of cyber bullying, cyber harassment, cyber incitement and threats of offline violence. Against this background, we examine the nature and impacts of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime. We draw on our different experiences of conducting research on anti-Muslim hate crime, using two independent research projects in order to consider the affinity between online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime. We argue that, in reality, online/offline boundaries may be more blurred than the terms imply. For victims, it is often difficult to isolate the online threats from the intimidation, violence and abuse that they suffer offline. Moreover, victims often live in fear because of the possibility of online threats materialising in the 'real world'. We conclude that there is a continuity of anti-Muslim hostility in both the virtual and the physical world, especially in the globalized world.

Key Words

Anti-Muslim hostility; victims, hate crime; Online; Offline

Introduction

In the current climate, Muslims are increasingly finding themselves under siege (Awan 2012a; Lambert and Githens-Mazer, 2011; Poynting and Perry, 2007; Poynting and Mason, 2007). Anti-Muslim hate crime has increased significantly following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the US and 7/7 in the UK (Byers and Jones, 2007; Hanes and Machin, 2014; Poynting and Noble, 2004; Poynting and Mason, 2006). More recently, the murder of British Army soldier Drummer Lee Rigby in Woolwich in May 2013 has fuelled the growth of anti-Muslim hostility on social media as well as in the streets of Britain. According to the Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks project (Tell MAMA, 2014; 2015), there has been a significant spike in anti-Muslim attacks, ranging from online threats, incitement and harassment to actual physical attacks and arson in public. Moreover, the activities of Islamic State militants such as the murder of British aid worker David Haines in September 2014 demonize Islam and Muslims and as a result, 'legitimize' anti-Muslim attacks both online and offline (Dodd and Williams, 2014).

At the same time, certain European countries have applied restrictive measures and bans on the practice of Islam in the public sphere. In 2009 Switzerland banned the construction of new mosque minarets. In 2011 France became the first European country to ban the wearing of the face veil in public places including public buildings, educational institutions, hospitals and public transport. Belgium was the second European country after France to enforce a similar ban. In Spain, the city of Barcelona and other regions have brought in similar bans, as have some towns in Italy. Similar restrictions have been introduced outside of Europe too. In 2011 the Canadian government made it illegal for Muslim women to wear a face veil at citizenship ceremonies, while in West Australia a law requiring Muslim women to remove their face veil in order to prove their identity to police was passed in 2013. In the wake of the rise of terrorist group Isis, a number of Australian politicians have called for the banning of the face veil in public in New South Wales, Australia on the basis that it could be used for the purposes of terrorism (Barker, 2014).

Seen through the prism of security and risk, Muslims in the West have emerged as the new 'folk devils' of popular and media imagination (Zempi and Chakraborti, 2014). Within this paradigm, Islam is understood as a violent political ideology, religion and culture; Muslim men are perceived as the embodiment of terrorism, fundamentalism and extremism; and Muslim women are viewed as the personification of gender oppression in Islam, especially if they are veiled. Ultimately, such stereotypes provide fertile ground for manifestations of offline anti-Muslim hate crime for example, verbal abuse, physical assault, and property damage in the public space (Awan, 2012b) as well as online anti-Muslim hate crime, for example, via social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Bebo and MySpace (Awan, 2014). Specifically, for far right groups such as the English Defence League (EDL), online activity is central to its organizational identity and as such social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are the favored mode of communication between their online sympathizers, as it allows them and other groups (such as far-right British nationalist political party Britain First) to use them to hold online posts, but also to organize offline attacks. Online communicative messages are used in order to engage with members as regards offline protests and demonstrations which often risk stoking up fear, and promoting anti-Muslim hatred and in some cases actual offline violence (Citron, 2014).

Against this background, we examine the nature and impacts of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime. We draw on our different experiences of conducting research on anti-Muslim hate crime, using two independent research projects in order to consider the affinity between online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime. We argue that Muslim women are more vulnerable to intimidation, violence and harassment, both online and offline. Also, we highlight that individual experiences of online and/or offline anti-Muslim hostility increase feelings of insecurity and vulnerability amongst victims, thereby diminishing their sense of belonging, confidence and willingness to integrate into society. Moreover, we consider the collective impacts associated with online/offline anti-Muslim hostility through notions of a worldwide, transnational Muslim community, the ''ummah'', which connects Muslims from all over world. We suggest that, in reality, online/offline boundaries may be more blurred than the terms imply. We conclude that for victims, it is often difficult to isolate the

online threats from the intimidation, violence and abuse that they suffer offline. Rather, there is a continuity of anti-Muslim hostility in both the virtual and the physical world, especially in the globalised world. Correspondingly, victims live in fear because of the possibility of online threats materialising in the 'real world'.

Methods

The findings in this paper are based on two independent research projects that we are attempting to bring together in order to compare the relative online and offline experiences. Specifically, Awan's (2014) study examined anti-Muslim hate crime on Twitter. He analyzed a random sample of 500 tweets from 100 different Twitter user profiles, in order to look for patterns emerging about Muslim communities on this social media platform. His study analysed tweets between January 2013 and April 2014, using the hashtags #Woolwich, #Muslim, and #Islam in order to examine patterns emerging regarding online anti-Muslim hate crime on Twitter. Hashtags allow an opportunity to use specific terms such as Muslim and Islam, as a means to see how Muslims were depicted both before and post the Woolwich attack. Indeed, these terms had appeared on the Twitter search engine as words that had recently "trended" in the United Kingdom (UK). The study used a mixed methodology as part of a wider content analysis utilizing qualitative and quantitative data gathering techniques embedded within grounded theory.

The study also included the use of the electronic database NVivo. By using the software system NVivo, Awan (2014) was able to collate and identify comments, posts and patterns that emerged through 'high frequency' words. The comments and posts investigated were then compiled into a large word cloud. The word cloud was analyzed using a word frequency count that was created to explore core issues and recurring themes around how Muslims were being viewed on social media. All the social media comments were imported into NVivo and the author was able to analyze the comments with the use of visualization tools such as the NCapture tool, which is a web browser extension that allowed the author to quickly and easily capture web content via social media data such as Twitter for further analysis.

Zempi's (2014) doctoral research took the form of a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews with veiled Muslim women in Leicester between 2011 and 2012. Specifically, the study comprised of 60 individual interviews and 20 focus group interviews with veiled Muslim women who have been victims of anti-Muslim hostility in public in the UK and elsewhere. Individual, in-depth interviews allow for 'rich' data to be collected with detailed descriptions (Hennink et al., 2011). This approach is especially valuable for researching sensitive issues that require confidentiality and a more intimate setting for data collection, and this is especially appropriate for 'hard to access' groups such as veiled Muslim women. Focus group interviews incorporate the strengths of qualitative research in terms of gathering 'rich' data whilst generating additional insights through group interactions (Curtis and Curtis, 2011). In the context of this study, the focus group method afforded the possibility of open discussion amongst veiled Muslim women with similar or different experiences of anti-Muslim hate crime whilst, at the same time, highlighting collectively held beliefs and attitudes.

Prospective participants were identified through local Muslim organisations including mosques, Muslim schools and Islamic centres, as well as local Muslim university student societies, and Muslim women's groups. Participants unaffiliated to any local Muslim organizations or groups were also recruited through snowball sampling. All interviews were anonymised and the research participants were given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. At the time of the fieldwork, the veiled Muslim women who took part in the study were residents living in Leicester. According to the most recent Census data, Leicester is a city located at the heart of the East Midlands of England and has a population of approximately 330,000 (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Leicester residents hail from over 50 countries from across the globe, making the city one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse places in the UK. In view of its diverse mix of cultures and faiths, Leicester is commonly depicted as the UK's most ethnically harmonious city and as a successful model of multiculturalism both nationally and internationally. Moreover, Leicester has a large and rapidly expanding population of Muslims and niqab-wearing women, making it an ideal site in which to conduct this particular study.

Understanding the nature of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime

In the British context, a hate crime is any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice on particular grounds – race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender status and disability. Hate crime is not limited to just physical attacks, but includes a wide range of potential crimes from offensive graffiti, damage to property, abusive and threatening messages, harassment, intimidation and verbal abuse (Perry, 2001). Perry (2001: 10) argues that hate crime is about offenders pursuing a level of control and power and states that a hate crime must involve "…acts of violence and intimidation, usually directed towards already stigmatized and marginalized groups. As such it is a mechanism of power and oppression, intended to reaffirm the precarious hierarchies that characterize a given social order..."

Within a sociological framework, hate crime is a qualitative distinct form of aggression. In essence, hate crime victimisation serves as a visible indicator of the motives of the perpetrators. It indicates the perpetrator's bias and prejudice, and serves symbolic and instrumental functions for the perpetrators. A 'hate' message is communicated to a community or group and the symbolic status of the victim motivates the perpetrators. It is irrelevant if victims actually identify themselves as members of a particular socially identifiable group. In the eyes of their perpetrators, they symbolise a despised social group. According to the organisation Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) recent data analysis they found 548 verified incidents (of 729) reported to them concerning anti-Muslim abuse. The majority of incidents took place online (402 out of 548). Almost, a fifth of service users reported repeat offline incidents of anti-Muslim hate with Muslim women suffering more offline incidents than men.

Anti-Muslim hate crime falls under the category of religious hate crime, which is where it is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based upon a person's religion or perceived religion

(Keats, 2014). According to the Association of Chief Police Officers in the UK, online hate crime includes illegal hate content that aims to incite hatred based on the grounds of race, religion and sexual orientation. This could include; words; posts; forums; videos; chatrooms; pictures and websites. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) who are tasked with prosecuting people who have committed communication offences via social media, argue for there to be an offence of online hatred there must be; (i) A credible threat of violence and damage to property; (ii) Communications must specifically target an individual or individuals based on harassment; (iii) Communications that have breached a court order and (iv) The communications must be grossly offensive, obscene, indecent or false.

Hall (2013: 5) argues that "These definitions are notable because they allow for anyone to be a victim of hate crime, and for any offence or incident to be recorded and investigated by the police as a hate crime." The UK policy and legal interpretation of hate crime has also divided the term into different areas from hate motivation, hate incidents, and hate crimes. The operational definition in England and Wales states that hate motivation is where "Hate crimes and incidents are taken to mean any crime or incident where the perpetrator's hostility or prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is victimized" (College of Policing, 2014: 3). The definition included here is broader in the sense that the victim does not have to be a member of a group.

A hate incident on the other hand is described as: "Any non-crime incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race, religion or perceived religion, sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation, disability or perceived disability, or transgender or perceived to be transgender" (College of Policing, 2014: 3). Hate incidents are important because they are defined as particular crimes that can often escalate into further crimes or tension in a community. For example, comments made by an evangelical Protestant preacher, named Pastor James McConnell who described Islam as a 'heathen' doctrine and argued that Muslims 'could not be trusted' were investigated by police as a potential hate incident, because of the nature of the comments

which were construed as potentially aiding an act that could lead to an escalation of violence and community tensions (BBC News, 2014).

That stated, it is important to recognise that the visibility of Islam is key to revealing the individual's Muslim identity and thus triggering online and/or offline anti-Muslim attacks. Indeed, a key finding that emerges from our case studies is that the visibility of victims' Muslim identity is key to triggering anti-Muslim attacks, both online and offline. For example, in terms of social networking sites individuals might be perceived as 'Muslim' because of their name, appearance in their profile picture (dress for women and beard for men) and comments indicating their affiliation with Islam. With respect to public spaces, individuals might be identified as 'Muslim' primarily because of their appearance, dress and location (for example, attending the mosque). Similarly to the virtual world, where actual and potential victims are identified through the visibility of their Muslim identity, 'perceived' Muslims are equally vulnerable to intimidation, violence and abuse on the street. Public visibility is a critical element to prejudice given that "perceptible differences are of basic importance in distinguishing between out-group and in-group members" (Allport, 1979: 132). The power of social perception along with negative attributions ascribed to those viewed as visibly different is a key element to understanding hate crime in general and anti-Muslim hate crime committed against individuals more specifically (Byers and Jones, 2008). Without what Allport (1979) refers to as "visible differences" in the form of social dress, perceived in-group and out-group membership would not be ascribed. He refers to the merging of the "symbol" (e.g., physical and cultural attributes) and what the symbol is perceived to stand for (e.g., terrorism, enemy) as "condensation" whereby the visible difference and the ascribed meaning given to the symbol come together, thus, creating a key element of the necessary perceptual formula for prejudice (Jacobs and Potter, 1998: 13).

We also found that in addition to the 'visibility' of a person's Muslim identity, gender was key to triggering attacks both online and offline. For example, Awan (2014) found that the majority of victims of online anti-Muslim hate crime were 'visible' Muslim women, particularly those wearing the hijab or niqab. Similarly, Zempi (2014) found that niqab-wearing women were persistent and multiple victims of anti-Muslim hate crime offline. Whilst suffering

manifestations of anti-Muslim hostility in public, some participants had also suffered persistent online abuse including name-calling, threats to physically harm, online stalking and sexual harassment (Zempi, 2014).

Typically, males are overwhelmingly the victims of hate crime but in the case of anti-Muslim hate crime, it is the females who are most often attacked (Perry, 2015). This applies to both online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime, as our case studies demonstrate. As Perry (2014) points out, Muslim women are more vulnerable to anti-Muslim hate crime and this is very much in contrast to the demographics of hate crime generally, which tend to target men disproportionately. Githens-Mazer and Lambert's (2010) London study also found that while racist violence typically targets men, Muslim women are more vulnerable to religiously motivated hate crime. Poynting and Noble (2004) found that women had experienced racism, abuse or violence since 11 September 2001 more than men. An Australian Community Relations Commission (Dreher, 2006) on post-9/11 experiences of Muslims found that 50.4% of the victims were female, whereas only 44.4% were male (the remainder were institutions/buildings). Abu-Ras and Suarez's (2009) American study of the PTSD effects on Muslims after 9/11 found that a significantly larger proportion of women (86.3%) than men (54.9%) had experienced hate crime. In light of these findings, it is important to note that in comparison to men, women are more visibly identifiable as 'Muslim' through their dress. Unless they wear the jubba (male Muslim robe), men are not easily identifiable as Muslim even if they wear a beard. This indicates that Muslim men are less 'visible' than Muslim women.

Zempi and Chakraborti (2014) point out that gender precipitates manifestations of anti-Muslim hostility on the basis that the visibility of the Muslim veil, coupled with popular perceptions about veiled Muslim women as oppressed, dangerous and segregated, mark them as 'uniquely' vulnerable to online and offline manifestations of anti-Muslim hostility. Perry (2014) argues that for veiled Muslim women, the anti-Muslim violence they experience is different in its dynamics from that perpetrated against Muslim men. Relatedly, Abu-Ras and Suarez (2009: 59) highlight the complexity of these women's identities as follows: (i) their gender status as women, who generally face more discrimination in access to educational, financial, health, and social resources;

(ii) their cultural identity that is shaped by structural social and cultural constraints provided by gender socialization and patriarchal processes, that also justify certain types of discrimination; (iii) their status as immigrants and minorities in a Western country and the resulting social and economic marginalization; (iv) their language barriers, which often result in loss of power, influence, and control over their family members; (v) their religious identity, which results in their separation from men and the wider society; and (vi) their Islamic dress code that symbolizes modesty and physical integrity, and identifies them from non-Muslims, marking them as targets for hate crimes, discrimination, and possible violations of their bodily integrity (Perry, 2014).

In relation to the motivation of hate crime perpetrators, Perry (2015) emphasizes that hate crimes involve acts of violence and intimidation, usually directed towards already stigmatized and marginalised groups. As such, it is a mechanism of power and oppression, intended to reaffirm the precarious hierarchies that characterize a social order. Participants in Zempi's (2014) study made explicit reference to the type of language used by the perpetrators, which signified their motivations for the attack. For example, they had been called names such as 'terrorists', 'Muslim bombers' and 'suicide bombers', which indicate the perpetrators' perceptions of veiled Muslim women as a security or terrorist threat. Awan (2014) found that there were a number of terms that were used to describe Muslims in a negative manner; these included the words ''Muslim pigs'' (9%), ''Muzrats'' (14%), ''Muslim Paedos'' (30%), ''Muslim terrorists'' (22%), ''Muslim scum'' (15%), and ''Pisslam'' (10%). Tell MAMA (2014) has also examined the use of words on social media to describe Muslims from January 2013 to December 2013, collating high-frequency words that were directly related to anti-Muslim hate and prejudice. They also found the words ''Ninja'', ''Muzrats'', and ''Paedo'' being used against Muslims (Tell MAMA, 2014). After examining the 500 tweets, and looking at the use of language to depict Muslims in a negative light, Awan (2014) constructed a typology, consisting of eight different people identified as cyber trolls; that is, people who are using social networking sites such as Twitter to produce a sustained campaign of hate against Muslims.

These are the "trawler" (a person who has gone through other people's Twitter accounts to specifically target people with a Muslim connection); the

“apprentice” (someone who is fairly new to Twitter but nonetheless has began to target people with the help of more experienced online abusers); the “disseminator” (someone who has tweeted about and retweeted messages, pictures, and documents of online hate which are specifically targeting Muslims); the “impersonator” (a person who is using a fake profile, account, and images to target individuals); the “accessory” (a person who is joining in with other people’s conversations via Twitter to target ‘visible’ Muslims); the “reactive” (a person who following a major incident, such as the Woolwich attack, will begin an online campaign targeting actual and perceived Muslims); the “mover” (someone who regularly changes their Twitter account in order to continue targeting someone from a different profile); and finally, the “professional” (a person who has a huge number of people following on Twitter and regardless of consequences, he/she will launch a major campaign of hate against Muslims; this person is also likely to have multiple Twitter accounts which are all aimed at targeting Muslims).

Another key finding that emerges from our case studies is the fact that anti-Muslim hate crimes increased both online and offline following ‘trigger’ attacks including terrorist attacks carried out by individuals who choose to identify themselves as being Muslim or acting in the name of Islam. Such ‘trigger’ attacks include the 7/7 terror attack that hit London in July 2005 and the 9/11 terror attack that hit the United States in September 2001 (see also Hanes and Machin, 2014; Poynting and Mason, 2006). According to Byers and Jones (2007) terrorist attacks such as 9/11 have a significant impact on the rise of anti-Muslim hate crime. For them, they act as ‘trigger’ events that culminate in the increase of actual changes in social behaviour. They found that anti-Muslim hate crime increased on average from 0.6136 reported per week before 9/11 but that increased to 28.44 following 9/11 after spiking to nearly 200 reports one single week. Similarly, Poynting and Mason (2006) have examined the post 9/11 response towards Muslims in Britain and Australia. They found that anti-terror and security policies had in effect criminalised Muslims as being ‘‘evil’’ and a ‘‘fifth column’’ enemy, thus creating the “othering” of Muslim communities. They reported how in the immediate aftermath of ‘trigger’ events such as 9/11, there was an upsurge in anti-Muslim hostility.

More recently, both online and offline anti-Muslim hate crimes increased following terrorist attacks of national significance such as the Woolwich attack and terrorist attacks of international significance such as the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, and attacks in Copenhagen and Tunisia. Hanes and Machin (2014) argue that if attitudes toward groups like British Muslims are altered by 'trigger' attacks and by media coverage of attacks, then this reflects the proposition of "attitudinal shocks," where a driver of hate crimes is the level of hatred or bigotry for a particular group in society, which may be influenced by media framing and coverage of attacks. In this context, shifts in underlying bigotry from attitudinal change following events like terrorist attacks seem to be potentially important determinants of hate crime incidence. .

Spikes in anti-Muslim hate crimes and incidents following 'trigger' events are not confided to offline settings; rather, the offline pattern is replicated online (Awan, 2014). That said, it is important to note that anti-Muslim abuse occurring online can be categorized as being "cyber harassment," "cyber bullying," "cyber abuse," "cyber incitement/threats," and "cyber hate" (Wall, 2001). Indeed, online offender personality traits seem to have been formed from those seeking and searching for an ''identity'', which allows them to use and exploit social and political beliefs as an ideology which has no respect for the individuals or groups it targets (Prince, 2012; Lagerlof, 2004; McKenna and Bargh, 1998; Tajfel, 1970). This therefore can result in them trying to use online methods as a means of self-protectionism and false patriotism such as far right groups, which are apt at fuelling anti-Muslim hostility.

Often this is played out by abusive, threatening and coordinated tweets or through the use of sites like Facebook to send messages of hate which include the use of visual images to target particular individuals and communities. Many of the comments posted online through social networking sites have an extremist and incendiary undertone (Awan, 2014). Moreover, they are not confined to social networking sites but include blogging sites, online chat rooms, and other virtual platforms, which have been used to promote online cyber hate and anti-Muslim attacks (Allen, 2014), often in the form of racist jokes and stereotypical "banter" (Weaver, 2013). As these incidents often go unchecked, this type of ''low-level'' online abuse leads to the normalization of such behaviour and even an escalation to physical attacks (Allport, 1954).

As Feldman et al. (2013: 11) point out, comparatively to offline hate crime 'much less attention has been paid to online hate crime, which can be the precursor to more physically threatening offline incidents'.

Understanding the individual impact of anti-Muslim hostility

Crime can incur a number of different 'costs' following a victimization experience that involve emotional, psychological, physical and financial liabilities (Waldron, 2012). However, victims who have been targeted on the basis of their perceived ''difference'' and ''otherness'' are likely to experience a host of negative emotions that are qualitatively distinct from those experienced following victimization that is not motivated by hate or fear towards the ''Other''. The wider hate crime literature demonstrates a 'unique' impact associated with targeted victimization (Botcherby et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2012; Williams and Tregidga, 2014). In the context of anti-Muslim hate crime, both online and offline attacks upon Muslims ''hurt'' more than ordinary crimes as they are seen as an attack upon the victims' core identity (Zempi and Chakraborti, 2014). In this context, the impact of anti-Muslim hate crime may exceed that of 'normal' crime because of victims' perceived and actual vulnerability due to their affiliation to Islam.

A key feature of targeted victimization is that single incidents tend to be part of a long-term pattern of victimization, a recurring and, in some cases, constant feature of one's everyday life. From this perspective, anti-Muslim hate crime – similar to other forms of hate crime – is not a static problem, but instead should be seen as a dynamic social process involving context, structure and agency (see also Chakraborti and Zempi, 2012; Bowling, 1999; Kelly, 1987). For Rowe (2004), the fact that this victimization is part of the routine of the victim's daily experience makes the abuse more, rather than, less serious. From this perspective, online and/or offline anti-Muslim hate crime can place a potentially huge emotional burden on actual and potential victims. It can damage their sense of belonging, confidence and feelings of safety (Bowling, 2009).

Given that they are targeted because of the 'visibility' of their Muslim identity (which is easily identifiable because of their Muslim name and/or Muslim appearance in either the virtual world or the physical sphere), victims are unable to take comfort in the belief that what happened to them was simply random and ''could have happened to anyone''. Rather, they are forced to view this abuse as an attack on their Muslim identity and this has severe implications for the levels of confidence and feelings of security (Spalek, 2005). Correspondingly, Zempi (2014) found that veiled Muslim women's confidence had been severely affected as a result of their recurring experiences of online and offline anti-Muslim hostility, as demonstrated in the quotes below.

> Everyone thinks we are the enemy. I feel that I don't have the right to be here. It crushes my self-esteem. (Parveen)

> We feel like social lepers that no one wants to engage with. (Maryam)

The threat of anti-Muslim hate crime has long-lasting effects for individual victims including making them afraid to leave their homes and feeling like social outcasts. Zempi (2014) found that veiled Muslim women were often reluctant to leave the house through fear of being attacked particularly on the street, in parks, in shops and on public transport. At the same time though, many participants reported feeling like ''prisoners in their own home''. As the following quotations show, negotiations of personal safety can create a sense of imprisonment on the basis that they restrict veiled Muslim women's participation in society, despite decreasing exposure to anti-Muslim hostility in public.

> It stops me from going out. I only go out when it is absolutely necessary, for example, to go to the shops or for medical treatment. (Latifah)

> It feels like we are under house arrest. People have locked us up without realising it. (Duniya)

> People are being hypocritical in their argument that women in niqab are oppressed because they oppress us. We are stuck at home all day. (Focus group participant)

As Hindelang (2009) points out, for crime to occur the prime actors – the offender and the victim – must have the occasion to intersect in time and space. By removing themselves from public space, actual and potential victims reduce the chances of being subjected to anti-Muslim hostility. Accordingly, veiled Muslim women spoke of feeling safe by confining themselves to their home as much as possible, with many participants explaining that they used the internet to connect with the outside world (Zempi, 2014). In this case the home was understood as a retreat from the hostility of the outside world and a key source of personal sense of security.

However, the fact that women often experienced online abuse indicates that they could not feel safe even online. In this regard, the threat of online abuse creates social isolation for Muslims who are effectively cut off from their online social life because the abuse and harassment they are receiving online. For many individuals social media is a lifeline. For example, for those with disabilities, life limiting conditions, caring responsibilities, leaving or being driven off social media would leave them completely isolated. At the same time, participants described living in fear because of the possibility of online threats materialising in the 'real world' (Zempi, 2014). Therefore, the affinity between online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime ''forces'' some Muslims to withdraw from wider social participation, as this might be seen as the ''only way'' to be safe from the threat of anti-Muslim hostility.

Furthermore, offline experiences of anti-Muslim hostility coupled with the potential for future attacks can affect and sometimes seriously damage the quality of life of victims and their families. Zempi (2014) found that on many occasions, veiled Muslim women's children were affected by this victimization, especially since they were witnesses of such incidents. For young children, witnessing their mother being abused was confusing and extremely upsetting, as indicated below.

> I was on my own with my five year old daughter in London, going to get the bus so I was crossing the road. A man in a big car, it was an English man in his 50s, pulled down his window and shouted swear words. Then my daughter started crying. She kept talking about it all day saying ‘‘Why was that man so horrible mummy?’’ (Nadia)

> The incident at Sainsbury’s in Leicester [a white English man shouted ‘‘Get the fuck out of my country’’], my children witnessed it and my younger daughter was very upset because she couldn’t understand why it happened. She was like ‘‘Why is he saying that mummy? We are British, aren’t we?’’ (Aisha)

Similarly, Awan (2014) found that online anti-Muslim hate had a devastating impact upon victims and their families. Clearly, online threatening and abusive comments, for example through visual images, fake profiles, Facebook messages, online YouTube videos and tweets, can have a detrimental effect on the individuals who are targeted as well as their families (Waddington, 2010). A political director recalls the impact of online anti-Muslim hate comments on his family. He stated that:

> To say that I find the relentlessly hostile coverage of Islam, coupled with the personal abuse that I receive online, depressing is an understatement. There have been times – for instance, when I found my wife curled up on our couch, in tears, after having discovered some of the more monstrous and threatening comments on my New Statesman blog – when I've wondered whether it's all worth it.

We argue that hate crime, hate incidents and hate speech can have direct impacts for individuals, both online and offline. For example, this is particularly strong when considering hate speech online that aims to threaten and incite violence. Hate speech in this context is any form of language used to depict someone in a negative fashion with regards their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation or physical and mental disability with promotes hate and incites violence (Yar, 2013). This also links into the convergence of

emotional distress caused by hate online, the nature of intimidation and harassment online, and the prejudice that seeks to defame groups or an individual, through speech intending to intimidate. Some of those sites include the Bare Naked Islam site which has a daily forum and chatroom which uses hate speech to incite racial hatred and animosity. The hate comments made online can have a negative impact on the victims who are targeted and can be very upsetting and unsettling for them and their families (Awan, 2014). Below is a direct quote from an article by Fiyaz Mughal (2013), the Director for Tell MAMA with regards the impact of online anti-Muslim hostility:

> Tell MAMA were contacted about four months ago by a young 15-year-old who explained that her picture had been placed on a website without her approval and it transpired that the young girl had then received targeted hate tweets and comments because of her faith. Her avatar showed a young girl with a hijab on, looking rather innocent. Having received anti-Muslim tweets, she responded back with some confidence and then extracted herself from the conversation. What she subsequently found out was that a range of strangers and far right supporters began to make explicit comments about her and they posted statements that humiliated her faith, her sexuality and aggressively abused her privacy.

This case, which lasted over nine weeks, has had a huge impact on this girl. Both the emotional and psychological stress caused to her must not be underestimated. Moreover, the fact she was reluctant to report this incident to her family because of the social taboo attached had also exacerbated the internal pain she was suffering. This case also demonstrates that online behaviour can be normalised by offenders, which allows a perpetrator to use anonymity, manipulation, and social control to target their victims (Douglas et al., 2005). However, while this form of cyber hate often remains ‘‘invisible’’, due to offenders deleting tweets and also because the perpetrator can often hide their identity, the offline threat remains very real for victims and their families (Hall, 2005).

Understanding the collective impacts of anti-Muslim hostility

We found that the impacts of anti-Muslim hostility are not restricted to individual victims and their families; rather, the harm extends to the wider Muslim community (Awan, 2014; Zempi, 2014). In other words, the individual fear and vulnerability discussed above is accompanied by the collective fear and vulnerability of *all* Muslims, particularly those individuals who have a ‘‘visible’’ Muslim identity in the virtual and physical space.

As mentioned earlier, one of the key characteristics of anti-Muslim hate crime is its apparent randomness amongst ‘‘visible’’ Muslims. Drawing on Perry’s (2001) seminal work on hate crime, it could be argued that the identity of the individual victim is potentially irrelevant as the victim is likely to be chosen on the basis of their ‘‘visible’’ membership in the Muslim community rather than any individual characteristics. Viewed from this perspective, victims are often interchangeable on the premise that they represent the Muslim ‘‘Other’’. As Perry (2001) highlights in the context of targeted victimization, anti-Muslim hate crime is directed toward the community and not simply the individual victim. Correspondingly, the intent of the act is to subordinate and intimidate not only the individual victim but also the entire community to which the victim belongs. This type of targeted violence can be seen as a ‘‘message’’ which is designed to tell the wider Muslim community that they are “unwelcome” and ‘‘don’t belong’’, thereby extending the impact of this victimization beyond the actual, immediate victim to instill fear in the whole of the targeted community (see also Chakraborti and Garland, 2009).

Throughout interviews and focus group discussions with veiled Muslim women, the consensus view amongst participants was that the wider Muslim community is under attack by virtue of the fact that ‘an attack on one Muslim is an attack on all’ (Zempi, 2014). For Muslims this is a crucial aspect of their faith; they are one body in Islam and ‘when any part of the body suffers, the whole body feels the pain’. This is demonstrated in the following quotations:

> You feel it as a whole. Whilst it is an attack on the individual, it’s actually an attack on Islam as a whole. Therefore, it has an effect on

> everybody. We talk very much about the ummah, so any part of that which is attacked is felt across the whole community. (Layla)
>
> We feel we are all under attack. When it has happened to another sister or brother it does affect me. It affects all of us. (Focus group participant)
>
> In our religion, we believe we are all one body. If one person is hurt, it's like a part of our body is hurt so we all have to be concerned when women in niqabs are at risk. (Focus group participant)

In this sense, anti-Muslim hostility is unique in the consciousness of the wider Muslim community through notions of a worldwide, transnational Muslim community, the ummah, which connects Muslims in the UK with other Muslims throughout the world (see also Zempi and Chakraborti, 2014). An appreciation of the concept of ummah and its implications has relevance for understanding the community impacts of anti-Muslim hostility. In essence, the notion of ummah reframes the parameters of what defines national identity in Islam, and reflects the development of a robust collective identity amongst the world's Muslims, which cannot be adequately explained exclusively within the framework of religious fellowship.

According to Mandeville (2003, p. 135), 'Muslims living in diaspora – particularly in the West – are of varied and diverse ethnic origins. What links them together, however, is a shared sense of identity within their religion, an idea most clearly located within the concept of the ummah'. The cumulative impacts of anti-Muslim hostility can disrupt notions of safety within the Muslim community on the basis that fellow Muslims are equally vulnerable to attacks by virtue of their group membership. In addition, the collective impacts of anti-Muslim hostility reinforce the sense of alienation experienced by members of the ummah-based community. At the same time though, it is important to challenge any notion of the essentialised Muslim community (Bolognani, 2007). The reified notion of ummah as a homogeneous religious cluster simplifies the enormous levels of diversity and heterogeneity amongst its members, including variations around age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation and

socio-economic status (Alexander et al., 2007). Indeed, an understanding of the different layers of identity surrounding the core identity of ummah has significance for understanding the diversity of Muslims' experiences. Clearly there are differences across Muslim communities; however, the concept of ummah demonstrates that despite these differences, Muslims feel connected through their religious beliefs and therefore their collective Muslim identity globally keeps them connected.

Indeed, in some instances the threat of anti-Muslim hate crime is so ''real'' that it can cause Muslims to change the way that they live their lives. For example, some Muslims are driven to adopt western names and pretend not to be Muslims at all, whilst others emphasize their Asian-ness in order to draw boundaries between themselves and other ''visible'' Muslims (Afshar, 2008). In this context, the actual and perceived threat of anti-Muslim hate crime acts as a form of ''emotional terrorism'' in that it segregates and isolates Muslims, in terms of restricting their freedom of movement and changing their patterns of social interaction, both in the public and virtual sphere. As mentioned earlier, the anonymity aspect in cases of online abuse is extremely frightening as the perpetrator could be anyone (Gelber, 2011). Equally worryingly, the online threats can escalate into the physical space. Thus, the affinity between online and offline anti-Muslim hostility limits pivotal aspects of identity-building, such as using social media as well as visiting friends, going to University and attending the mosque. This demonstrates that the fear and reality of online and offline anti-Muslim hostility restricts Muslims' participation in society (Bleich, 2011).

Perry and Alvi (2012) point out that this is not a voluntary choice, but the ''safe'' choice. Whether individually or collectively, the reality of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime creates ''invisible'' boundaries, across which members of the Muslim community are not ''welcome'' to step. The enactment of both virtual and physical boundaries impacts upon ''emotional geographies'' in relation to the way in which Muslims perceive the spaces and places around and outside their communities of abode (Perry and Alvi, 2012). Rather than risk the threat of being attacked, either verbally or physically, many actual and potential victims opt to retreat to ''their own'' communities. The fear of online harassment and physical violence reinforces these offline and online

boundaries whilst contributing to ongoing withdrawal and isolation. From this perspective, anti-Muslim hostility affects the wider society on the basis that it isolates and excludes Muslims, thereby creating fear, resentment and mistrust of the ‘‘Muslim other’’. The separation of communities based on the ‘‘us-versus-them’’ binary has created a situation in which both Muslims and non-Muslims live in fear of each other. This separation prevents ‘‘us’’ and ‘‘them’’ from interacting with each other and increases fear of engagement on both sides. As such, anti-Muslim hostility promotes the notion of ‘‘parallel lives’’ both online and offline.

Conclusion

In this article, we have examined the nature and impacts of both online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime. Specifically, we have used our research projects as case studies in order to consider the affinity between online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime. We found that Muslim women are more vulnerable to intimidation, violence and harassment, both online and offline. Also, individual experiences of online and/or offline anti-Muslim hostility increase feelings of insecurity and vulnerability amongst victims, thereby diminishing their sense of belonging, confidence and willingness to integrate into society. We also found that for victims and their families, it is often difficult to isolate the online threats from the intimidation, violence and abuse that they suffer offline. Rather, there is a continuity of anti-Muslim hostility in both the virtual and the physical world, especially in the globalised world. Correspondingly, victims live in fear because of the possibility of online threats materialising in the ‘real world’. This shows that in reality, online/offline boundaries may be more blurred than the terms imply. In addition, we considered the collective impacts associated with online/offline anti-Muslim hostility through notions of a worldwide, transnational Muslim community, the ‘‘ummah’’, which connects Muslims from all over world. We argued that whether Muslims are targeted online or offline, anti-Muslim hate crime is commonly perceived by victims to be an attack on Islam and Muslims as a whole. In this regard, the abuse that individual victims suffer online and/or offline is linked to the suffering of Muslims globally through the ummah.

Ultimately, this discussion shows that a multifaceted partnership approach is vital when tackling online and offline anti-Muslim hatred. As we have discussed, previously hate crime victimisation serves as a visible indicator of the motives of the perpetrators. It indicates the perpetrator's bias and prejudice, and serves symbolic and instrumental functions for the perpetrators. As a result, we argue that a new international and national online hate strategy should be adopted, that highlights online and offline anti-Muslim abuse and ways in which the police can deal with such incidents. Furthermore, we argue that by strengthening cyber hate regulation and protocols that this could also be used to tackle online and offline threats made against people of all backgrounds, including anti-Muslim abuse, and at the same time ensuring free speech is protected. Accordingly, the UK government and police service must examine all online threats and the links with actual offline violence as this could help agencies have a better understanding of what they are dealing with.

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