

The Production Culture of Religious Television

The Case of the Islam Channel

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds
The School of Media and Communication

September 2015

Declaration of Authorship

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Drawing on media sociology and cultural studies approaches, this thesis aims to conceptualise the production culture of religious television. The study of production culture emphasises ‘collective, daily cultural performance involving symbolic codes, [and] conventionalized power hierarchies’ within media organisation (Caldwell, 2008, p. 342). The study of production culture of Islam-based television is important as it stands to aid our understanding of how religious television programming – and in particular, Islamic television programming – comes to take the form it does. It might also enhance our understanding of how and under what conditions television production employees produce television programmes. By combining participant observation and interviews with textual analysis, this study analyses the complex ways in which television production workers adapt to the resource limitations and ideological constraints within the production culture of a television channel. It analyses both the production quality of a magazine talk show called *Living the Life* and the quality of working life amongst members of its production community. This thesis argues that the diminished quality of working life exhibited by television production workers contributes to the poor production quality of a magazine talk show. Empirical findings reveal the ways in which the socioreligious and political mission of the channel shapes creative decision-making processes during the production of *Living the Life*. By exploiting the religious idea of ‘work as a mission,’ the channel motivated its television production employees to work with limited resources and, subsequently, to become more vulnerable to self-exploit whilst striving for the ‘deferred reward’ promised by God in the afterlife. Additionally, ideological constraints foster a ‘culture of caution’ amongst workers, which lessens both their creative autonomy and emotional well-being. Whilst research into television production offers rich insights into the employee’s experience of creative-commercial tensions and emotional work, this particular thesis demonstrates how religion shapes the production culture of a religious television organisation, thereby affecting the ways in which television production employees perceive their positions and manage emotions in their everyday working lives.

Acknowledgements

My utmost praises to Allah for providing me with such a humbling experience in my life. I thank both the Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia and the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia for scholarship awards. I am grateful to Mohamed Ali and his staff at the Islam Channel for their kindness and cooperation.

Thank you to Professor Sylvia Harvey for inspiring me to embark upon this academic journey, as well as to my transfer viva panel interlocutors, Dr David Lee, Dr Lee Edwards and Dr Steve Lax. Also, thank you to the Head of school, Professor Bethany Klein; the Postgraduate Tutors, Professor Kevin Barnhurst and Dr Julie Firmstone, as well as to all of the faculty and administrative staff at the School of Media and Communication.

I am truly honoured to have been under the academic supervision of Professor David Hesmondhalgh and Dr Anna Zoellner. I am indebted to them, as their priceless advice and honest criticism that have changed completely my opinions of academic life.

I must offer a special word of thanks to my many mentors: the late Dr Redzuwan Yunus and Professor Musa Abu Hassan (Allah bless their souls), Professor Zulkiple Abd Ghani, Professor Mizan Adiliah Ahmad Ibrahim, Professor Faridah Ibrahim, Professor Asiah Sarji, Professor Mazni Buyong, Dr Rushdan Jailani, Dr Muhammad Yusuf Khalid, Dr Sapora Sipon, Dr Saedah Abd Ghani, Dr Sharifah Meriam Syed Akil, Dr Mohd Yahya Ariffin, Dr Faizal Kasmani, Dr Rosidayu Sabran, Dr Sofia Hayati, Dr Siti Suriani Othman, Dr Daniel Mutibwa, Dr Jason Cabanes, Professor Gary Rawnsley and Dr Ming-Yeh.

Likewise, I offer another word of thanks to my PhD comrades: Roslizawati, Marina Munira, Suria Hani, Wan Fazrul, Zaki, Andreas, Ana, Antje, Caitlin, Carlo, Carly, Carolyn, Charlotte, Chris, Christiaan, Christina, Dimitri, Ellis, Faisal, Heidi, James, Jeremy, Kristina, Lone, Luca, Mario, Molly, Modestus, Nelly, Patrick, Paul, Penelope, Ray, Ruben, Salem, Stu, Sarah, Sharine, Tracey, Toussaint, Turki, Victoria, Yang, Yiben, Yinyi, Ysabel and Yummi. Thank all of you for having been part of this wonderful journey.

My friends at Astro, Haida, Fida, Fatin, Linda, Nita, Ruby, Rina, Mina, Zul, Fadhil, Laila, Jimmie, Asmada, Ravi, Rashdan, Masrohan, Yusof, Anuar, Izan, Junaidah, Jamil, Nurjannah, Haji Izelan, Yusak (Allah bless his soul) and many others, I thank you for inspiring me to study media workers.

My family in Leeds has been an endless source of support: Dr Suhaila, Juliana, Zatul, Fatimah, Sherry, Mary, Deng, Ina, Zaimah, Shafa, Kamla, Eva, Noraini and Fadli, Jun and Iwan, Fidah and Fendi, Is and Laila, Amy and Man, Tini and Hisham, Umi Khadijah Hambali and Abah Lukman.

Dr Rebecca O'Rourke, I thank you for having turned me into a better writer. Kruakae, Mandy, Yi, Anna, Jennifer and Ummi Hani, I thank you for our fun intellectual banter. Lily, I thank you for your shelter and prayers as I raced toward my finish line.

To my family in Kuwait, Haji Salama Hajjaj, Hajjah Wajeaha, Nezar, Ghassan, Sanaa', Asma', Rami, Luda and Lama, as well as to my family in Malaysia, Hajjah Salmah, Zaki, Nur Salina, Dr Rusna, Siti Nordina, Mohd Kavi and my beloved cousins, nieces and nephews, thank you for always remembering me in your prayers.

This thesis is a special gift to my parents, Haji Abd. Karim and Hajjah Rela. Thank you for always believing in my potential. I thank my siblings, Nur Krismarina, Abd. Hadi, and Nur Azlita, for loving my boys just like their own. To my little men, Faris and Nabeil, I thank you for your understanding and for patiently awaiting my return. Finally, Sami Salama Hajjaj, thank you for your patience throughout these laborious years of juggling PhD tasks, work and domestic chores. Sami remains my rock, my soul mate, and my life coach, and for those things, I also dedicate this thesis to him.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Since the late 1990s, satellite broadcasting technologies have allowed some Islam-based television channels to operate from various countries. By 2015, approximately fifty Islamic television services were in operation, broadcasting from the United Kingdom, Europe, North America, Africa and the Middle East.¹ The increasing number of Islam-based television broadcasts has generated numerous scholarly debates over issues such as ownership, control of operations, and the agendas that animate such programming. However, few research studies of Islam-based television programming provide information about a channel's production culture. The study of production culture emphasises 'collective, daily cultural performance involving symbolic codes, [and] conventionalized power hierarchies' within media organisation (Caldwell, 2008, p. 342). The study of production culture of Islam-based television is critical as it stands to enhance our understanding of how religious television programming – and in particular, Islamic television programming – adopts the form that it does. More generally, such a study could develop a better understanding of how and under what conditions television production employees produce television programmes.

Al-Jazeera sets the clearest discernible trend in Islam-based television. This station has 'scooped' leading global news channels, such as the BBC and CNN, with its coverage of the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in response to the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington (Kraidy and Khalil, 2009, p. 1). Al-Jazeera became well-known globally for being the first channel to broadcast videotapes of Osama bin Laden, as well as for covering Al-Qaeda extensively (Cherribi, 2012). Despite this popularity, both the West and the Muslim world have criticised Al-Jazeera for allowing access to

¹ The figure stated is based on my personal observation, as there is no census of the actual figures of Islamic television channels. Available from: www.watchislamictv.com; www.islambox.com/tv-channel; www.muslimvideo.com/live/

² Mohamed Ali was once a political exile associated with the Tunisian *Ennahda Movement*, a self-proclaimed moderate Islamic party. Ennahda Movement had long been banned from the political spectrum by former President Ben Ali, most notably in the 1989 elections where some of its members had to run independently due to government repression. Mohamed

religiopolitical extremist groups, such as Al-Qaeda (Cherribi, 2012, p. 472), and for being ‘an instrument of propaganda for violent radical groups’ (Kraidy and Khalil, 2009, p. 146). Nor is Al-Jazeera, the only communication organisation, facing such criticism, as several other Islam-based broadcasters have been accused of mobilising religious extremism (Kosnick, 2004; Kraidy and Khalil, 2009; Hroub, 2012). Such critiques, however, are not grounded in a subtle understanding of the television stations themselves, nor of how power dynamics might shape their production processes. Most studies of Islam-based television are focused on the broadcast content produced (Pond, 2006; Echchaibi, 2011), the politics of representation (Cottle, 2000; Moll, 2010; Saha, 2012), audience reception (Chammah, 2010), the political economy of Arab-Islamic television industries (Kraidy and Khalil, 2009), and the ideological influences on religious broadcasting in the Middle East (Hroub, 2012). Although these various studies are wide-ranging, there is still inadequate research into the production of Islam-based television.

1.1 The Research Project

To address the gap in research into the production of Islam-based television, this thesis seeks to understand what shapes the production of a television programme and under what conditions employees in television production make such programmes. To do so, a study of an Islam-based organisation and a television programme produced by such an organisation is appropriate. The focus of this thesis is a study of the production of a particular television programme broadcast on the Islam Channel.

1.1.1 The Islam Channel as a Research Site

I have chosen the Islam Channel, an Islam-based television station in central London, as a site to conduct this research. Mohamed Ali Harrath, a Tunisian political exile who migrated to the UK, founded the Islam Channel in 2004.² Although the unusual profile of

² Mohamed Ali was once a political exile associated with the Tunisian *Ennahda Movement*, a self-proclaimed moderate Islamic party. Ennahda Movement had long been banned from the political spectrum by former President Ben Ali, most notably in the 1989 elections where some of its members had to run independently due to government repression. Mohamed Ali was one of them. See: Zarnosh, A. 2008. *Exclusive Interview with Mohamed Ali*. [Online]. [Accessed 13 April 2012]. Available from: <http://www.ummah2.com/archives/archives/119-exclusive-interview-with-mohamed-ali.html>.

its CEO stimulated my interest in conducting this research, there are four other reasons for choosing the Islam Channel.

First, the Islam Channel is the first Islam-based programming to use English as a broadcast medium. The use of English language by the channel allows a wider audience to access such programming, which might signify the channel's support of a social cohesion agenda. Other Islam-based satellite programmes established in the UK either combine Urdu with English (e.g., Noor TV) or use only Urdu (e.g., Peace TV) or Arabic as the language of television programming (e.g., Al Hiwar Channel). A UK government census reported 59% of Muslims in this country have watched the Islam Channel at some point (Ofcom, 2011). Furthermore, although the Islam Channel is based in central London, viewers in 136 countries can access its programmes via satellite and the Internet (*The Dawah Project*, 2015). The Ofcom Content Sanctions Committee (Graf et al., 2007, p. 6) identifies the Islam Channel as 'a specialist religious channel that broadcasts on the SKY platform (EPG 813) and is directed at a largely Muslim audience both in Britain and around the world'. The use of English language in its programmes not only allows access to English-speaking Muslims but also complements the channel's mission to proselytise non-Muslim viewers (*The Dawah Project*, 2015). Because the English language is one of the channel's features that attracts British Muslims and (potentially) a non-Muslim audience both locally and abroad, the Islam Channel is a suitable site to study the production of religious television.

Second, the Islam Channel represents 'everyday television' for young and conservative Muslim audiences in Britain. The programmes produced by the channel cover a wide range of genres, from current affairs and political discussion to light-hearted lifestyle and nonfictional programmes. According to the Office of National Statistics, there were 2.71 million Muslims in the UK in 2011 (*British Muslims in Numbers*, 2015, p.16). Of this 2.71 million, 59% watch the Islam Channel (cited in *About Islam Channel*, 2012). Also, other data supporting this report indicate that Muslims under the age of 50 are more attracted to Muslim media than their elders (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2012, p. 10). Such reports suggest that the Islam Channel, in particular, is popular among young British Muslims. Another report by the Islam Channel stated that 80% of the channel's programming is religious programming (*Spreading Islam through the Media*, 2013). Religious programming includes live phone-in programmes, such as *IslamQA*, and those

that feature religious sermons, such as Hajj and Ramadan programmes, Qur'anic recitation, or discussions of traditions regarding the Prophet Muhammad and/or Islamic jurisprudence. This indicates that the channel aims to cater to a conservative Muslim audience.

This thesis is neither about audience reception nor about trying to ascertain what the Islam Channel's viewers think of its programming. Instead, it examines television production. My analysis is based on the concept of 'production culture', which I will discuss in more detail in Section 1.2 and Chapter 3.

Third, a study of the Islam Channel will help broaden our understanding of Islam-based television and its programming. Since the events of 9/11 in the United States of America and the 7/7 attack on London, Islamic culture has become politicised. Islamic media organisations have been scrutinised both by the media regulator Ofcom and by the Islamic institutions that monitor their operation within society. The Islam Channel is one such organisation.³ In 2006, for instance, Ofcom investigated the Islam Channel for 'failing to treat major matters of political controversy with due impartiality' (Graf et al., 2007, p.3). In 2010, the UK-based counter-extremism think-tank, the Quilliam Foundation, scrutinised Islam-based television organisations beneath a political lens.⁴ According to the Quilliam Foundation report (Rajab, 2010), the Islam Channel is 'reprogramming' young British Muslims. The report accused the Islam Channel of disseminating extremist ideology through a 'live' phone-in television programme called *IslamQA*. As a result of such grave accusations, the UK media regulator Ofcom threatened to annul the Islam Channel's licence to broadcast. This thesis is about the production culture of religious television manifested in everyday production processes and how it affects the working lives of employees. It is worth exploring whether Ofcom's scrutiny and the Quilliam accusation have had any impact on the production culture of the Islam

³ This important political controversy is related to the programme entitled *Jerusalem: the Promise of Heaven*, produced by the Islam Channel in 2006. According to Ofcom's Sanctions Committee, the channel failed to ensure that its content was treated with due impartiality. Ofcom considered that this failure was an example of an overall pattern of weak compliance with Ofcom's Broadcasting Code at the Islam Channel.

⁴ The Quilliam Foundation is a counter-extremism think tank based in London. In 2010, Quilliam produced a report entitled *Reprogramming British Muslims* after conducting content analyses of key religious programmes produced by the Islam Channel. Available from: <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org>

Channel, as well as considering how production community members respond to such scrutiny while attempting to meet the needs of the channel's young and conservative audiences.

Finally, the socioreligious and political mission of the Islam Channel may shape its production culture. For that reason, I chose the channel as a research site. The Islam Channel's mission is to: 1) present a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims, 2) educate Muslims, and 3) become the voice of the voiceless for Muslims oppressed locally and abroad. These mission goals signify the way in which the Islam Channel has positioned itself as a Muslim organisation located in the West. A study of the production culture of Islam-based television is particularly relevant when recent global threats of religious extremism, such as those proffered by Islamic State (IS), are taken into consideration. Without research into Islamic television production culture, little can be known about either the creative decision-making of its producers or the working conditions that constrain certain editorial decisions. I will discuss the socioreligious and political mission of the Islam Channel in Chapter 5 to demonstrate what the management and the production community perceive this mission to be and in what ways the mission shapes television production.

The stated reasons relating to the Islam Channel's accessibility, its characteristics as everyday television and its socioreligious and political mission justify my choice of the channel as a case study for this research. This study of the production culture and institutional context of Islam-based television may contribute to better understanding of how religious television programming takes the form that it does, as well as of how and under what conditions a television production community produces religious programmes. Moreover, this study of the Islam Channel may encourage other media production researchers to look into the production culture of other faith-based television organisations.

1.1.2 The Magazine Talk Show

Aside from analysing a single media organisation, this thesis focuses on a particular genre of the television programme: a magazine talk show. A number of studies in the nineties and early 2000s have analysed television talk shows (daytime or confessional talk shows) regarding sociocultural and political perspectives (e.g. Munson, 1993; Livingstone and Lunt, 1994; Shattuc, 1997; Lowney, 1999), the history of television talk shows (Timberg,

2002), the production of daytime talk shows (Grindstaff, 2002) and audience reception of the talk show genre (Mittell, 2003). With the exception of the Grindstaff study, which utilises an ethnographic approach to talk shows in the US, most of these studies are either based on textual analyses of talk shows (narrative and historical approaches to a wide-range of talk shows produced in the UK and the US) or upon interviews with the presenters and talk show studio audiences. The production of television talk shows within the context of religious television, however, remains under-explored.

Like Laura Grindstaff (2002), my approach is ethnographic. However, unlike her work, which is based on four different ‘pre-recorded’ daytime talk shows, this thesis focuses on a single talk show that is produced ‘live’ by the Islam Channel. It analyses the production quality of *Living the Life*, a magazine talk show that is broadcast ‘live’ every Monday to Thursday at 7:00 pm on the Islam Channel. *Living the Life* was first aired in July 2012, and it aimed to emulate the genre conventions of *The One Show*, a magazine talk show produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). *The One Show* is broadcast ‘live’ on BBC 1 at 7:00 pm, five days a week. I use genre conventions of *The One Show* as a yardstick when assessing the production quality of *Living the Life* in Chapter 6. In the discussion of ‘production quality’ throughout this thesis, I refer to the discourses regarding ‘aesthetics of television talk show’ (Bruun, 2001).

As a public service broadcasting organisation, the BBC aims ‘to enrich people's lives with programmes and services that inform, educate and entertain’. *The One Show* is a television programme that attempts to materialise such an ethos. Likewise, *Living the Life* is also subject to the Islam Channel’s mission. Whereas the BBC’s public service broadcasting remit aims to serve the British public, the socioreligious and political mission of the Islam Channel targets global Muslims (the *Ummah*) and non-Muslims. I will discuss the mission of the Islam Channel in more detail in Chapter 5, addressing how it causes tensions within the channel and shapes its production culture.

1.2 Research Questions and Thesis Structure

This thesis aims to contribute to the emerging field of media production studies. It is intended to conceptualise the production culture of religious television through an ethnographic study of the Islam Channel. In doing so, this thesis asks two questions:

1. How does a religious television programme come to take the form it does?

2. How and under what conditions do television production employees produce a religious television programme?

The thesis is built on three levels of analysis. The first level examines the set of goals that the Islam Channel aims to accomplish through its programming. It discusses this mission's meaning to the management and to the channel's production community, including how they relate their personal values and belief systems to this mission. The second level involves an analysis of the outputs of *Living the Life* as a magazine talk show. The aim is to analyse production quality about the channel's mission and the tensions within the channel. This thesis argues that a poor quality of working life contributes to the poor production quality of the magazine talk show *Living the Life*. This argument leads to the third level of analysis, which includes examining the quality of the working life of the staff involved in the production of *Living the Life*.

1.2.1 Conceptual Framework

This thesis combines different approaches to media production studies. In Chapter 3, I review relevant literature that shapes the construction of specific research questions, the choice of research design and methods, and the focus of analysis. I seek to conceptualise the production culture of religious television. In doing so, I apply the concept of 'production culture', originating from cultural studies of the media industries tradition. The concept of production culture is proposed by John T. Caldwell (2006; 2008) for the study of television and film production within institutional and industrial contexts. I apply the concept of production culture that seeks to examine 'collective, daily cultural performance involving symbolic codes, [and] conventionalized power hierarchies' within a media organisation (Caldwell, 2008, p. 342). I apply this concept within this thesis to answer the first research question: how does a religious television programme, such as the magazine talk show *Living the Life*, come to take the form it does? The concept of production culture also offers insight into the shared cultural norms, values and rituals involved in television production. Such cultural aspects of television production help answer the second research question, regarding how and under what conditions do television employees produce the magazine talk show *Living the Life*.

This thesis is built upon a two-part literature review, which forms its conceptual framework. The first part provides a context for the study, which I discuss in Chapter 2. It focuses on tensions between the West and Muslim culture, as well as on tensions among Muslim communities themselves. It emphasises such tensions concerning norms, values

and rituals in Muslim cultural production, and the ways in which Islam and Muslims are supposed to present/ought to be presented by Muslim creative producers. It addresses how such tensions may affect television production at the Islam Channel.

The second part of the literature review (Chapter 3) combines a broad range of literature from the media sociology and cultural studies traditions that explore media production and creative labour. It seeks to understand how power dynamics that are internal and external to the broadcast organisations shape the programmes produced by these organisations. It further engages with research into the production of television talk shows (Section 3.1), the production of religious television (Section 3.2) and a sociological approach to creative labour (Section 3.3).

This two-part approach to the literature helped me conceptualise the production culture of the Islam Channel. I developed the empirical chapters (5 to 7) based on the themes that emerged from the data and was guided by the relevant literature.

1.2.2 Empirical Study

In addition to applying the concept of production culture and mapping the relevant literature in order to conceptualise the production culture of a religious television station, I have conducted an empirical study, which draws upon a social constructivist worldview and an ethnographic research design. I discuss the research design and these methods in Chapter 4, which I have divided into four sections:

The first section presents the qualitative research paradigm that is the social constructivist worldview. Social constructivism holds assumptions that ‘individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work’ (Creswell, 2013). As a social constructivist researcher, I try to understand how members of the production community at the Islam Channel perceived their daily individual and collective television production rituals. I also seek to understand how power dynamics within the channel shape television production.

The second section discusses the ethnographic research design and methods. I refer to Caldwell’s (2006; 2008) production culture to develop the research design. However, unlike Caldwell’s ethnography, which based on an extensive cultural-industrial analysis, I developed a small-scale ethnographic research design, based on a four-layer analytical framework, including the following layers: sociocultural environment, institutional

context, television production community and genre conventions. I use this analytical framework for conceptualising the production culture of religious television as well as for mapping my ethnographic experiences.

The third section reflects on my ethnographic experience. I deliberate my ethnographic research experience with the specificities of the Islam Channel as a research site. I reflect on the possibilities and limitations that the setting presented regarding structures, relationships between teams, cultural norms around gender and religion, and interactions between the production team and other areas of the Islam Channel's staff. By doing so, I was able to examine the power dynamics within the Islam Channel.

Aside from being a participant observer and conducting interviews, I also analysed the production quality of the magazine talk show *Living the Life*. I identified how tensions within the channel affected the production quality of this talk show, as well as my experiences and the experiences of other television staff involved in the *Living the Life* production. I have identified the personal values, assumptions, and biases that attend my experience as a gendered individual, a Muslim and an academic with extensive professional experience. The discussion includes how I obtained access to the research site, my relationships with participants in the field, and ethical considerations. All of these things have shaped my interpretation of data gathered from the fieldwork.

Finally, the fourth section discusses the data analysis procedures and the strategies for verifying the data. I ensure the validity of the findings by 1) clarifying my assumptions and biases; 2) presenting the power dynamics across the production hierarchy and the tensions affected the production quality and the working life; 3) spending a prolonged period at the Islam Channel, and finally, 4) by using the peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of accounts and results of the analysis.

1.2.3 Research Findings

I analysed the empirical data gathered during my fieldwork at the Islam Channel and classified the findings into three parts: the first part includes an analysis of the mission of the Islam Channel, which I address in Chapter 5. I focus on three aspects of the mission of the Islam Channel: to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims, which describes the channel's socioreligious agenda; to educate Muslims, which describes the channel's sociocultural agenda; and to represent the voiceless and oppressed British Muslims and global Muslims (*Ummah*), which describes the channel's religiopolitical agenda. I gathered

data from my observations and interviews of employees at the managerial and television production levels and drew upon it in an effort to understand how the employees interpret their professional roles and perceive these goals. Such an analytical approach is relevant to the study of the production culture of religious television as it examines how the channel's institutional mission has contributed to tensions and the adoption of a 'culture of caution' within the channel.

The second part of the analysis is discussed in Chapter 6, which aims to identify the production culture and institutional context of the Islam Channel. The chapter begins with an overview of television talk show genre conventions and production routines, focusing mainly on Laura Grindstaff's (2002) empirical research regarding the production of daytime talk shows and Rebecca Whitefoot's (2014) personal account as a researcher involved with the production of the magazine talk show *The One Show* (BBC 1, 2006-present).⁵ Next, I outline the genre conventions of *Living the Life* and *The One Show*, indicating the criteria of magazine talk shows exhibited by each programme. I use *The One Show* as an example of a "good" magazine talk show (see Table 6). Not only is *The One Show* possibly the current leading UK example of a magazine talk show, but also it was an inspirational goal for both the programming manager and the producer of *Living the Life* when the programme was conceived in 2012 (Interviews, 2013). By 'production quality' of the magazine talk show, I refer to the 'aesthetics of [the] television talk show' (Agger and Jensen, 2001; Bruun, 2001). I consider how well the producers have achieved success in realising their aesthetic goals and in matching generally accepted professional standards. I analyse the production quality of *Living the Life* by relating it to *The One Show*, which serves as an example of a good magazine talk show. I present the results of this textual analysis of *Living the Life* by connecting these results to three main constraints: 1) lack of resources, 2) problems relating to the mission of the Islam Channel, and 3) conflicting

⁵ Whitefoot, R. 2014. *A One Show Researcher's First Recollections*. Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/2H8sv5WnBdX7TCh3HWcctR9/a-one-show-researchers-first-recollections>. Accessed 8 June 2014. I acknowledge that Whitefoot may be biased in her reflection because she works for the BBC. One might argue that article is more promotional than academic, aiming to promote the BBC's standards of professionalism and its employees' experiences. I refer to her article not only due to the dearth of academic publications regarding these matters, but also because it is the only piece (for now) that tells us about the magazine talk show, its making, its genre conventions, and what constitutes the daily responsibilities and routines of a researcher involved in the magazine talk show's production.

notions of what constitutes a ‘good’ television programme. Ultimately, these constraints shape the production culture of the Islam Channel.

The third part of the analysis aims to explore the quality of working life amongst the production community members at the Islam Channel through a critique of my experience as a researcher and the experiences of others involved in the production of *Living the Life*. I present this level of analysis in Chapter 7. The findings are linked to my argument that a poor quality of working life contributes to the poor production quality of a magazine talk show. The analyses in this chapter indicate that the production culture of religious television involves exploitation and self-exploitation, limits creative autonomy and bears implications for the emotional well-being of employees in television production.

Based upon the concept of ‘production culture’ (Caldwell, 2006; 2008), in Chapter 8 I provide a conclusion that sums up the central findings and applies this conclusion to conceptualise the production culture of religious television. The findings affirm the concept of production culture, which emphasises ‘collective, daily cultural performance involving symbolic codes, [and] conventionalized power hierarchies’ within media organisation (Caldwell, 2008, p. 342). These findings also affirm my argument regarding a link between poor employee quality of working life and poor production quality. This thesis concludes that the production culture of religious television is shaped by the power dynamics that are internal and external to television organisation.

Section 8.1 draws broader conclusions about the power dynamics in the production culture. The discussion concerning the power dynamics animating the production culture of the Islam Channel involves four level of analysis (illustrated by the research design in Figure 1), which summarise the findings of this thesis. This four-level analysis includes 1) the discourse of “the clash”, 2) the internal conflict, 3) implications for working life, and 4) implications for the production quality. Further, Section 8.2 elaborates the contributions of this thesis to television production studies. And finally, Section 8.3 discusses the implications of this thesis for future research. While this chapter provides an overview of the research project, summarising its rationale, purposes, focus, conceptual frameworks, empirical study and findings, the following chapter discusses the context for the study of the production culture of religious television.

Chapter 2

Context for the Study

This chapter offers a context for the study of the production culture of religious television. It begins with a brief historical background of Islam and Muslims in the United Kingdom (Section 2.1) and is followed by a discussion of discourses concerning the clash between Western and Muslim culture (Section 2.2), as well as conflicts within Muslim communities themselves (Section 2.3). An analysis of tensions that uses this contextual framework may support our understanding of the power dynamics within this particular production culture, which subsequently may help to conceptualise the production culture of religious television in general.

2.1 Islam and Muslims in the United Kingdom

Early Muslim settlement in the UK can be traced back to the nineteenth century, when the British India Company brought Bengali and Kashmiri sailors into the country (Herding, 2013, p. 18). Britain became a home for Yemeni sailors in 1869 and for Indian soldiers who fought on behalf of Britain during World War II (McLoughlin and Abbas, 2010, pp. 545-46). In addition to these events, Muslims emigrated to the UK because of its immigration policy. The 1948 British Nationality Act granted British citizenship to any person from a Commonwealth country, which encouraged migrants from India and Pakistan to settle in the UK. This policy, however, was later amended (between 1964 and 1971) to restrict the access of these same migrants. In 1981, the original Nationality Act was revoked (Herding, 2013, p. 18). After the change in policy, those seeking to emigrate had to prove that they had British familial ties before they were allowed to immigrate (Haddad, 1999, p. 627).

According to the 2011 census, Muslims form 4.8% of the total population of England and Wales (*British Muslims in Numbers*, 2015, p. 16).⁶ The census also indicates

⁶ The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) has published a report called *British Muslims in Numbers: a demographic, socioeconomic and health profile of Muslims in Britain* by drawing on the 2011 census. Available from:

http://www.mcb.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport_2015.pdf

that there are 2.71 million Muslims in the entire UK, an increase of 75% compared to the 2001 census. Such a percentage constitutes the largest group among all non-Christian faith groups (ibid., p. 22). Of the 2.71 million Muslims, 48% are UK-born, 68% are of Asian origin and 32% are non-Asian. The largest percentage (76%) of Muslims reside within the areas of Greater London, the West Midlands, the North West, Yorkshire and Humberside (ibid., p. 16). Sophie Gilliat-Ray suggests that the increasing number of Muslims in the UK is due to a high birth rate, immigration and conversions to Islam (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 117).

In 2011, 33% of the Muslim population was aged 15 years or younger, and only 4% was above the age of 65. The median age of British Muslims is 25 years, which is younger than that of the general UK population (median age of 40 years) (*British Muslims in Numbers*, 2015, p. 27). Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) argues that this youthful population benefits a nation with an increasing number of senior citizens (ibid.). Consistent with the increased number of young Muslims, the census also states that the percentage of Muslims with no qualifications has fallen from 39% to 26% (ibid.). This percentage, however, does not correspond to the academic achievement and overall socioeconomic status of the UK Muslim population. A study by Matthew Wilkinson (2014) addresses factors contributing to under-achievement in education amongst Muslim boys in the UK. As a committee member of the UK's Curriculum for Cohesion, he concludes that 'overcrowded housing, relative absence of parental English language skill, low levels of parental engagement with mainstream schools, low teacher expectations, the curricular removal of Islam from the school learning environment, and racism and anti-Muslim prejudice' are contributing factors to young Muslim's under-achievement (ibid., p. 399).

The phenomenon of diminished academic achievement tells us not only about the social and educational experience of young Muslims, but also about their socioeconomic status and quality of working life as they approach adulthood. Just less than one-half of the Muslim population (46%) lives in poverty according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (*British Muslims in Numbers*, 2015, p. 46). This figure provokes questions relating to: a) Muslim inequality and unemployment in the labour market, and b) socioeconomic class. In addition to inequality and unemployment within the UK job market, the 2011 census shows that only 1 in 5 (19.8%) of the Muslim population has full-time employment, compared to more than 1 in 3 of the general population (ibid., p. 58). The

rate of unemployment among Muslims is nearly double that of the general population (7.2% compared to 4%) (ibid.). In their study of Muslims within the labour market, Anthony Heath and Jean Martin (2012) argue that ethnicity and religious affiliation contribute to Muslims' socioeconomic disadvantages. The results demonstrate a steep 'Muslim penalty' on economic activity and employment for women and men from different ethnic groups (ibid., p. 1005).

In regards to socioeconomic class, the 2011 census indicates that Muslims represent: a) 5.5% of the proportion of those in the 'higher professional occupation category', which is not significantly lower than the overall population (7.6%); and b) a significant proportion of 'small employers and own account group', that is, 9.7% of Muslim groups, compared to 9.3% of the overall population (*British Muslims in Numbers*, 2015, p. 64). While Muslim representation in the higher socioeconomic category is an indicator of improvement in their economic well-being, Muslim participation in small businesses and self-employment is an indicator of their entrepreneurial interests. Despite concerns of Muslim educational under-attainment and a higher percentage of impoverishment in comparison to other faith groups, socioeconomic class indicators suggest the importance of the Muslim contribution to the UK economy (ibid., p. 65).

Beyond issues regarding Muslims' socioeconomic achievement and class, there is also anxiety among Muslims concerning their socioreligious life. Living in a country dominated by membership in the Anglican Church of England, Muslims are concerned about the status of Islam and the right to continue practising their faith. No constitution protects Muslims' right to practice Islam in the UK, nor dictates the way in which the state should treat Islam (McLoughlin and Abbas, 2010, pp. 546-47). The 1976 Race Relations Act, which recognised the difference of all ethnic groups and aimed to providing them with equal rights, only prohibits indirect discriminatory practices on basis of race, not religion (Haddad, 1999, p. 627). In response to such uncertainty regarding the future of Islam within the UK, Muslims immigrants began establishing faith-based institutions, such as the mosque. Most of these immigrants are Sunni, 'who believe that there is no clergy in Islam; [and] thus, the creation and maintenance of Islamic institutions in the West is a new experience for the majority of the Muslim diaspora community' (ibid., p. 631). As a result, the mosque is regarded as an institution that 'glues' the Muslim community together and educates Muslim youth.

Based upon experiences with colonialism and neo-colonialism in the countries from which they emigrated, early Muslim immigrant communities in the UK bore preconceived notions of Western culture. They felt that Islamic teachings should be preserved through the establishment of religious institutions (e.g., the mosque), which teach and encourage younger generations in their practice and maintenance of Islamic values. Such a view of Western culture as a threat to both Islam and to younger Muslim generations continues to plague religious elders (Haddad, 1999). Contemporary scholars, such as Tariq Ramadan (2004; 2009; 2010), Said Fares Hassan (2013), Karim H. Karim and Mahmoud Eid (2014) and others, seek solutions for keeping religious identity intact while integrating within western society on behalf of Muslims living in the West.

While the mosque functions as a Muslim institution that oversees socioreligious affairs, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) became the first Muslim umbrella organisation in the UK. As such, the MCB, an independent body, is charged with promoting consultation with and cooperation amongst Muslims. It also coordinates Muslim socioreligious and political affairs in the United Kingdom (*About Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)*, 2015). Founded in 1997, the MCB comprises 500 local mosques and national groups, which hold diverse religious and political views. According to Ehsan Masood, 'the MCB is little different in its structure and operation from any other British non-governmental lobby group in that it is critical of many aspects of government policy, but is happy to effect change from within the structures of parliamentary democracy' (Masood, 2006, p. 21). Sunni organisations such as the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), the UK Islamic Mission (UKIM), and the Islamic Forum Europe (IFE), dominate the MCB. These organisations stem from an anti-colonial political Islam, which originated in the Middle East and South Asia (ibid.). However, the MCB enjoys less support from the Shíah communities and the Sunni Sufi groups, which prefer to support a second umbrella Muslim organisation, the British Muslim Forum (BMF). BMF has a network of some 300 mosques, interfaith communities and youth groups that commonly show less of an interest in Muslim political life within the UK (ibid.). While MCB members tend to be actively involved in British politics, the BMF focuses upon the socioreligious affairs of British Muslims (ibid.). In 1997, the MCB alliance with the Labour government proved beneficial for British Muslims. In comparison to the BMF, the MCB has received the support of the majority of British Muslims since its inception and

continues to be a leading Muslim organisation that cares for the socioreligious, economic and political life of the UK Muslim population.

The MCB claims to be an organisation that speaks on behalf of Muslims and encourages religiopolitical consciousness and civic engagement amongst British Muslims (Masood, 2006; *British Muslims in Numbers*, 2015). In addition, the Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) helps ‘empower and encourage British Muslims within local communities to be more actively involved in British media and politics’ (*About Muslim Engagement & Development (MEND)*, 2015). Among MEND's core objectives is working with other faith groups ‘to ensure Islamophobia is as socially unacceptable as anti-Semitism and other forms of racism and xenophobia’ (ibid.). MEND complements the efforts of the MCB by organising training for Muslims in order to enhance their communication skills so as to respond effectively to derogatory and exciting news stories (ibid.).

In this section, I have briefly outlined the historical, sociocultural, economic, religious and political contexts of Muslim life in the UK. Issues related to migration, racial and ethnic inequality, socioeconomic class, youth and efforts to preserve Islam and Muslim identity, as well as to counter Islamophobia, must be considered a part of everyday British Muslim life. This brief background of Islam and Muslims in the United Kingdom aims to support our understandings of how and under what conditions television production workers at the Islam Channel produce religious programmes.

2.2 The Clash between the West and the Muslim Cultures.

Power dynamics are integral to production culture. Therefore, an exploration of the various tensions facing Muslims in general, and the production of religious media in particular, are appropriate for this thesis. This section focuses on the clash between the Western and the Muslim cultures, which informs the kinds of challenges that Muslim cultural production faces when making cultural products. Muslim cultural production is involved in producing items such as calligraphy, both *nasheed* (devotional songs) and musical performances, television programmes, and films. While making these products, Muslim media producers learn about their audience and surrounding societal issues. As David Hesmondhalgh argues, ‘during the production of media texts, media producers draw upon knowledge, values and beliefs circulating in society’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p. 2). In light of his argument, this section considers the clash between the Western and

Muslim cultures, as well as its effects upon Muslim society. Mapping the tensions faced by Muslims living in the west from both sociocultural and religious perspectives stands to help conceptualise the production culture of religious television.

The argument describing the friction between the West and Muslim cultures is represented by Samuel Huntington's (1996) thesis *The Clash of Civilizations*. Culturalists upholding Huntington's argument regard 'every' Muslim as a threat to Western civilisation and Islamic culture and *Shari'a* (Islamic law) as incompatible with Western culture (Kundnani, 2015, p. 65). Consequently, those upholding his argument suggest that Muslims should shed their religious identities in order to blend into Western society (ibid.). The Huntington thesis/culturalists' interpretation of this "clash" has resulted in two things: first, the negative representation of Islam and Muslims in the media; and second, the representation of Muslims as 'a suspect community' (ibid.).

The first effect can be observed in the media representations of the events of September 11 and the 7/7 bombing of the London transportation system, after which Islam and Muslims received negative publicity in the media. These negative representations include the use of terms, such as 'Islamic fundamentalism' or 'Islamic extremism' (when referring to the religion) and 'fundamentalist', 'radical Muslim', 'extremist' or 'terrorist' when referring to individuals or groups of Muslims (see Said, 1997; Poole, 2009; Knott et al., 2013). Over the years, the negative media representation of Islam has surged. A study by Kim Knott, Elizabeth Poole and Teemu Taira revealed that references to Islam in selected British media grew significantly from 66 (in 1982) to 306 (in 2008), an increase by 400% within a 16-year period (Knott et al., 2013, p. 80). The same study also reported an increase in references to Islam as 'extremism' (to 41), as well as 141 references to 'militant action' in 2009 (ibid., p. 81). Likewise, the study indicated a growing number of negative representations of Islam and Muslims in the media.

The second effect of the Huntington thesis concerning the clash regards Muslims being cast as 'a suspect community'. Arun Kundnani argues that the 'anti-extremism' discourse in the media has specific implications for British Muslims; specifically, they have become 'a suspect community' (2015, p. 63). State policing reflects the anxieties that the West bears toward the "other-ed" Muslim communities and contributes to the

surrounding suspicions. Using the culturalist interpretation, Kundnani explains how Muslims have become 'a suspect community' despite their dissociation with extremism:

Muslim extremists are a threat to Western civilization, and the state can legitimately use wide-ranging emergency powers to counter them. But other Muslims, who do not adopt a literalist interpretation of Islam [fundamentalism], must be regarded with suspicion (Kundnani, 2015, p. 63).

Culturalists insist that the only way Muslims can free themselves from suspicion is by a 'rejection of their own Muslim identity' and such 'liberation' for Muslims consists of leaving their culture [religion] behind rather than autonomously changing it from within' (ibid., p. 65).

To counter Huntington's thesis, Edward Said (2001) coined the term 'the clash of ignorance' in a *Nation* magazine article that was published six weeks after the 9/11 attacks (cited in Karim and Eid, 2014, p. 214). The term 'the clash of ignorance' is used to describe the dynamics of power that characterize the West's relationship with Muslims and Islamic culture, particularly during the post-9/11 period (Said, 2001). Karim H. Karim and Mahmoud Eid (2014) prefer Edward Said's term 'clash of ignorance' to describe this apparent conflict between Muslims and the West. Such a conflict is seen as a result of the West's misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Islamic ideology. Much like in the representation of Muslims as 'a suspect community', 'the clash of ignorance' refers to Muslims' experience of 'institutionalised ignorance' – that is, 'an epistemological system, a state and its institutions that intentionally produce misrepresentations of the [Muslim] Other in a discourse whose objective is to maintain its citizens' ignorance about the rest of the world' (Gafaiti, 2008, pp. 103-104, cited in Karim and Eid, 2014, p. 5). Reformists like Ramadan (2004; 2009; 2010) and Karim and Eid (2014) believe that 'the clash of ignorance' can be resolved by Muslim engagement with the Western Other, integrating whilst preserving Muslim identity and adhering to Islamic culture and practices. It is through learning each other's culture and acknowledging the differences in each religious belief system that much of ignorance can be reduced (if not eliminated).

Also, in an effort to counter Huntington's thesis and to overcome a lack of understanding of Muslims and Islam amongst Western governments/Other, Mahmoud Eid suggests an improvement of policies supporting multiculturalism and integration/social cohesion, ones aimed at 'enhancing engagement of cultural and

religious groups through active participation in all social activities and positive beliefs in Western values and freedoms' (Eid, 2014, p. 165). Criticising the current policies regarding multiculturalism and integration, Eid argues that multiculturalism, which supposedly helps to 'reduce racism and discrimination and provide a space for celebrating differences', has failed 'despite forceful measures towards Muslims' because the state fails to understand the Muslim faith and its cultural practices (ibid.). Moreover, social cohesion/integration also suffers when critiques of multiculturalism assert it has failed to integrate different cultures and religions. Such failure, according to Eid, 'amplifies clashes between Western governments and Muslim immigrants, rather than helping engagement and integration' (ibid.). To eliminate the stereotype of Muslims as 'a suspect community', there is a need for Eid's suggested policy, which incorporates an 'understanding of Islam, acknowledging and respecting Muslim differences, eliminating racism and discrimination against Muslims, correcting their misrepresentations, addressing their concerns, listening to their demands, and protecting their human and communication rights', (ibid., pp. 165-166).

This section has examined how debates on the clash between the West and Muslim cultures shape the ways in which Islam and Muslims are represented, interpreted, perceived and politicised by the media, by those ignorant of Islamic cultures, and by the authorities and those in power. The effects on Islam and Muslims discussed above matter to this research project as they may also shape the ways and the conditions under which religious television programmes are produced by the Islam Channel.

2.3 Tensions within Muslim Communities

The second form of power dynamics central to the production culture of religious television concerns the tensions within Muslim communities. While previously I have discussed the kind of power that is external to Muslim cultural production organisations, this section focuses on the clashes between Muslims themselves. It offers a critical approach to examining two areas of tensions in British Muslim communities: ideological and intergenerational conflicts.

Whereas Huntington claims that the ideology of Islam is a threat to western civilization and the root of the clash between Muslim cultures and the West, Kundnani suggests otherwise. Rather, Kundnani argues 'it is not a clash of civilizations between the West's modern values and Islam's fanaticism; the "clash" is instead between a traditional,

apolitical Islam that is compatible with Western values, i.e., the [moderate/reformist], and a totalitarian appropriation of Islam's meaning that has transformed it into a violent political ideology [extremism]' (Kundnani, 2015, p. 56). To support this claim, Kundnani outlines three reformist views that counter those of the culturalists (e.g., Huntington's clash of civilizations):

- a) [Reformists/Moderate Muslims] rejected the view that Islamic culture was inherently oppositional to Western interests. What mattered, they said, was not the Islamic culture itself, but the politicization of Islamic culture by an extremist minority.
- b) Whereas culturalists saw Islam as having an inherent tendency to generate extremism, the reformists argued that extremism was a product not of Islam but of its perversion. In this view, what distinguished extremist Muslims from moderate Muslims was their misinterpretation of Islam as bearing a political message.
- c) Against the culturalists, who argued that Islam is inherently reluctant to separate itself from the political sphere, the reformists viewed the majority of Muslims as practicing their religion apolitically and in ways presenting no threat to the West (ibid., p. 65).

In support of the reformist/moderate Muslim views above, Kundnani claims that 'the ideological clash' is in fact between the reformist/moderate and extremist Muslims, not between Islamic and Western cultures, as claimed by Huntington.

While Said's (2001) term 'the clash of ignorance' implies a conflict between the West and Islam as a religion and culture, the 'clash of ideology' amongst British Muslims may lead to fragmented views on sociocultural issues. Both types of conflict shape the creative processes of Muslim cultural production.

The second form of tension in British Muslim society is an intergenerational clash, which results from the generation gap between elder/traditional Muslims and younger Muslims. This intergenerational tension developed as an identity crisis among young Muslims concerning the ways in which the traditional beliefs and views of kinds of music shape how the young understand Islamic principles. The young Muslim adoption of the concept of '*halal* and fun', encouraged by Muslim artists while adoring hip-hop nasheed, collides with the traditional British Muslim view of Western culture (including music) (Herding, 2013). Such a view emphasises 'self-protection, self-preservation, and sometimes even self-definition over and against the 'Western megamachine', asserting 'whatever is Western is anti-Islamic' or 'Islam has nothing in common with the West',

(Ramadan, 2004, pp. 4-5).⁷ As a reformist/moderate scholar, Tariq Ramadan criticises such misconceptions of Western culture by conservative, traditional Muslims:

This bipolar vision is widespread and gives some Muslims a sense of power, might and legitimacies on the Otherness. But not only is this bipolar and simplistic vision a decoy (and the claims that justify it are untruths), but the power it bestows is a pure illusion: in practice, the Muslims who maintain this thesis only isolate themselves, marginalise themselves, and sometimes, by their excessive emotional, intellectual, and social isolation, even strengthen the logic of the dominant system whose power, by contrast, lies in and always appearing open, pluralistic, and rational. (ibid., p. 5).

Ramadan's critique of the older Muslim generation's perceptions of the West highlights the existence of a generational gap in Muslim society in Britain. This gap is problematic, as it might lead to an identity crisis amongst young Muslims in the field of cultural production, one which subsequently makes sound judgements unlikely whenever thinking becomes trapped within the traditional way of evaluating Western culture (Ramadan, 2004). Instead, Muslim youth should be encouraged to demonstrate 'creativity and fresh, original cultural expressions', but 'within the interpretive freedom allowed by scriptural sources' (Ramadan, 2009, p. 193). This type of clash is also a challenge for Muslim cultural production in the extent to which such a conflict constrains creativity.

In light of these ideological and intergenerational conflicts, the following sections discuss the challenges and problems in representation faced by Muslim cultural production concerning three conflicting aspects of Muslim life. These are: 1) religious identity, 2) music and youth, and 3) gender and female subjects.

2.3.1 Religious Identity

Muslim cultural production faces challenges when dealing with the representation of Muslim identity by Western Others and by Muslim themselves. Western scholars and the media tend to describe Muslims in two ways: either 'bad' or 'good.' Bad Muslims are

⁷ *Halal* means religiously permissible, often used for food, but may also be used in reference to activities, attitudes and behaviours. Tariq Ramadan suggests *halal* indicates 'lawful' and *haram* 'unlawful' when discussing music as 'ethical art'. In Ramadan's opinion, ethical art reflects an 'ethical dimension [that] does not lie in being artificial and moralizing, but in resisting the pressure of money, of show business, of meaningless tastes that have been pre-programmed, standardized, reduced to their crudest expression' Ramadan, T. 2009. *Radical reform : Islamic ethics and liberation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

fundamentalists, terrorists or extremists, and good Muslims are seen as pious and devoted to moral and ethical beliefs grounded in the type of religious teachings that dissociate the religion from violent extremism or radicalism (see Abu-Lughod, 2005; Abbas, 2011; Kundnani, 2015). Media discourses on Muslim identity and social integration are often fuelled by an ‘anti-Muslim political culture’ (Kundnani, 2007, p. 126) or the ‘politics of anti-extremism’, (Kundnani, 2015, pp. 55-88). Because the media often set their agenda around these sociopolitical discourses, a large part of Islamic culture and ‘everyday life’ of Muslims remains ‘obscured’ (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 234).

While many terms are used to describe Islam and Muslims, the words ‘fundamentalism/fundamentalist/*Salafis*’ and ‘extremism/extremist’ or ‘terrorist’ are used to discuss the negative representations of Islam and Muslims, as well as to refer to their ideological stance toward Western modernisation. The terms ‘moderate Islam’ and ‘moderate Islamist’ is used when referring to a ‘good’ Muslim, who chooses to integrate. Knott, Poole and Taira’s research sees the need for a terminology that defines broader spectrums of Muslim religious identity (Knott et al., 2013). Aydin Bayram (2014, p. 11) argues that the categorisation of Muslim religious identity actually identifies differing degree of the Muslims’ responses to Western modernisation.

The first category, ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, includes ‘the scholars of text’ or the so-called *Salafis*.⁸ *Salafis*/fundamentalists tend to believe in the exact nature of the Qur’anic text (as God’s word), which allows Muslims to understand and solve problems without changing the meanings or understandings of the Qur’an. The danger in a literal interpretation of the Qur’anic text is that readers might be too easily influenced by these explanations, rejecting any references to the historical, social, political and/or economic contexts in which Muslims lived. An example of existing Islamic fundamentalism includes

⁸ They call themselves *Salafis* because they follow the *Salaf*, which is the title given to the Companions of the Prophet and the pious Muslims of the first three generations of Islam. The Quran and Sunnah are, therefore, interpreted in an immediate way without scholarly conclaves. See Ramadan, T. 2004. *Western Muslims and the future of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 25.

the Wahhabi Movement, which aims to restore Islam to its traditional form according to Qur'anic texts without reference to the social contexts in which Muslims lived.⁹

The second category, 'extremism', is an offshoot of Islamic fundamentalism discussed above that holds to a particular understanding of scriptural sources. Extremists believe that the establishment of an 'Islamic State' based on *Shari'a* (Islamic law) can only be achieved through struggle (*jihad*) against or resistance to unbelievers. Fundamentalist groups adopt non-violent approaches to religious practice while applying a strict interpretation of the Qur'anic text. Extremists (so-called *jihadists*), however, involve themselves in militant activities and support violent acts, such as suicide bombings, against those who do not share their beliefs. Their terrorism threatens the lives of both non-Muslims and Muslims alike who do not share their ideology. Among well-known examples of extremist movements that aim to establish an 'Islamic State' are the Al-Qaeda network, the Taliban, Jama'at Islamiya (JI) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The third category is 'moderate Islam/Muslim', also called 'reformist' by some scholars (e.g., Ramadan, 2009; Kundnani, 2015). The scholars (*Ulama*) among moderate Islamists are known as the 'scholars of context'. Unlike fundamentalists (the scholars of text) and extremists, moderate Islam supporters espouse ideas of 'reform' and 'renewal' of the religion by reading to achieve a fuller understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Its texts are then implemented in light of various historical-cultural contexts, and this inclination can be seen where individual Muslim communities or societies exist (Ramadan, 2009, pp. 12-13). The term 'renewal of religion' does not require a change in the sources, principles or fundamentals of Islam, but only a change in the way the religion is 'understood, implemented, and lived in different times or places' (ibid., p.12). This renewal of religion involves the interpretation and understanding of texts in the fields of law and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The 'minority *fiqh*' (*Fiqh al-Aqalliyyaat*), a 'reformed' area of Islamic jurisprudence, is an example of the product of renewal of religion to suit the context or reality in which Muslims live (see Hassan, 2013; Qaradawi, 2001). Muslim

⁹ The Wahhabi Movement was founded by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1787). He sought to create a fundamentalist return to Islamic principles. See Turner, B. in *The Blackwell dictionary of modern social thought*. 2 ed. 2013. s.v. p.310.

scholars have formulated this minority jurisprudence as a solution to the challenges facing Muslims living in a 'minority situation' (Ramadan, 2009, p.31).

These three categories of Islamic identity not only reflect the notion of bad/good Muslims framed by the media, but also divide Muslim life into three spheres: religious, political, and ordinary/every day. Whereas fundamentalism/ist and extremism/ist describe the religiopolitical lives of Muslims, moderate Muslims represent the 'ordinary' lives of Muslims: a civically engaged community co-existing with the rest of Western society. Muslim reformists/moderate Islamists have created such an identity to counter the negative media misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims that have evolved since early in the war on terror (Kundnani, 2015, p. 56).

Media portrayals of Muslim identity are reduced to a function of Islam as an ideology and culture that teaches violence and extremism. Because media discourses are often developed as part of an 'anti-Muslim political culture' (Kundnani, 2007, p. 126) or the 'politics of anti-extremism' (Kundnani, 2015, pp. 55-88), other subjects related to the ordinary lives of Muslims in Britain 'become obscured' (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 234). As Sophie Gilliat-Ray argues, 'there is a sense in which Muslims have, in some studies and reports, been reduced to a function of their religion and other dimensions of identity and experience have been ignored' (ibid.). The discourses of extremism/terrorism or the war on terror are not the focus of this thesis. Rather, it is 'the other dimensions of identity and experience' of everyday Muslims that this thesis seeks to explore: the everyday working lives of a religious television production community and how these challenges shape Muslim cultural production.

2.2.2 Music and Youth

Another challenge faced by Muslim cultural production is in dealing with musical performances like *nasheed* or devotional songs. These forms of entertainment are popular and widely perceived to be *halal* entertainment among youth of second- and third-generation Muslims in Britain (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Herding, 2013). Despite the notion of 'halal and fun' (Herding, 2013), these young Muslims suffer from two types of dissonance: intergenerational and religious ideological (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). These conflicts shape not only their opinions about Islam and music, but also others' views of how Islam treats the subject. As a result of media discourses concerning fundamentalism and extremism, Islam is perceived and projected as rigid by those misunderstanding its

principles concerning music. As a result of such ignorance, Islam is distorted by the media and criticised as ‘a sombre, austere, if not angry faith in which the act of having fun needs divine license’ (Masood, 2006, p. 62).

Because these young Muslims are included amongst the target audience of Muslim cultural production industries, it is appropriate to better understand their dilemmas and the tensions relating to everyday consumption of popular music. Beyond considering these young Muslims as a part of the Islam Channel’s audience, they could also be members of the channel’s production community. The following sections map the disparate Muslim views of music as seen in both intergenerational tensions and the ideological conflict between moderate and fundamentalist Muslims.

British Muslim views of music have changed over the years. Sophie Gilliat-Ray (2010) outlines these changes in three phases:

- a) The first phase was in the 1960s and 1970s when Muslim migrants brought with them a variety of traditional musical and artistic forms, such as *Sufi nasheed*, a devotional religious music unique to South Asia (Baily, 1990, cited in Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 240). The themes of these devotional songs contributed to cultural solidarity and provided ‘a source of comfort, a partial antidote to the hostility experienced in the new society, reinforcing and responding to feelings of nostalgia’ (Baily and Collyer, 2006, p. 171).
- b) The second phase involves changes occurring in the Muslim music genres between the 1980s and 1990s. Particularly after the Rushdie affair, British-born Muslim artists employed their songs to express anger towards Salman Rushdie’s derogatory remarks and their experience of racism in Britain (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 240).¹⁰ In this phase, the use of music changed from a form of relaxation and cultural solidarity (in the context of *Sufi nasheed*) to a form of activism ‘as a means to express political resistance and anti-imperialist sentiment’, (ibid.) Aki Nawaz of Bradford, leader of the rappers *Fun Da Mental*, is an example of a British Muslim artist in this genre (ibid.).
- c) The third phase, from the late 1990s to the present, describes the blossoming of individual *nasheed* artists and groups performing devotional songs in the pop, rap and hip-hop genre within the music scene. While the 1990s witnessed the popularity of activism and songs of anti-imperialist sentiment, the popular genres of *nasheed* have been a focus of British Muslims since 2005. British *nasheed* artists, such as Sami Yusuf, are not only popular due to their pleasant voices and devotional lyrics, ‘conveying messages of love, mercy, peace and tolerance’, but also because their appearance makes them ‘decidedly good Muslims’ (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 241). *Mecca2Medina* (M2M) and *Pearl of Islam* are two popular rap and

¹⁰ Salman Rushdie’s book ‘*The Satanic Verses*’ angered many British Muslims and led to the Bradford Riot in 1989.

hip-hop *nasheed* groups among British Muslims. These types of music are a 'synthetic fusion of inherited tradition', which is used as a form of 'artistic expression to assert and negotiate identities,' particularly those of second-and third-generation British Muslims (ibid.).

These three phases point to the ways in which music and Islamic culture have fused within the everyday lives of many Muslims in Britain. The younger generation widely accepts the *nasheed* blended with hip-hop and pop music genres. The older generation, however, views the shift of *nasheed*/devotional songs from traditional to hip-hop and pop music genres as a threat to new Muslim identities, as it involves the imitation of Western music culture (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Herding, 2013). Thus, there exists an intergenerational clash within Muslim society in Britain. Such friction has caused tensions between Muslim parents and their children. One area of concern is educating youth to distance themselves from Western entertainment, perceived as harmful, in order to remain faithful to Islamic principles and values that might strengthen their Islamic identities (Lewis, 2002; 2008). In their desire to prove themselves 'true' Muslims to their elders, some young Muslims show signs of 'cultural schizophrenia', or even opt for the fundamentalist path (Lewis, 2008, p. 37). In researching young Muslims in Bradford, Philip Lewis (2008) describes this identity crisis as a result of *Salafi* fundamentalism and the tendency of youth to alienate themselves from Western culture and music. Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, a moderate scholar, advises Muslim parents to inform their children that they are 'culturally British', although they are Pakistanis or Punjabis in ethnicity:

They needed to enable youngsters to 'take the best and leave the rest' of both cultures. It was important that parents allowed this process of discernment to take place, otherwise their children would become culturally schizophrenic or locked into an identity crisis (Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, cited by Lewis, 2008, p. 37).

In addition to the intergenerational clash of opinions on music and Western culture, viewpoints among fundamentalist and moderate Muslims also differ regarding which forms of music and instruments are allowed (Van Nieuwkerk, 2011). In the previous section, I addressed the root of misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims articulated by the culturalist understanding of 'the clash of civilizations' (e.g., Huntington, 1996). Unlike Huntington, Arun Kundnani (2015) argues that the 'clash' occurs among ideologies within Islam itself. Such an internal conflict can be observed in two situations: a) tensions among fundamentalists themselves; and b) the disagreements between literalist fundamentalist and moderate Islamist views of music.

Salafi fundamentalists regard music and hip-hop *nasheed* as *haram* (impermissible) because they consider such musical performances as un-Islamic innovation (*bid'ah*) and thus harmful to the Muslim faith in its potential to affect Muslims' devotion to God. Some fundamentalists regard the human voice accompanied by certain percussive instruments as acceptable, while others do not (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 240). While some strands of the fundamentalist movement support youth in music and entertainment (Hemmasi, 2011, p. 85), others condemn musicians associated with genres, such as, heavy metal, as 'blasphemous' (Hecker, 2011, p. 55). Fundamentalist opinions of music vary regarding which genres and musical instruments are accepted and which are not. Apparently, there is a strand of fundamentalism that does hold similar views to those of moderate Islam, especially concerning music. In this thesis, I identify them as 'moderate fundamentalists,' specifically in my discussion of the differing views of music. This category of fundamentalism distinguishes itself from *Salafi* fundamentalists (who adhere to a literal interpretation of the text) by holding moderate views on music. For the *Salafis*, their watertight interpretation and rejection of '*halal* and fun' is a concept that is echoed among moderate Muslims (Herding, 2013) as well as those portraying Islam as 'sombre' and 'austere' (Masood, 2006, p. 62).

The second form of ideological conflict regarding views of music in Islam occurs between fundamentalist and moderate Muslims. Moderate Muslims accept music provided it is harmless to their faith and relaxing to their mind and body (Ramadan, 2009). The central issue causing disagreement between moderate Muslims and fundamentalists is evident in musical genres, like hip-hop, that fundamentalists argue violates Islamic principles. In her Ph.D thesis, *Inventing the Muslim Cool: Islamic Youth Culture in Western Europe*, Maruta Herding claims that '*Salafis* [fundamentalists] do not embrace Islamic youth culture, mainly because of their rejection of music related to hip-hop culture' (Herding, 2013, p. 133). Her research demonstrates that various forms of social engagement of Muslim youth, such as 'youth work, political activism, interfaith dialogues, charity, and personal development', were introduced specifically to counter negative perceptions of young Muslims in Britain as anti-integrationist due to fundamentalists' definite opinions of music (*ibid.*, p. 134). In her observation of a Muslim youth dialogue on 'Islam, Hip-Hop and Social Change', Herding found that participants were convinced that Muslim youth's contribution to rap music 'also contributed to community cohesion and interfaith dialogue by openly addressing topics that Muslims had

an urge to discuss, especially after 9/11 and 7/7 and as citizens in the West (ibid.).¹¹ The panellists of this dialogue included such hip-hop artists as *Mecca2Medina*, *Lowkey*, *Poetic Pilgrimage* and a Cambridge Ph.D 'Sheikh' Michael Mumisa and, according to Herding, they 'discussed the permissibility of music'. Using the 'legitimising voice' of a moderate Muslim scholar like Mumisa to justify the permissibility of music, Herding states:

No proof has been given of music being forbidden, and the panel agreed that if they [rappers/hip-hop artists] kept to certain (self-imposed) rules, such as respectful language, rap was just another means of expressing one's faith. They were thus concerned with no less than reinterpreting Islam and solving intergenerational and intercultural differences within Islam (Herding, 2013, p. 135).

While hip-hop *nasheed* artists claimed to have an integration agenda and looked forward to bridging the generational and cultural gaps in British Muslim society, there were also mixed opinions about deciding the *halal* limit on music and performance. Some, influenced by 'moderate fundamentalists', felt that the *nasheed* artists should perform *a capella* (without backing instruments) because fundamentalism condemns all kinds of music. In her research on hip-hop *nasheed* artists, Herding found that artists among moderate Muslims and moderate fundamentalists sought justification for lifting the music ban based upon its 'intentions and rules'. Such a ruling regards music as a tool for proselytization that helps spread Islamic values, serves as a platform of sociopolitical mobilisation and can be disconnected from any connotations relating to sex, drug abuse, crime or violence and other activities attributed to youth cultural music scenes (Herding, 2013, pp. 94-95). The list of justifications for lifting the music ban proposed by moderate young Muslims signifies their support for youth engagement and participation in Western popular music genres, such as hip-hop. Rap performance seems to be the favoured approach because it contains fewer musical instruments. As outlined by Herding above, moderate Muslims assess activities related to music based upon 'intentions and rules', that are formulated in accordance with interpretations of scriptural sources (Qur'an, Hadith)

¹¹ The 'Hip-Hop and Social Change' debate was held at the Drum Arts Centre in Birmingham on 4th May 2010. Over 250 attended a discussion exploring the relationship between hip-hop and social change and how both movements sit within the Islamic tradition. Available from: <http://faithandthearts.com/category/multimedia>

and the rulings of the moderate *Ulama* or ‘scholars of context’ (e.g., Qaradawi, 2001; Ramadan, 2009; Hassan, 2013).

Whereas moderate Muslims advocate ‘*halal* and fun’, the *Salafi* fundamentalists are against such a notion. Their attitudes and opinions are reflected in such examples¹² as the banning of particular types of musical instruments¹³ and other forms of entertainment. Although there is no explicit verse in the Qur’an mentioning a ban on particular types of musical instruments or the performing arts per se, fundamentalists has interpreted a few Qur’anic verses to claim such performances (i.e. dancing and singing to the music) are *haram*.¹⁴ Moreover, in order to support their opinions on music and the performing arts, fundamentalists also seek to interpret the Hadith (the Prophet’s oral tradition) and refer to several *Ulama* interpretations vis-à-vis the Prophet Muhammad’s attitudes toward particular types of musical instruments. It is obvious that there are differences of opinion concerning music and the performing arts among *Salafis* themselves, such as when different groups hold to various interpretations of the Prophet’s traditions.

¹² I acknowledge that Herding (2013) also offers a similar example when arguing hip-hop as a contested genre of music and the performing arts (p. 93). However, I elaborate further in footnotes by referring to a translated Arabic article entitled *Ruling on Music, Singing, and Dancing (al-Darb bi al-Nawa li man abaha al-Maāzif li al-Hawa)* written by a *Salafi* fundamentalist, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Kibbi. I refer to this article to explain the specific area in music and performing arts in which fundamentalism is in disagreement with moderate Islam. For details on Sheikh Al-Kibbi and *Salafism*, see Rabil, R., G. 2014. *Salafism in Lebanon: from apoliticism to transnational jihadism*. United State: Georgetown University Press.

¹³ Some regard ‘drums and wind’ instruments as *haram* because they resemble the voice of Satan and the hedonistic effects these instruments have on the artists and listeners, such as deviation from the remembrance of Allah and timely worship. In a different interpretation, duff, a type of drum played by women, is allowed only during celebrations, such as Eid and weddings, depending on who is attending such events and only in the presence of women. Hanbali Mazhab (a *Sunni* belonging to the strictest fundamentalist strand) added asides from ‘drums and wind’ instruments, regarding ‘stringed’ instruments (i.e., guitars) as *haram* (al-Mughni, 10/173), cited in Muhammad al-Kibbi, S.S. 2015. *Ruling on music, singing, and dancing*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 May 2015]. Available from: <http://islamqa.info/en/5000>

¹⁴ A number of the fundamentalist *Ulama* use the following verses from the Qur’an to assert that music and the performing arts (singing and dancing) are *haram*: the Qur’anic verse ‘Wasting your (precious) lifetime in pastime and amusement’ (Qur’an, Verse al-Najm 53:59-61) by which the word ‘amusement’ has been interpreted by *Salafi* fundamentalists as ‘singing’. In another verse: [Allah said to *Iblees* (the devil):] and befool them gradually those whom you can among them with your voice’ (Qur’an, Verse al-Israa’ 17:64). Here, ‘voice’ is referred to as ‘songs, music, and any other call to disobey Allah. Thus, the fundamentalists deem any form of entertainment, including the voice (or *maāzif*) and musical instruments, as *haram* (ibid.)

A distorted understanding of Islam's views on music and the performing arts has tarnished the image of Islam as a religion that embraces peace and encourages the development of art and culture among its adherents. In the media and scholarly discourses on extremism and fundamentalism, Islam has been portrayed as a rigid, 'sombre', and 'austere' religion that prohibits its believers from having fun and enjoying any music and performance. To identify the roots of such a negative portrayal, I analyse two points of view: the intergenerational and the religious ideological.

First, I refer to an intergenerational disagreement (between the older conservative generation and the young) that is mentioned in a brief historical account of the development of musical genres amongst Muslims in Britain by Gilliat-Ray (2010). Analysis of this tension allows me to better understand the dilemmas attending and the processes of identity formation amongst young Muslims in Britain in light of the notions of '*halal* and fun' or 'Muslim cool' evinced by their positive attitudes toward social cohesion and integration into Western culture. I distinguish them from young fundamentalist Muslims, who are regarded as the reason for the negative media portrayal of Islam.

Next, I analyse the ideological differences regarding music and the performing arts amongst fundamentalists themselves and between moderate and fundamentalist Muslims. Analyses of intergenerational and ideological conflicts within Muslim communities are relevant to this thesis's focus upon cultural production. When making a cultural/media product, Muslim producers need to identify in what ways these intergenerational and ideological clashes constrain or facilitate the channel's mission, as well as the extent to which such conflicts affect production quality and the quality of the staff's working lives.

2.2.3 Gender and Female Subjects

In addition to misrepresentations of Islam, Muslim identity and the Islamic view of music, a misunderstanding of the notions of hijab, veiling and segregation has challenged Muslim cultural production. The media discourses on Islam and Muslims, frequently fuelled by state politics of anti-extremism, have served to politicise the practices of *hijab* veiling and segregation amongst Muslim community members (Kundnani, 2015). Such representations assume expression of the Muslim identity – through veiling, for instance to be signs of extremism and oppression. The western media have misrepresented the *hijab* as an article of clothing, a religious symbol and a sign of oppression. In her journal

article *Hijab in London*, Emma Tarlo (2007) emphasises the sorts of associations that stereotyped Western media perceptions of the *hijab* are built upon:

A whole other set of associations which tie the *hijab* to ideas of patriarchy, oppression, victimhood, ignorance, tradition, barbarism, foreignness, fundamentalism, suspicion and the threat of violence – associations which have been greatly inflated by 9/11 and through subsequent events such as the London Bombings of July 2005 and the cartoon controversy of 2006. [As a result of such stereotype], people who look Muslim are constantly having to fend off the association of their dress with terrorism and oppression (ibid., p. 144).

The Arabic word *hijab* is neither confined in meaning to an article of women's clothing nor gender-specific. Rather, in general the *hijab* is a notion that refers to the acts of separating, segregating, screening and keeping things apart (El Guindi, 1999). Moreover, it is incorrectly used by many in the media to describe women's coverings or to symbolise oppression. The phenomenon of veiling, or covering one's face, is misunderstood and regarded as a part of women's lives. As a result of such misunderstanding, critiques tend to frame Muslim women wearing these forms of clothing as oppressed and segregated from the rest of western society; some perceive veiling as a threat to national security due to the anonymous identity of such women (Tarlo, 2007). Because these misconceptions exist within society and are adopted by the Western Other, it is important here to explore the cultural, historical and religious roots of the *hijab*, veiling and segregation. Exploration of the concept allows me to examine the notion of *hijab*, the practice of veiling and segregation, from informed historical accounts, rather than from its portrayal in and politicisation by the western media. The mapping of historical and cultural discourse is relevant to this thesis because in making creative decisions media producers draw upon sociocultural elements that exist around them. These include the notions of *hijab*, veiling and segregation, which surface in the everyday life of western society.

In her book *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance*, Fadwa El Guindi argues that early Arab-Islamic studies of women did not focus upon their clothing, but rather discussed women's everyday lives (El Guindi, 1999, p. 6). El Guindi traced the historical roots of veiling to pre-Islamic and post-Islamic Arab societies, focusing on the veiling phenomenon

among both women and men (ibid.).¹⁵ She argues that veiling is not solely a part of Islamic culture because 'it has become accepted in the scholarly circles that the practice of women's veiling existed in the Mesopotamian/Mediterranean region'. She cites other accounts that trace the history of veiling; for instance, the '[Prophet] Muhammad did not introduce the custom of veiling', or that 'seclusion and veiling are phenomena [...] foreign to the Arabs and unknown at the time of Muhammad' (ibid). El Guindi argues that the veiling practice did not originate in Islamic culture, as it was known during the pre-Islamic period (ibid.).

In further support of her claim, El Guindi cites Laila Ahmed's research (1982) project (carried out between 1982-1992) on ancient and modern historical materials. Ahmed concluded that Islam did not introduce, but rather institutionalised, veiling: 'veiling seems not to have been institutionalised until Islam adopted it'. Because 'veiling is evidently very congenial to Islam', Ahmed finds that 'as an institution, it [veiling] is Islamic', but 'before Islam (in the Mesopotamian/Mediterranean region/non-Arabian), it was 'an occasional custom' (Ahmed, 1982, p. 523). In her later research, Ahmed confirms that the practice of veiling and seclusion were part of Greek and Byzantine societies as well (Ahmed, 1992, cited in El Guindi, 1999, p. 6). Based upon these historical accounts, Ahmed (1982) and El Guindi (1999) agree that the practice of veiling and segregation is not rooted in Islam, but rather had been established since the Christian era in such regions as the Balkans and the Mediterranean (El Guindi, 1999, p. 7). Challenging the media's projections of modesty-seclusion-oppression onto veiling, El Guindi suggests that the *hijab* and veiling is a cultural code. As such, the underlying concepts of *hijab* and veiling relate not only to clothing, but also to notions of 'privacy, sanctity, respect and restraint'; it is not a symbol of oppression as portrayed in western discourses on Islam and women (ibid., p. 96). Her study mentioned little about the ways in which the *hijab* and veiling have become increasingly common signifiers of the wearer's growing religious commitment over time, demonstrated by ever more concealing garments. Her anthropological lens also lacks an engagement with the concept of *hijab*

¹⁵ The English term 'veil' is commonly used to refer to Middle Eastern and South Asian women's traditional head, face (eyes, nose or mouth) or body cover. See El Guindi, F. 1999. *Veil modesty, privacy and resistance*. [Online]. Oxford: Berg,. Available from: <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.2752/9781847888969>

according to Qur'anic text, as well as with the disagreements amongst Islamic ideologies over the concept.

The increasing visibility of the hijab and veiling in western public life is not only misinterpreted in the context of dress, but also it has been criticised as a perceived symbol of power for both males and females. El Guindi (1999) incorporates men's veiling in her analyses, suggesting there is some universality of meaning for both sexes. In doing so, she claims that veiling was practised by women and men, indicating the equality of both genders. Unlike El Guindi's claim, Andrea Rugh (2002) argues that there are issues of power and inequality when considering the different purposes of veiling for men and women. When men cover their faces, the aim is to lower their gaze toward women (when entering women's spaces); as for women, Rugh indicates that the purpose of covering/veiling is 'to create their own private spaces' separate from men (ibid., 2002, p. 112). Because of these differing purposes of veiling, Rugh criticises El Guindi for ignoring power dynamics and inequality in her analysis of the hijab and veiling.

In agreement with El Guindi who claims that the *hijab* and veiling symbolise 'privacy, sanctity, respect and restraint' (El Guindi, 1999, p. 96), anthropologist Layla Abu-Lughod contributes: the *hijab* and veiling 'marked the symbolic separation of men's and women's spheres, as part of the general association of women with family and home, not with public space where strangers mingled' (Abu-Lughod, 2000, p. 785). She regards 'separation' as equal to privacy, sanctity and respect for the domestic nature of women. Her view is in marked contrast to the popular media's description of 'separation' as a form of 'oppression' and maltreatment of women, as men control the movements of women and restrict their engagement with the public. Although Abu-Lughod and El Guindi's analyses are based upon cultural history, their perceptions of the *hijab*, veiling and segregation are in line with the Qur'anic order that requires women to cover while in public:

Oh Prophet, tell thy wives and daughters and the believing women that they should cast their outer garments¹⁶ over themselves, that is most convenient, that as this

¹⁶ According to the scholarly translation and commentaries of the Qur'an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, the Arabic word *jilbab* (plural *jalabib*) refers to 'outer garment(s)', which indicates a long gown covering the whole body or a cloak covering the neck and bosom: Yusuf Ali, A. 2011. *The meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. 11 ed. Maryland, USA: Amana Publications.

distinguish¹⁷ them [from the slaves] so that they should be known and not molested and Allah is Oft-Forgiving,¹⁸ Most Merciful (Qur'an 33: 57, translated by Yusuf Ali, 2011, p. 1077).

There are clashes between ideologies when interpreting the enforcement of *hijab* on women. The *Salafi* fundamentalists, for example, state that Islam strongly emphasises the concepts of decency and modesty during interactions between members of the opposite sex (Al-Rizvi, n.d.), leaving no room for their co-mingling in private or public spaces. This ruling is based on two Qur'anic verses dedicated to the behaviour of men and women. In the first verse, Allah commands the Prophet Muhammad to inform believing men as follows:

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard¹⁹ their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them; and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do (Qur'an, 24:30 translated by Yusuf Ali, 2011, p. 873).

In the following verse, Allah commands the Prophet to inform women that they should also cast down their glances and guard their modesty:

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and do not display their beauty [...] (Qur'an, 24:31, translated by Yusuf Ali, 2011, p. 873).

These two verses from the Qur'an are often taken literally by fundamentalists, who use these rules when imposing strict dress codes for women. The fundamentalists criticise different styles and fashions of the hijab or headscarf from the veiling prescribed in the

¹⁷ The Qur'an further states that the covering was not to restrict the liberty of women, but to protect them from harm and molestation. Yusuf Ali comments on this verse, referring to the covering as meant to protect the sanctity and honour of women: 'In the East and the West a distinctive public dress of some sort or another has always been a badge of honour or distinction, both among men and women. This can be traced back to the earliest civilisations. Assyrian Law in its palmist day (say, 7th century B.C.) enjoined the veiling of married women and forbade the veiling of slaves and women of ill fame', (see Cambridge Ancient History, III, p. 107) (ibid.).

¹⁸ This suggests that if a Muslim woman sincerely tries to observe this rule, but owing to human weakness falls short of the ideal, Allah 'the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful' will not force such rule onto her (ibid.)

¹⁹ Yusuf Ali refers to the rule of modesty in this verse as 'guard'. The rule is applied to both men and women. He states 'the brazen stare by a man at a woman (or by man at a man) is a breach of refined manners. Modesty is meant to protect those who could not abstain from sexual desire and maintain appropriate spirituality' (ibid.)

above verse. Despite such criticism, Muslim women continue to challenge the conventional and conservative style of headscarf. In their research on Muslim fashion, Annelies Moors and Emma Tarlo demonstrate 'how the alleged contradiction of Islamic sartorial prescriptions and trendiness is challenged by Muslim women worldwide' (Moors and Tarlo, 2007, p. 138).

The religious constraints concerning the *hijab* are evident in a study of the 4Shbab TV, a Muslim youth music television programme by Maurice Chammah (2010). Chammah criticises Ahmed Abu Haiba, the producer of the music television programme, for his rigid treatment of female singer appearances on the 4Shbab. He finds, despite the more modern and sophisticated approach towards religious musical fusion displayed by the television format, the treatment of women and the *hijab* shapes religious television. Chammah comments on gender inequality and the stricter rules imposed on female singers or actresses who appear on the 4Shbab TV (for example, they are not allowed to sing or perform and must wear a *hijab*). His study addresses how such fundamentalism influences the production routine and the creative decisions that are made at the television station. Representational issues, such as the *hijab*, veiling and segregation, are central to production studies of Islam-based television.

Western media discourses tend to limit the notion of the *hijab* to the item of clothing and fashion popular among Muslim women. Although Muslim women wear different sorts of headscarves, veils and garments, they all belong to the 'suspect community' (Kundnani, 2015). Their 'invisibility' (a reference to their fully-covered body) has always been tied to religious ideologies, such as fundamentalism and extremism, and is presumed to represent a threat to national security (Tarlo, 2007). Tarlo further observes that this 'invisibility' of Muslim women increases the 'visibility' of Muslims in the public sphere, which ironically heightens Islamophobia and suspicion amongst the Western Other. Instead of being regarded as a symbol of respect and honour for women, the notion of the *hijab* has been disseminated by the media as a sign of oppression. Resulting from such misrepresentations, other aspects of the everyday lives of Muslim women remain unexplored.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

This thesis aims to conceptualise the production culture of religious television. This chapter provides a brief background of Muslims in the United Kingdom and the discourses

concerning the tensions that result from clashes between the West and Muslim culture and between the different religious ideologies expressed by Muslims (e.g., fundamentalism vs. moderate Muslim identities). Knowledge of these pressures may contribute to the understanding of how norms, values and rituals in Muslim cultural production shape media products, and the ways in which Islam and Muslims are supposed to present/ought to be represented by Muslim creative producers. I have addressed issues surrounding British Muslims' religious identity, as well as the problems faced by Muslim cultural/media producers that relate to music and youth culture and gender and female subjects when making cultural products. The different connotations of the "clash" between Islam/Muslims and the Western Other (e.g., Huntington, 1996; Ramadan, 2009; Karim and Eid, 2014) and the conflict of ideologies within Islam itself (e.g., Bayram, 2014; Kundnani, 2015) are relevant to this thesis. These studies inform the way in which the discourses concerning Islam, Muslims and the Western Other shape the worldviews of the members of the production community at the Islam Channel and, subsequently, inflect its production culture. An understanding of the intergenerational clash is equally important to this thesis, for it reflects an everyday reality faced by Muslim youth and thus might help media producers manage such a conflict. As the first phase of literature review, this chapter provides a context for the study of religious television. As the second part of literature review, the next chapter focuses on the conceptual framework for this research project.

Chapter 3

Conceptual Framework

This chapter focuses on literature that has supported my choice of thesis subjects and prompted the research questions. I have divided the chapter into three parts. Section 3.1 reviews a wide range of literature from the media sociology and cultural studies traditions that explore media production and creative labour. Section 3.2 analyses the relevant literature concerning production studies of religious television, examining areas such as broadcasting and occupational challenges within religious television, and covering both Christian and Islamic programming. Section 3.3 discusses sociological approaches to creative labour, focusing on four key concepts pertinent to studies of work in the television industry: exploitation, self-exploitation, creative autonomy and emotional well-being. These three sections form the framework for this research project and assist me in conceptualising the production culture of religious television. Further reference to relevant literature is made during chapters 5 through 7 when addressing themes that emerged in the findings of this research.

3.1 Combining Media Sociology with Cultural Studies Approaches to Media Production

For many years, researchers have explored how occupational and organisational conditions in general, and media production processes in particular, have shaped media content. James Curran points out that two major traditions focus upon media production (Curran, 2000, p. 10). One tradition uses media sociology, which views media primarily as organisations, while the other is the cultural studies tradition, which sees media as cultural products.

Media sociology examines the organisational conditions under which workers labour, as well as how production processes affect media content. Media sociologists 'investigate how regulation, policy, political action, aesthetic ideologies, professional codes and histories of class, gender and ethnic relationships can all affect the production processes and outcomes within media organisations' (Group, 2000, p. 21). James Curran (2000) further categorises this tradition of viewing media as institutions (media sociology)

into six different approaches. The first approach has roots in organisational sociology, which emphasises the internal processes within media organisations (e.g., Tunstall, 2001). The second approach examines media occupations with an eye toward recruitment, career paths, culture and norms of groups of media workers (e.g., Weaver and Wilhoit, 1991). The third approach focuses on external influences, such as those of the suppliers of news on journalistic work (e.g., Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994). The fourth approach is that of political economy, which tends to focus on media ownership and control (e.g., Murdock, 1997). The fifth approach focuses on public policy and the civil administration of the media (e.g., Humphreys, 1996). The sixth approach views media performance through two separate lenses: one lens reviews the media according to a normative framework (e.g., McQuail, 1992); and the other lens, from a historical, political economy perspective (e.g., Curran and Seaton, 2010). According to Curran, all of these categories are 'media-centred' in that they describe how media systems and organisations operate within society, but 'not exclusively as organisations' (2000, p. 10). I position my research within the categories of media sociology that emphasises those influences that are 'internal' and 'external' to media organisations in order to conceptualise the production culture of the Islam Channel.

Among the six approaches delineated above by James Curran and the Goldsmiths Media Group, the political economy approach is considered a 'sister-discipline' to media sociology (Goldsmiths Media Group, 2000, p. 21). This approach to media and culture concentrates on the production and distribution of the cultural product (Durham and Kellner, 2001). Therefore, media sociology and political economy are appropriate approaches since both emphasise media production. They may complement each other, too, as the former 'links dynamics of power in the cultural industries with questions of meaning – questions of the kinds of texts that are produced by cultural industry organisations' (Hesmondhalgh, 2013a, p. 50). Despite their interests in media production, however, political economists insufficiently offer analyses of production processes. Oriented towards macro-analysis of media production, political economists pay little attention to the analysis of single media organisations, which my research addresses. A wide range of media sociology literature explores media production. However, many of these studies are concerned with factors that affect the production of news and journalism, organisational constraints (e.g., Tunstall, 1971; Schlesinger, 1990; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994; Turow, 1994) and management of the journalism profession (e.g., Deuze

and Fortunati, 2011). These studies may support our understanding of the routines involved in the production of a television talk show, as journalistic skills are indeed required from its creative staff (e.g., Grindstaff, 2002).

A combination of media sociology and cultural studies is essential for this thesis. I stated earlier that media sociology allows us to study media production within an organisational context. Nevertheless, it pays little attention to the media product. By contrast, cultural studies is a tradition that pays closer attention to media products, in particular questioning facets of 'representation' (e.g., Barker, 2012). The cultural studies tradition has taken various views of media, as 'an index of shared values' used within cultural indicators (e.g., Nowak, 1984); as a channel of dominant ideology (e.g., Parenti, 1993) as an extension of the power structure (e.g., Hallin, 1994); as contested spaces reflecting the struggle for ascendancy (e.g., Hall, 1982); as 'cultural fora' for reproducing the collective debates of society (Newcomb and Hirsch, 1984); and so forth (see Curran, 2000, p. 10). These various aspects of cultural studies may support our understanding of the magazine talk show format as a media/cultural product. Even so, despite these approaches to media as 'an index of shared values' (e.g., Nowak, 1984) or as an extension of the power structure (e.g., Hallin, 1994), cultural studies is insufficiently sociological. Furthermore, it has usually lacked interest in the experiences of media workers, which this thesis concerns. Moreover, cultural studies pays too little attention to television production analysis, as most attention surrounds questions of media representation. Since both the media sociology and the cultural studies tradition have their shortcomings, a combination of sociological and cultural approaches is essential to assessing television production in an organisational context.

Recently, cultural studies scholars (such as Havens et al., 2009) have begun to analyse media production through the lens of cultural studies. A group of scholars have adopted the cultural studies tradition in their examination of media production/industries. Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks and John Thornton Caldwell (Mayer et al., 2009) demonstrate the 'harmonisation' of the cultural studies and the media sociology approaches. Their focus on 'representation' (e.g., Hall, 1997) as central to the cultural studies tradition, however, can at times 'marginalise' their other aim: to provide an analyses of 'lived realities' within a media organisation (Hesmondhalgh, 2013a, p. 56). Thus, a combination of cultural studies with media sociology is appropriate for this thesis,

as the former focuses on culture and representation and the latter focuses on media organisation. This combined approach supports my analyses of culture and representational issues, as well as the working life in religious television production.

The empirical data gathered by the approach taken by cultural studies scholars to media industries include 'routines and rituals, and also political and economic forces that shape roles and technologies, as well as the distribution of resources according to cultural and demographic differences' (Hesmondhalgh, 2013a, p. 56). The concept of production culture emphasises the dynamics of power in television production. According to Caldwell,

Production indeed involves physical and manual work. But production also unfolds as a collective, daily, cultural performance involving symbolic codes, conventionalized power hierarchies [...] (Caldwell, 2008, p. 342).

John T. Caldwell's research into the Hollywood film and television industries is an example of the cultural studies of media industries approach. Caldwell analysed cultures of television and film production using concepts of 'industrial reflexivity' and 'critical practice'. Using both terms, he examined 'the industry's own self-representation, self-critique, and self-reflection' (ibid., p. 5). He adopted Geertz's (1973) 'interpretive anthropology approach to culture' that aims to '*look over the shoulders*' of television workers. By looking over the producers' shoulders, Caldwell aims to interpret their practices. This suggests how television employees 'industrial reflexivity' locate power dynamics within institutional contexts, and subsequently, 'express an emerging and unstable economic and social order in Hollywood' (ibid.).

Caldwell was also critical when reflecting on his ethnographic experience as well as results of textual analysis of television employees' industrial reflexivity and 'trade artifacts' (e.g., the 'behind-the-scenes' videos). Nevertheless, Caldwell's purpose of doing textual analysis was to explore the development and 'unstable economic and social order in Hollywood'. On the contrary, the purpose of deploying textual analysis in this research project is to assess the production quality and aesthetic features of a magazine talk show. Caldwell's 'microsocial' approach to studying television production labour is relevant for this thesis. Applying the concept of production culture to religious television enables me to analyse tensions in the Islam Channel about religious ideology. Media sociology allows me to examine the power dynamics within the channel, observing how power is exercised

from the top (CEO), at the level of middle management and from within the television production community.

Laura Grindstaff's (2002) sociological research is particularly useful when analysing a television talk show's production because it was built on 'interpretive but empirically grounded manner, the nature of reality constructed and disseminated by media institutions as well as the specific processes by which these constructions take place' (Grindstaff, 2009, p. 72). I discuss this in the next section, alongside other studies of talk shows – the genre that I worked on in my research.

3.1.1 Television Talk Show Studies

Media sociology and cultural studies scholars have examined: (a) the economic aspects of talk shows; (b) the broadcast institutions that produce or commission the talk shows; and (c) the sociocultural contexts of television talk shows production. Understanding these aspects of talk shows allows me to comprehend generic conventions, to analyse the production quality of the magazine talk show *Living the Life* and to identify the tensions and constraints experienced by the members of its production community.

The first area of analysis relating to television talk shows deploys an economic perspective. Talk shows are known for being a cheap television genre (Gill, 2007), which uses the 'first-person media' concept (Dovey, 2000). This suggests that independent television producers, struggling to secure a commission from broadcast institutions, often choose the talk show format because it is cheaply produced by a small production crew or even a single-person's camera work. Aside from low production costs, Dovey's research findings also imply that talk show production is a strategy employed by broadcasters to gain ratings. Dovey's claim confirms Jane Shattuc's (1997) argument, which regards the talk show as a cheap television genre and implies that the costs of its production are reduced by involving an 'assembly-line system of codified rules of production, specialised labour, and aesthetic norms and thereby turn[ing] out one of the least expensive forms of television to produce – \$25,000 to \$50,000 each half hour, a fraction of the cost of a unit in a network drama' (p. 66). Another example indicating that talk shows are a cheap television genre is Rita Crisci's (1997) empirical research into 'the war' over ratings between Italian private and public broadcasters. She discovered 'an increasing reliance on romance, confession and emotional realism in public as well private networks'(cited in Gill, 2007, p. 155). Because of the low production costs involved, talk shows became a

preferred television genre in the 1990s for the television producers and broadcasters commissioning them.

In the context of US talk shows, Grindstaff (2002, p. 21) suggests that the increasing number of such programmes is an indicator of rating competition amongst broadcast television institutions. Sensational or tabloid-style programming, such as daytime confessional talk shows, are included amongst the strategies to secure high ratings. Grindstaff's study shows that 'emotion' in daytime talk show is treated as a commodity that bears commercial imperatives for the network television. Although his argument does not specifically concern the production of talk shows, Anamik Saha (2012) points to strategies, such as 'making noise' or including controversial elements within minority television programming, as one way to secure higher ratings. Addressing the economic aspects of talk shows that rely upon such strategies can help me to analyse the resources available to the Islam Channel, to understand its motivation in choosing the talk show genre.

The second area of helpful analysis is the organisational context of a television talk show's production. Both Paddy Scannell (1991) and Andrew Tolson (1991) are among media sociologists who observe the development of 'broadcast talk' (in Scannell's sense) and talk or chat shows (according to Tolson) from a historical perspective and focusing on the institutional context. Scannell argues that broadcast talk, in the British case, has undergone 'a significant shift in the communicative ethos of broadcasting from an earlier authoritarian mode to a more populist and democratic manner and style – a key time for this transformation being the late 1950s to the late 1960s' (ibid., p. 10). Tolson (1991), however, criticises Scannell's argument as 'too harmonious and unitary to be adequate as an account of the public sphere of broadcasting in the post-populist era of the 1980s' (ibid.) Using a case study of *The Dame Edna Show*, Tolson argues that talk shows as a genre have become 'a lynch-pin of the popular public sphere' and are centred on the figure of the 'real person' who 'speaks from experience' (p. 198). Scannell and Tolson's studies are relevant to my thesis because they point to how shifts within the ideology of a broadcast institution can transform the genre of the talk show. Broadcasters' ideological shifts have altered the role of the talk show. For instance, the talk show has changed *from* serving as a platform for those in authority, such as politicians, elites or celebrities, to speak, *to* now serving as a broadcast talk 'chat show', during which interviews are conducted within a

casual and relaxed environment. The genre of broadcast talk has also developed into ‘daytime’ (e.g., *Kilroy* on BBC1, 1986-2004) talk shows that allow access to ordinary people discussing social issues and everyday experience. Talk shows include ‘celebrity chat shows’ (e.g., *The Graham Norton Show*, from 2007 to present) and ‘magazine talk shows’ (e.g., *The One Show* on BBC1, 2006 to present). My research focused on an example of the latter.

On-going debates that regard talk shows as a ‘popular’ television programme/genre are central to this thesis because they concern the economic and organisational contexts in which the production quality of talk shows is understood. Dovey (2000) offers a set of contrasts that help to explain the growing emphasis upon ‘popular’ programming in the 1990s (illustrated in Table 1) – an issue that remains very relevant in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Table 1: A pattern that characterises certain important features of the 1990s media culture

| Traditional | Popular |
|----------------|---------------|
| Authoritative | Reflexive |
| Film | Video |
| Public service | Reality TV |
| Observational | Docu-soap |
| Investigation | Entertainment |
| Argument | Pleasure |
| TV News | TV Chat |
| Working | Shopping |
| Elitist | Democratic |
| Boring | Fun |

Source: Dovey, J. 2000. *Freakshow : First Person Media and Factual Television*. London: Pluto. p. 4

For Dovey, while ‘the traditional’ is perceived as ‘boring’, ‘authoritative’ and ‘elitist’ (that is, less entertaining), according to his categorisation, ‘the popular’ offers ‘good’ audience experiences, related to ‘reflexiv[ity]’, ‘pleasure’ and ‘fun’. Dovey disagrees with the interpretation of ‘the popular’ as a ‘good’ television experience, primarily because the ‘popular’ television programme often benefits broadcasters rather than a society and its citizens. Indeed, popular talk shows attract larger audiences, which means higher advertising revenues and, subsequently, higher turnover within the broadcast institutions. He compares the ‘confessional talk show’, a form of first-person media that discusses topics previously deemed taboo (e.g., divorce, sexual orientation, infidelity and abuse) ‘to a ‘freakshow’. These topics are more frequently mentioned on

television and have become issues that matter in everyday conversation. Although my research is not about confessional talk shows, Dovey's critique of talk shows as a popular genre raises such questions as the following: How might the production quality of the magazine talk show *Living the Life* be assessed? Does the use of a popular genre by the Islam Channel entail good television? How might we interpret subjective judgements of television quality by television producers?

Cultural studies scholars have at times addressed the aesthetics of television (Agger and Jensen, 2001) including questions of production quality. According to Gunhild Agger and Jens F. Jensen (2001, pp. 11-15), the study of television aesthetics has focused on analysis of fictional genres, but aesthetic concepts have been increasingly accepted by media researchers to genres as news broadcasts and documentary programmes, for example questions concerning the 'dramaturgy' of the programmes (ibid., p. 15) or 'compositional or stylistic aspects' of television content and genre (Chandler and Munday, 2011, p. 8). However, aestheticians such as Agger and Jensen have not discussed television production or, a talk show.

In contrast, Hanne Bruun's (Bruun, 2001) research offers an approach to studying the *production quality* of a television talk show. She analysed the aesthetics/dramaturgic elements of five Danish television talk shows broadcast on public service television: *Kanal 22*, *Lørdagskanalen*, *Eleva2ren*, *Damernes Magasin*, and *Højlands Forsamlingshus*. Her study suggests that 'uncertainty' and 'sociability' are critical factors that accentuate the viewers' experience and subsequently determine the quality/aesthetics of a television talk show. Bruun's scholarship addresses the tension that exists between factors of uncertainty and sociability, as well as how these matters can affect the viewing experience and the production quality of television talk show. She argues that this tension exists between the tendency towards chaos, danger, unpleasantness, and loss of face found in the uncertainty factor, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the tendency towards impeccability, politeness, and 'pleasure of sociability' (ibid., pp. 245-251).

Bruun also suggests that the 'experiential consequences' of a talk show for viewers determine its aesthetics/quality. As a television genre, the talk show requires its producer to imagine his/her audience as for which particular group of an audience the programme he/she aims to serve. As Bruun argues, 'what constitutes the experience of uncertainty and sociability in actual programmes depends very much on who the viewers are' (ibid.).

By properly managing the factors of uncertainty and sociability on a talk show, the producers can maintain the production quality of this show. As Bruun argues ‘the estimation of the individual talk show’s degree of success and the experiential consequences of the viewers is inseparable from considerations of whom the show is directed at’ (p. 251). Bruun’s study is highly relevant because it helps to describe aspects of production quality, a term which I will apply throughout this thesis, especially when discussing the textual analysis of the magazine talk show *Living the Life* in Chapter 6.

Whereas scholars like Dovey (2000) criticise the talk show as cheaply produced and a profitable genre for its broadcasters, and Bruun (2001) points to factors that stand to better define its quality, other researchers view talk shows more positively. For instance, Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt (1994, p. 5) argue in their research that audience discussion programmes allow audiences comprised by ordinary people to participate in discussions with experts and the elites. In doing so, they suggest that talk shows have performed three roles: (a) ‘as spokesmen for the people to both government and experts, conveying opinions, experiences, information and criticism “upward” to the elite’; (b) as an opportunity for the public to communicate with the elites and politicians and encourage them to respond directly to the issues raised; and (c) as ‘a social space’ for the public to share its everyday experiences either with the studio audience and with the audience at home. Their research, however, does not concern the production aspects of talk shows. Rather, they focus on how talk shows become sites where ‘life-world processes of opinion formation, group discussion and public debate are potentially colonised and undermined by media institutions and by the experts and politicians who represent established power’ (ibid., p. 8). Despite lacking emphasis upon production processes, their study remains relevant to my research into how the magazine talk show *Living the Life* might offer the kind of ‘public sphere’ that is identified by Livingstone and Lunt in the talk shows they examined.

The third aspect of television talk shows that proves relevant to this thesis results from analyses that adopt a sociocultural lens. Analyses of the television talk show genre offered by media sociologists and cultural studies scholars who examine sociocultural aspects are important because issues related to gender and race, in particular, are central to the study of the production culture of religious television. In the mid-1990s, confrontational talk shows, such as *Ricki Lake*, *Jenny Jones* and *Jerry Springer*, together

comprised one of the most popular American television genres. The insights of a group of media sociologists who emphasise the sociocultural aspects of daytime talk shows are relevant to this thesis. These scholars and their works include Wayne Munson (1993), author of *All Talk: the Talkshows in Media Culture*; Joshua Gamson (1998), *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity*; Kathleen Lowney (1999), *Baring Our Souls: Talk Shows and the Religion of Recovery*; Laura Grindstaff (2002), *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows*; and Julie Engel Manga (2003), *Talking Trash: the Cultural Politics of Daytime Talk Shows*. Although these studies analyse talk shows from sociocultural perspectives, none focuses upon *magazine* talk show production. Lowney (1999) argues that television talk shows offer a new kind of American civil religion, which addresses social problems, social deviances and offers solutions to these problems. These studies conduct their analyses from multiple angles, including those of the host, the contributors (guests) and audience perspectives. Yet, these studies tell little of what happens behind the scenes, before and during the filming of these talk shows.

Although I acknowledged earlier the importance of understanding shifts in the genre of the television talk show as important to understanding how the magazine talk show emerged, my analyses in this thesis are not about the history of daytime talk shows. Also, I am less interested in why studio or home audiences watch talk shows, as well as less interested in how guests (contributors) perceive the genre (e.g., Livingstone and Lunt, 1994). Rather, like Grindstaff, I am interested in ‘why producers and television executives thought that people were watching and how, if at all, this information was incorporated into the production process itself’ (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 41). Grindstaff’s study is relevant to this thesis because it addresses the hierarchy of power operating within the daytime talk show production and representational issues relating to class, gender and race. Her research maps out the everyday lived experience of members of the production community involved, as well as how they negotiate tensions and contradictions whilst dealing with such issues. In doing so, she examines the work roles of talk show hosts/presenters, researchers for daytime talk shows, producers and staff involved in the production of daytime talk shows.

Scholars researching daytime/confrontation talk shows have analysed class, gender and race in terms of demographic makeup of talk show studio audiences, as well as the experts/contributors and members of their production community. Grindstaff analyses

class when arguing that daytime talk shows challenge the hierarchy between 'high' and 'low' culture, 'expert and ordinary knowledge', relating these hierarchies to social class and inequality (ibid., p. 17). The class and cultural hierarchies are manifested in characteristics such as 'sleazy topics' and 'trashy talk' used by other, more 'respectable' media in order to describe daytime talk shows.

In her seminal work *The Talking Cure: TV Talkshows and Women*, Jane Shattuc (1997) addresses gender as an important consideration of the representational aspects of talk shows. Shattuc regards talk shows as a gendered television genre due to their popularity amongst women and their construction of a gendered division of labour. For instance, the producers of *Sally Jesse Raphael*, one of the top four talk shows in the mid-1990s, hired women as creative producers (executives, seniors, associates, and line producers). In a study of the female talk show audience, Manga (2003) suggests that *Jerry Springer* was enjoyed by a female audience because it exuded 'emotional and physical excess' (cited in Grindstaff, 2004, p. 326). Manga's study confirms Grindstaff's (2002) research, which reveals daytime talk shows as sites for emotional displays and dramatic outbursts; these two elements are commonly associated with women. Although Manga's study confirms the elements of Shattuc's (1997) and Grindstaff's (2002), which imply that daytime talk shows are a genre for women, it does not document the female creative workers who dominate talk show production. Whereas Shattuc addresses how women tend to dominate creative work in daytime talk show production, Manga examines how gender, in particular female subjects, are framed and understood in the context of audience/spectators of daytime talk shows. Unlike Grindstaff, Shattuc does not analyse the everyday experience of the production of daytime talk shows. Such aspects concerning women are interesting areas to explore within the context of religious television production and the magazine talk show genre because the debates surrounding women, i.e., their physical appearance and the ways in which women should or should not behave and dress in public, are central to religious discourse, particularly in Islam. I address these issues in the research reported in this thesis.

Race is also vital to studies of television talk shows in the 1990s given a crucial disparity: Although the production sites of daytime talk shows were 'occupied by the white, well-educated and middle-class', the programmes were made for working-class people of colour (Gill, 2007, p. 162). Researchers have examined the daytime talk show

Ricki Lake, which was hosted by a white presenter who acted African-American by using colloquial terms, such as 'street' and 'home girls', borrowed from the 'hip-hop lexicon' whilst interacting with the guests and the audience (ibid.). Another indicator that some talk shows target black audiences is offered by circumstances surrounding *Ricki Lake*'s executive producer's aim to present a more confrontational form of talk show. Market research had proven the connection between television consumption and race and class, wherein 'people of colour and those with lower incomes tend to watch more hours of television, especially more hours of daytime television, than do whites or those with high incomes' (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 60). The therapy form of talk show, another example of the genre, is epitomised by *Oprah Winfrey*. Questions of race arise in such talk shows and not only relate to the empowering of women, but also to the power of blacks in a world of television dominated by whites (Gill, 2007, p. 162). These studies addressed how sociocultural issues relating to race, class and gender are central to both the talk show genre and to the discourses concerning it, which help me to better understand the issues surrounding talk shows. They, however, lack the account of lived experiences of television workers involved in the talk show production that this thesis provides.

3.1.2 Conceptualising Religious Ideology in the Study of Cultural Production

The traditions of media sociology and cultural studies leave a large gap in the study of religious television. Cultural studies scholarship regards culture as not only 'the effect of human activity', but also as 'the constructive activity that makes social reality'. Therefore, its inquiries include '[human] interactions of everyday life, especially in the form of class, race, gender, and sexuality' (Morgan, 2008b, p. 4). Hence, the cultural studies scholarship that approaches media and religion, according to David Morgan, 'may be defined as the humanistic form of study that stresses the constructive role of culture in the investigation of religion and media' (ibid.). Similarly, this thesis aims to examine the constructive role of culture in the production of religious television.

When aiming to conceptualise the production culture of religious television, it is important to define the context of religion/religious ideology in this thesis. I refer to Clifford Geertz's (1973) definition of 'religion', which includes three facets: first, religion is 'a cultural system of symbols that provide its believers with a coherent understanding or valuation of life, a meaningful, ordered world which enables interaction and

interdependence. Second, religion is a shared, communal, distinct way of meaning making, a project of culture rather than society. Third, religion is 'a cultural system of symbols that consists of people's ethos and worldview [described as] the tone, character and quality of their life' (cited in Morgan, 2008b, p. 5).

In the context of this thesis, the term 'religious ideology' is applied to identify the dynamics of power that are internal and external to the Islam Channel. Regarding internal power, religious ideology can include the ways in which its management interprets religious messages and imposes a certain religious ideology on members of its television production community, as well as embedding such ideological messages within the television programme production. While I don't intend to criticise any particular religious ideology here, I do refer to Islam as an ideology in order to better examine how the management and production community members of the Islam Channel interpret religious ideology/messages and project them onto the production culture of the channel. Regarding the dynamic of power external to the Islam Channel, I frame religious ideology as 'a relay or conduit for sources of power' that is external to media organisation (Corner, 2011, p. 14). The *Salafi* fundamentalist view of Islam is an example of religious ideology that has an influence on broadcast organisations (see Kraidy and Khalil, 2009; Kraidy, 2010; Hroub, 2012). A similar ideology may have acquired a certain degree of influence on the production culture of the Islam Channel. I have addressed such ideological clashes in Chapter 2, tracing how disparate views within Muslim communities on several issues pertaining to Islam and Muslims' religious identity, music and youth, as well as gender and female subjects, contribute to tensions within Muslim cultural production. Understanding Islam as a religious ideology and 'a relay or conduit' of external power (Corner, 2011) is relevant to this thesis because understanding the dynamics of power within an institutional context is inherent in the study of any production culture (Caldwell, 2008). According to Caldwell, the study of 'culture as an interpretive system' in television production 'always be seen as fully embedded in the play of power' (ibid., p. 2).

I have begun this section by mapping two sets of literature that focus on media production: first, I draw research from media sociology that examine power dynamics from an organisational context, and second, literature from cultural studies. I have argued that political economists of media sociology have paid little attention to a single-media

organisation and media products despite their focus on internal and external power dynamics in media organisation. I also argued that the cultural studies have emphasised too much on representation of media product, insufficiently sociological, and lack of production analysis. Next, in Sub-section 3.2.1, I reviewed research that highlight economic, organisational and sociocultural aspects of talk show as well as how the production quality of talk shows is understood by media organisations. Finally, in Sub-section 3.2.2, I addressed how the term ‘religious ideology’ is applied to identify the dynamics of power that are internal and external to religious television.

3.2 Production Studies of Religious Television

The media sociology and cultural studies traditions have paid little attention to production studies of religious television. Media sociology and cultural studies scholars have examined religion: (1) as a popular form and its reception in everyday life; (2) in terms of power relations within the social, historical and political-economic context and their maintenance through codes and symbols; (3) through critical and humanistic research methods; and (4) as part of a commitment to interdisciplinary inquiry and exploration (Clark, 2002, p. 15).

Cultural studies scholars, in particular, frame the study of religion and media ‘in terms that decenter religion and media from traditional, institutionally dominated definitions, refocusing on the intersections of institutions, authorities, and production with popular practices, circulation, and reception’ (Morgan, 2008a, p. xiii). Under such a paradigm, media are seen as ‘instruments for converting ideas or intentions into mass-produced forms for mass dissemination’ (ibid.) Most scholarly approaches to religion and media attempted by the cultural studies tradition have not explicitly discussed the production culture of a religious broadcast institution in Britain. Most of these studies are within the context of media, religion and culture in the United States. With the exception of doctoral theses of Ailsa Hollinshead (2002), on *The Production and Reception of Discourses Concerning Religion in Fictional Broadcasting*, and Caitriona Noonan (2008), on *The Production of Religious Broadcasting: the Case of the BBC*, as well as her research into the occupational culture of the BBC’s Department of Religions and Ethics (Noonan, 2011; 2012; 2013), there remains a dearth of production studies of religious television that focus upon institutional context and the experiences of creative workers.

There are a number of research studies into the intersections of Islam and media from the viewpoint of media sociology and cultural studies. These studies include areas such as: television talk shows and political change in Egypt (Sakr, 2013a); the political economy of Arab satellite television (e.g., Sakr, 1997; Kraidy and Khalil, 2009; Sakr, 2011; 2012; 2013b; 2013c); the ideological influences of Islamic authorities upon religious broadcasting in the Middle East (Hroub, 2012); and the political economy of a single-broadcast institution such as Al-Jazeera (Cherribi, 2012). These research projects emphasise macro-analyses of power relations within the context of the political economy of media organisations and Islam in the Middle East. In addition to differences in geographical context and the particular foci of these studies (i.e., macro-analyses of the political economy of religious broadcasting), such research provides little information regarding the production of Islam-based television. There are studies concerning talk shows (Sakr, 2013a) and the perspectives of television producers (Sakr, 1998), as well as research on single broadcasters, like Al-Jazeera (Cherribi, 2012), which may be relevant to this thesis. However, such research does not provide specific accounts of the lived experiences of the staff involved in television production – a central concern of this thesis.

Research stemming from the cultural studies tradition concerns Islam and popular culture, as well as observations of phenomena, such as the religious celebrity, authority and Islamic televangelism (Moll, 2010; Echchaibi, 2011). Other studies focus upon policy research in the intersections of media, Islam and Muslim identity within the Western context (e.g., Ramadan, 2004; 2009; 2010; Karim and Eid, 2014). There are also studies regarding how Muslims living in the West can and ought to integrate with the ‘Western Other’, Islamophobia, Extremism and the domestic war on terror (Kundnani, 2015). Within the British context, research into such areas includes the representation of Islam and Muslims in the British media (e.g., Poole, 2009; Knott et al., 2013). How these studies approach religion within sociocultural contexts interests me in particular, as the insights resulting support my discussion in Chapter 2 of how religion becomes a source of power, which can cause tensions within the Muslim cultural production organisation that subsequently shape the quality of the texts produced. Despite the large number of studies concerning Islam and the media conducted within the Western and British contexts from the viewpoints of media sociology and cultural studies, production studies of religious/Islam-based television are still underdeveloped.

This thesis aims to conceptualise the production culture of religious television using the Islam Channel as a site to conduct empirical research. In doing so, I apply the concept of production culture (Caldwell, 2006; 2008), which explores the power dynamics in a television station and how they shape the products and lives of television production workers. Although academic sources in this research area are limited, my analyses will draw upon the cultural studies tradition and sociological approaches to religion and the media, interweaving insights drawn from studies of religious television (i.e., Christian television) with those studies of Islam-based TV. The following sub-sections discuss four indicators of power dynamics in religious television production. These are: 1) advertising and ratings; 2) institutional control and mission; and 3) external challenges; and 4) sociocultural issues relating to identity, gender, class and race.

3.2.1 Advertising and Ratings

This section addresses how advertising and ratings shape television production in general and religious television in particular. Studies show that advertising forces and viewer ratings often result in media organisations imposing some level of control over media production processes, particularly over media products/texts (Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011). Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) point to the importance of programme genre as a way to match audience taste and attract advertisers. According to them, ‘cultural industries tend to use genres as a way of attempting to match audiences with texts [...] genre terms are based on shared understanding among producers and audiences to texts’ (ibid., p. 14). Understanding business strategy and audience tastes can attract advertising revenues and increase programme ratings (Saha, 2012). Murdock and Golding assert that cultural industries in general and media organisations in particular are important sites to study because they are ‘the major arena for advertising; the commercial media play a pivotal role in matching consumer demands to production’ (Murdock and Golding, 2005, p. 60). These are the ways media sociology, as described by political economists, observe that advertising forces can shape the processes of media production.

The cultural studies scholars who consider media industries regard advertising as a source of tensions in television production (Caldwell, 2006). Caldwell suggests that dealing with advertising clients as ‘rituals’ in television production. Caldwell suggests that television production involves ‘maintenance rituals’, during which television production executives negotiate with advertising clients and sponsors as part of their business

requirements and to secure resources (Caldwell, 2006, pp. 140-41). Such rituals include 'monitoring rituals', which subsequently develop anxiety among the television production staff involved. Both maintenance and monitoring rituals signify power hierarchies in television production (ibid., p. 141). In light of the production culture concept, this thesis examines the extent to which advertising and ratings lead to media organisations imposing a certain degree of control over religious television production processes, a degree which could subsequently affect the production quality of the produced programmes.

The same is true of religious television of which producers are governed by organisational business strategies to gain ratings and advertising revenues. Ailsa Hollinshead's (2002) doctoral research project notes that commercial forces such as advertising and viewing figures are prime motivators for television producers who commission fictional religious programmes. Her research shows that producers are under pressure to create intriguing storylines that increase ratings for TV episodes are convincing to advertisers and, subsequently, sustain the broadcasting of the programmes for a longer time. According to Hollinshead, a 'rating governs everything [...] if [a] rating starts to fall, a programme is in danger of being cancelled' (ibid., p. 177). Aside from ratings and advertising, television producers also experience resource constraints. In her interviews with producers of fictional TV programmes that represent religious elements, such as *Brookside* (Channel 4, 1982 – present), *Coronation Street* (ITV, 1960-present), *EastEnders* (BBC 1, 1985-present) and *Hollyoaks* (Channel 4, 1995-present), results suggest that television producers experience time, planning and financial constraints concerning programme development and production. Her research is a clear example of how commercial forces and resource constraints shape the production of fictional religious programmes.

In addressing how producers of religious programming negotiate the pressures of advertising and ratings, Catriona Noonan (2011) suggests that producers have 'rebranded' religious programmes by using the term 'spiritual programming'. Noonan's analysis of the production of *Extreme Pilgrim* (BBC2, 2008), a program that depicts the spiritual journey of an unconventional Church of England vicar, suggests that the representation of spirituality in reality television and a lifestyle format is perceived as a creative and innovative approach initiated by the broadcast institution due to its advertising and commercial appeal (Noonan, 2011, p. 728). Although television producers have acknowledged the

shift in which themes associated with spirituality are increasingly prevalent within factual religious programming, Noonan states that the traditional form of religious television (e.g., the worship format seen particularly in Christian tradition) 'still resonates and is likely to continue' (ibid., p. 743). Evidently, advertising and rating figures have driven television producers to adopt a strategy that incorporates audience preferences.

3.2.2 Institutional Mission and Control

Driven by the institutional mission and desire to regulate media production, owners and senior managers of media organisation exercise a certain degree of control over their employees. Georgina Born (2004) analyses the threats to BBC production under the leadership of John Birt, as compared with the relatively high degree of autonomy allowed by Greg Dyke as the director-general of that organisation. Her study shows that the change of institutional ethos within a media organisation impacts its overall operations, as well as individuals and groups involved in media production. Born's ethnographic research of BBC production may illuminate the ways in which an institutional mission and control shape the production culture of a television organisation.

The management control over production routines signifies the power dynamics within media organisations. Murdock states that, in general, owners possess potential control over media organisations, as they can 'regulate the output of the divisions they own directly, either intervening in day-to-day operations, or establishing general goals and understandings, and appointing managerial and editorial staff to implement them within the constraints set by overall allocation of resources' (Murdock, 1990, p. 7). Murdock also argues that there are two types of control that managers and owners can exert: 'allocative' and 'operational'. Allocative control consists of decisions connected to policy formulation, including allocation of resources, appointments to senior managerial positions, dictation of editorial lines and product investment, and control over the distribution of profits. Meanwhile, operational control involves making use of the resources allocated and pursuing policy decisions. Murdock maintains that in most cases managerial positions have operational rather than allocative control (cited in Goldsmiths Media Group, 2000, p. 33). He suggests that workers in media production still follow the institutional mission laid down by the owner notwithstanding such control. His study confirms the power hierarchies inherent in the production culture of a media organisation (Caldwell, 2006; 2008).

Curran compares and contrasts the liberal and radical political economy positions towards the issue of ownership control and media production (Curran, 2000, p. 26). According to Curran, in their critiques of media production, liberals have expressed positions that have 'overemphasised small gains and ignored great losses of individual autonomy'. Meanwhile, according to radical political economy, media industries reinforce social power because the wealthy and influential own them. Murdock and Curran have both expressed concerns over the tight control by owners exerted upon the activities of media producers. The 'news making' studies of the 1970s by media sociologists (Molotch and Lester, 1974; Tuchman, 1978) for example, reveal how institutional routines determine what would be defined as news' (Peterson and Anand, 2004, p. 312). These studies demonstrate how structural hierarchy, particularly owners' control, may facilitate or constrain news/media production processes.

In contrast, some researchers have discovered that media producers, particularly those in the television industry, enjoy a certain amount of freedom. The scholarship of media sociology and cultural studies explores issues of organisational control and creative autonomy concerning media production (e.g., Tunstall, 1993; Gitlin, 1983; Cottle, 2000; 2003; Born, 2004; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). As an example, Tunstall argues that British television producers enjoy considerable creative autonomy (1993, p. 24). As asserted by Tunstall, 'factual television producers have a substantial level of autonomy over the content'. Current affairs producers also have 'a huge degree of creative autonomy over both the choice and treatment of subjects' (ibid., p. 63).

Hesmondhalgh and Baker's research (2011) into creative labour in three media industries illuminates our understanding of the conditions of those involved in media production. Through a normative framework and a combination of three major paradigms (political economy of culture; organisation, business and management studies; and cultural studies), their research has generated a large amount of interpreted data concerning the experience of media workers and working lives in media production. They indicate that different media organisations offer their employees various types of working environments and experiences, 'including how much they respect autonomy and workers' needs to produce a good job' (ibid., p. 222). They also describe two types of autonomy relevant to the study of the production culture of religious television. These are 'workplace autonomy' and 'creative autonomy' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 40).

According to these scholars, 'workplace autonomy' is 'the degree of self-determination that individual workers or groups of workers have within a certain work situation'. On the other hand, 'creative autonomy' is 'the extent to which art, knowledge and symbol-making and so on can and/or should operate independently of the influence of other determinants' (ibid.) Their study shows the implications of institutional control for the creative autonomy of media production workers. The notion of creative autonomy is relevant to this thesis – in particular, during analysis of the quality of working life of employees involved in magazine talk show production in Chapter 7.

In the context of religious television, the ways in which the institutional mission/control shape programme production may be observed in both Christian and Muslim television contexts. In his research into the BBC's production of ethnic minority programmes, Simon Cottle states the Corporation aims 'to serve Britain's ethnic minorities, which include the Muslim community through targeted programmes and services and fair representation in mainstream radio and television output' (BBC, *People and Programme* 1995, cited in Cottle, 1998, p. 295). Cottle states that an 'overwhelming ethos of conservatism' seems to impact the quality of minority television programmes (Cottle, 1997, p. 60). Cottle (1998) describes a serious kind of control demonstrated by the BBC towards the production of ethnic minority programmes. As a result, executives and production professionals expressed feelings of discontent. According to Cottle, 'the essential conservative nature and corporate ethos of the BBC constraining programme subject matter and innovation of programme forms; the professional producer's pursuit of mainstream programmes, audiences and professional BBC status, and consequent tendency to provide less than committed or challenging ethnic minority programmes [...]' (ibid., p. 313). Perhaps in Cottle's case, the corporation's treatment of programmes might have varied from one genre to another (e.g., minority programmes vs. current affairs and factual programmes). Cottle's study is an example of how the mission of the broadcast institution shapes the production culture of the minority programme producers. Although his research did not explicitly analyse the experiences of Muslim television producers with the organisational mission, it demonstrates the challenge faced by the BBC television producers in representing ethnic minority issues on-screen and behind-the-scenes of its programming.

While Cottle contextualises his research within the politics of representation inside the BBC through the lens of the cultural studies of media industries approach (e.g., Havens et al., 2009), Catriona Noonan (2008) uses sociological approaches to analyse BBC religious broadcasting. Drawing upon historical analyses and ethnographic data, she maps the changes and continuities relating to the treatment of religion in BBC programming, as well as the occupational challenges facing its production community. She looks at both the radio and television broadcasting of religious topics. In her article examining the spiritual discourse in UK religious television, Noonan points to an evolution in religious broadcasting evident in the ways in which television producers have adopted a discourse of spirituality and faith in the style and tone of programming. While this strategy may have been the Corporation's response to economic forces, i.e., viewing figures, it was also an institutional effort to encourage viewership by a wider audience and not only those interested in religion. Hence, such interventions by the Corporation have continued to be factors that shape creative decision-making of the BBC in-house and independent producers. The Cottle and Noonan study offer insights into the extent to which the organisational mission adopted by the Islam Channel can shape the production quality of its magazine talk show and the working lives of the members of its production community.

From the perspective of Muslim television, there is still little research into the production culture of Islam-based television. Despite this void, there are a few research studies that focus on the interplay of power within Islam-based television institutions relating to institutional ideology and mission. Studies of Islam-based television organisations emphasising their social and religiopolitical ethos and ideological roots help to theorise the power relations internal and external to the production of religious television. No particular study provides an ethnographic account of the production culture and the institutional context of an Islam-based television organisation. Nonetheless, literature that focuses on the challenges faced by Muslim cultural production institutions helps conceptualise the production culture of the Islam Channel. Examples include Kira Kosnick's (2004) study of the Open Channel in Germany, Marwan Kraidy and Joe Khalil (2009) on Arab television industries, Talal Rajab (2010) on the Islam Channel and Mohammad Ayish (2012) on religious broadcasting on Middle East mainstream television.

3.2.3 External Challenges

Drawing upon the perspective of BBC religious broadcasting, I discuss how institutional control and mission shape media production. This section addresses the external challenges that affect religious television institutions and production workers. These external challenges include the Church authority and media regulators for Christian television (Noonan, 2008), and the religious ideology and media regulators for Muslim television (e.g., Kraidy and Khalil, 2009; Ayish, 2012). I discuss each challenge in turn.

The first external challenge facing a Christian broadcaster is the Church authority, on account of the close ideological and historical ties between religion and the public service principles upheld by the BBC (Noonan, 2014, p. 65). Religion is perceived to have been a 'distinct style of programming since the 1920s' (Noonan, 2008, p. 11). As compared to radio, television is a more complex medium with which to disseminate Christian beliefs. Thus, the Corporation tends to treat televised religious programmes with more caution because the religious message intended by the producers also appears in various programme formats. As Noonan puts it, 'religious broadcasting does not have a typical mode of delivery straddling fact and fiction, at times using discussion, debate or drama as a vehicle for their message' (ibid., p. 10). The clash between the Church and producers at the Corporation was concerned with the programme format. While the Church prefers a traditional form of religious broadcasting, such as sermon and talk, producers struggle to find a way to serve the public interest through programmes that contain not only a religious mission but also other aspects of everyday life involving moral and ethical values. This is an example of how external influence can cause tensions in religious television production.

The second external challenge faced by a Christian broadcaster is the media regulator. Whereas the Church is concerned by new programming formats that could compromise the Christian mission, the media regulator recognises religion as 'a distinct genre that meets the needs of particular minority audiences', hence, it must be protected (Ofcom, 2005). The protection of public interest is paramount to the media regulator. The creative producers managed to enhance the production quality of the BBC's religious-themed programming. They produced lifestyle and reality television genres, including the *Extreme Pilgrim* (BBC2, 2008), *The Monastery* (BBC 2, 2005) and *The Island Parish* (BBC2, 2007). Despite the producers' success, the BBC Department of Religion and Ethics is still

fighting for its autonomy. According to Noonan, ‘In the case of religious broadcasting, its political links are clearly visible in the way the regulator intervenes in the supply of programmes and the policies that [the BBC] forms to support it’ (Noonan, 2008, p. 10). To maintain regulatory compliance, the Corporation seeks to control the producers’ creative decisions. As a result, unlike Channel 4, which has adopted a more controversial approach to representing religion, the BBC is more reserved; TV producers fear pushing the envelope too far. As Noonan asserts, ‘producers increasingly occupied the middle ground of production as risk-taking was side-lined for safer mainstream programmes’ (ibid., p. 33). Noonan’s research is relevant to my thesis as it points out why and how the management exercises caution, as well as the extent to which such caution affects the production quality and working life at the Islam Channel.

Studies of Islam-based television in the Middle East address the influence of religious authority or *ulama* on religious programming or the religious-themed television genre. For instance, Kraidy and Khalil (2009) suggest that although controversial programming, such as the “hot-button” issues of politics, women and entertainment, do attract advertising revenues in the Arab-Islamic television industry, they have resulted in criticism from religious authorities in the Middle East (Kraidy and Khalil, 2009, p. 33-54). In Saudi Arabia, Marwan Kraidy and Joe Khalil note: ‘conservative clerics were empowered to shape television policy and content which enabled them to influence the growth of the national television sector in the ensuing decade’ (ibid., p. 70-73). Kraidy and Khalil’s broad political economy analyses of religious television in the Arab television industries show how religious ideology is not separable from the state. The mapping of ideological influences upon Arab television channels interests me because it demonstrates how power dynamics within Muslim cultural industries, including the tension between the fundamentalist and moderate Muslim ideologies (addressed in Chapter 2), can shape television production. Table 2 illustrates ideological influences on religious television in the Middle East.

Table 2: Ideological Influence of Islam-based Television in the Middle East

| Channel | Country Base | Owner | Ideological Influence |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Iqra' | Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt | Arab Radio and Television (ART) (Sheikh Saleh Kamel) | Saudi-Wahhabi and Egyptian al- Azhar |
| Al-Majd Holy Quran Channel | Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Egypt | Al-Majd Satellite Broadcasting Limited, Al-Shamairi Brothers and associates | Saudi-Wahhabi |
| Al-Resalah | Kuwait | Kingdom Holding Prince al-Waleed bin Talal | Moderate Saudi |

Source: Kraidy, M. and Khalil, J.F. 2009. *Arab television industries*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan on behalf of the British Film Institute. p. 71

Whereas Kraidy and Khalil observe Islam-based television from the political economy perspective, Mohammad Ayish (2012) analyses three of the Middle East's mainstream television institutions: Al Jazeera, Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC1) and Dubai TV (DTV). Ayish approaches these organisations using quantitative content analysis and qualitative textual analysis of three religious talk shows produced by these broadcast institutions. These programmes are: *Al Sharia Wal Hayat* (*Shari'a*/Islamic Jurisprudence and Life), produced by Al Jazeera Arabic; *Al Haya Kalima* (Life is a Word), MBC1; and *Al Boyout Al Amana* (Safe Homes), by Dubai TV. Ayish indicates that quantitative analyses show that all three programmes adopt moderate, centrist and accommodating approaches to the promotion of those values. According to Ayish, 'something that bodes well for the future contributions of this broadcasting genre to the development of Arab societies in the context of globalisation' (Ayish, 2012, p. 20). With regards to the fundamentalist threat, Ayish found that none of these talk shows were 'carrying any fundamentalist messages, nor any religious or sectarian hate' (ibid.). His qualitative data analysis describes five major themes as central to these three talk shows: knowledge, reason, centrism (moderation), freedom and co-existence. The results not only seek to promote views of Islam as 'a religion that respects tolerance, moderation and dignity', but also reflect the states' agenda, which portrays them as an advocate of moderate views and an opponent of *Salafi* fundamentalism (ibid., p. 32). Such religious branding of moderate vs. fundamentalist is vital in the study of religious television production because it signifies the dynamics of power within the institution.

As with the context of the Muslim minority in the West, media regulators and counter-extremist think tanks are alarmed by the way a television organisation, such as the Islam Channel, portrays religious personalities. Upon researching the Islam Channel on behalf of the British counter-extremist Quilliam Foundation, Talal Rajab (2010) concluded that the channel was a hub of Muslim extremists. He believed that the content breached the broadcasting code, drawing attention to 'potential due impartiality issues' in its reporting of the Palestinian-Israeli conflicts, for example (see Ofcom, 2011 for details, pp. 5-25). The results of textual analysis also raised concerns from media regulator Ofcom about the threat of extremism through the Islam Channel programming.

Pressures from counter-extremism organisations and media regulators can shape to some extent the creative decision-making of television producers. A similar situation can be observed elsewhere: for example, in a country like Germany, immigrant television programming has been a subject of political debate. Kira Kosnick's (2004) study of Muslim migrant producers of the Open Channel TV in Germany looks at the clash between Germany's multicultural media policy (which set the Open Channel as public minority access) and Muslim television producers. Her research shows that immigrant productions at the Open Channel TV were described as the work of extremists and fundamentalists with anti-integrationist aims; she discusses how such claims might foster the further isolation of immigrant populations, as well as encourage anti-democratic sentiments amongst them (ibid., p. 23). Like the Islam Channel, Open Channel TV was also scrutinised by its media regulator, The State Media Council (*Landesmedienanstalt*) of Berlin-Brandenburg. After receiving several complaints from German viewers, the media regulator initiated an investigation of Open Channel TV. In the absence of concrete evidence that the channel advocates religious extremism, it was still accused of such extremism at the parliamentary level. According to Kosnick 'Islamic programmes are the first that parliamentary critics refer to when they claim that the Open Channel project has [and] failed to them, the programmes are an indication that the channel is a 'playground for extremists' rather than an example of lived, practical democracy' (ibid., p. 28).

I have discussed in Sub-section 3.2.2 internal challenges, such as the institutional mission and control, and in Sub-section 3.2.3 external challenges faced by Christian and Islam-based broadcast institutions. These organisations face ideological constraints and problems caused by the mission and policy set by religious broadcasters. Analysis of

institutional aspects of religious television allows an understanding of the dynamics of power that are internal and external to these organisations. These problems bear implications for television production staff who have to address them, as we shall discuss in chapters 5 through 7. While subsections 3.2.1 through 3.2.2 have examined challenges that are internal and external to religious television organisations, the next sub-section discusses issues relating to identity, gender, class and race in the society that shape media production.

3.2.4 Sociocultural Issues

Research on the intersections of media, religion and occupational culture is often emphasised within the scholarship on journalism from different geographical contexts. From the perspective of U.S. journalism, for example, this type of research includes a comparative study of Catholic and evangelical journalists' religious convictions, as well as a discussion of the tendency of both groups to separate professional issues from those in their religious lives (Schmalzbauer, 2002). Religious convictions and rituals are excluded from the working lives of these journalists. From the perspective of United Kingdom journalism, studies include the representations of Islam and Muslims in the media and news reporting (Poole, 2009; Knott et al., 2013). In Chapter 2, I have addressed the sociocultural contexts in which Muslim media producers live and work. I have elaborated on the clash between the West and Islamic cultures (Section 2.2) and tensions within Muslim communities relating to religious identity, music and youth, and gender and female subjects (Section 2.3). The review of literature in Chapter 2 shows that the clash and tensions may affect Muslim media organisations and producers. Even so, these studies do not explicitly examine religious television production. Due to the dearth of scholarly publications regarding how sociocultural issues shape religious television production, this section reviews literature from media sociology and cultural studies that address problems in the society concerning identity, gender, class and race that shape media production.

It is essential to understand how sociocultural issues affect the creative autonomy of media producers. David Hesmondhalgh argues that 'during the production of media texts, media producers draw upon knowledge, values and beliefs circulating in society' (2006, p. 2). The notion of 'creative autonomy' is central to the analysis of challenges for media producers. Hesmondhalgh and Baker address the creative autonomy of creative labour and

the ways in which struggles over autonomy ‘generate tensions and contradictions²⁰ in cultural production’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 81). I will discuss creative autonomy further in Section 3.3, where I introduce key concepts in the studies of creative labour. The point I am making here is that issues relating to sociocultural issues can shape media production in ways that challenge the creative autonomy of media producers. The knowledge, values and beliefs circulating in the society from which media producers are supposed to draw while making their creative decisions, therefore, must be negotiated.

Another area worth exploring when thinking about challenges is the identity of media producers who work in the cultural production industries. Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks and John Thornton Caldwell’s cultural studies approach seeks to analyse the various levels of the professional hierarchies present within television and film industries (Mayer et al., 2009, p. 2). The results indicate how creative workers ‘shape[s] and refashion[s] their identities in the process of making their careers in industries that are undergoing political transitions and economic reorganisations’. Within an organisational context, the lived experience of media producers and ‘the complexity of routines and rituals, the routines of seemingly complex processes, the economic and political forces that shape the roles, technologies, and the distribution of resources according to cultural demographic differences’ (ibid., p. 4).

Media sociologists and cultural studies scholars emphasise the power dynamics within the cultural industries relating to gender, class and race. A class-gender-race model is necessary to understand ‘capital-labour structure’ as well as ‘sex-gender and racialized identity relations’ (Toynbee, 2008, p. 271). According to Jason Toynbee, these [class-gender-race/ethnicity] are ‘the big three structures’ which have a significant impact on media-making’ (ibid.). The ways in which these elements are played out in media organisations might affect the creative autonomy of individual media producers. Histories of class, gender and ethnic relationships all affect the production processes and outcomes within media organisations (Goldsmith Media Group, 2000, p. 21). Cultural studies’

²⁰ According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker, ‘these tensions and contradictions are categorized in a form of ‘contrastive pairing’, e.g., tensions between art and capital (Ryan 1992), art and commerce (Banks 2007), culture and commerce (Slater and Tonkiss 2001), creativity and commerce (Negus and Pickering 2004), culture and commodity (Frow 1996), and culture and economy (Ray and Sayer 2004),’. Hesmondhalgh, D. and Baker, S. 2011. *Creative labour : media work in three cultural industries*. London: Routledge. p. 81.

critiques of class, race and gender focus on the media product, particularly upon the textual representation of these issues (Kellner, 1995; Durham and Kellner, 2001; Barker, 2012). However, for Toynbee, sometimes these cultural studies' approaches 'failed to take account of concrete linkages between mode of production, a sectorial organisation of the media and professional code of media makers' (Toynbee, 2008, p. 272). Nevertheless, the cultural studies approach to media texts is relevant to this thesis particularly in its analyses of the production quality of the magazine talk show in which questions of identity and gender may arise.

There is a strand of cultural studies involved in examining how 'prevailing patterns of cultural behaviour and power are reflected in the cultural industries' (Hesmondhalgh, 2013a, p. 55). While Keith Negus's (1999, p. 82) study asks questions of 'how gender, sexuality or class create patterns which shape the presentations of the artists', Jason Toynbee's (2000; 2008) efforts examine class, race and gender within the structural context of media and the politics of representation. On the one hand, he examines the structure of the media sector through the lens of political economy; and on the other, he looks at power relations based upon an ideological critique so as to determine the broader ideological landscape, including media representation. Overall, both the Toynbee and Negus studies highlight that class, gender and race can shape the processes of media production. Their studies contribute to my understanding of the power dynamics attending identity, class, gender and race within cultural production, particularly the power hierarchy involved in religious television, both at the organisational and television production levels.

Sociological approaches to gender in media production address its influence upon production processes. Miranda J. Banks (Banks, 2009, p. 87) addressed questions about gender equality (or inequality) in media production. She sought to understand how a particular profession might be socially constructed through gender, particularly concerning those women who work at the lower end of a professional hierarchy in television production. In contrast, Julie D'Acci (1994) focuses on 'above-the-line' women professionals involved in media production, such as television producers, scriptwriters and network executives. In a study of the television network responsible for producing the long-running television show *Cagney & Lacey* (1981-1988), she explored how the show offered a 'battleground for a negotiation' of the term 'feminism' (Banks, 2009).

Although I am not going to specifically examine feminism or Western feminist media production, the female subject is central to my study of religious television, especially in the study of the production culture of Islam-based TV. In particular, the question of gender is crucial to my studies insofar as it impacts upon the creative autonomy and the physical and emotional well-being of female media producers.

Feminisation of labour is another dimension of the gendered nature of media production (Carter et al., 2015, p. 5). Vicki Mayer (Mayer, 2015) categorises feminised work into three categories: First, there is work related to the domestic duties of housework and childcare. According to Mayer, 'Jobs that focus on organisational duties, interpersonal and time management skills, and the ability to do multiple tasks at once (multi-skilling) tend to be framed as feminised work' (ibid., p. 52). The second category includes jobs that tend to emphasise 'affective performances associated with serving, assisting, or caring for others' (ibid.). Mayer draws upon Arlie Hochschild's (1983; 2012) concept of 'emotional labour' in her conceptualisation of this category, e.g., a job that requires 'female performance' or 'deep acting in which people sublimed their emotions to make others feel more comfortable and pleased' (ibid.). A third category involves communication and social interactions. Although these are aspects of all work, in the context of feminised work they are often 'framed as gossip, chatting or banter' (ibid., p. 53). In this sense, 'feminised work tends to be devalued and degraded about non-feminised work' (Kemp 1994, cited in Mayer 2015, p. 53). These categories of feminised work in the media illuminate the ways in which female media workers may be framed within the context of labour in religious television production.

While Mayer argues that feminised work suggests the diminished visibility of female media workers and the degradation of women's work within the media industries, Denise D. Bielby (2015) addresses gender inequality in media industries somewhat differently, attending to the gender gap in pay and employment, resources, and rewards. She also points out that female media workers are often segregated from males because the tasks assigned to them are based upon sex. Like Mayer, she argues that employers assign these jobs based upon their social beliefs that women should behave modestly and carry out such tasks. In contrast, she claims that such feminised jobs are the result of 'employers' conscious and unconscious beliefs (i.e., sex stereotypes) about the characteristics that various jobs require and about what tasks women and men are capable of doing' (ibid.,

Bielby, 2015, p. 137). These approaches to female subjects within media production industries allow me to map the work roles of women television workers in religious television production and the treatment of the physical appearance of women on and off-screen. These areas are worth exploring in this thesis because they are central to the study of issues relating to Islam and Muslims in general and of Islam-based television in particular.

Previously, in sub-sections 3.2.1 through 3.2.3, I have engaged with research that addressed three other indicators of power dynamics in religious television. These include: 1) advertising and ratings; 2) institutional control and mission; and 3) external challenges. Because of the lack of research on how sociocultural issues affect religious television production, this sub-section (3.2.4) maps literature from media sociology and cultural studies that address issues relating to identity, gender, class and race in media production.

3.3 A Sociological Approach to Creative Labour: the Quality of Working Life

This section discusses research analysing the quality of working life in the creative industries. Such studies are relevant as they stand to support our understanding of how and under what conditions television production employees produce programmes. I will analyse literature that discusses the everyday working lives of creative workers in general and of television production staff in particular. I then discuss four key concepts relevant to studies of work in television production: exploitation, self-exploitation, creative autonomy and emotional well-being. These four concepts form part of my analysis of the staff experiences of the production culture at the Islam Channel (discussed in Chapter 6).

The critique of work under capitalism has always been a particular interest of Marxist scholars. The Marxist critique of capitalist economies, however, does not focus on the subjective experiences of workers (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 25). I acknowledge Marx's legacy in the studies of cultural labour and note that, to some extent, his critique of exploitation and autonomy is relevant to this thesis. Hesmondhalgh and Baker point out, Marx himself was not a sociologist and did not conduct his arguments on sociological grounds (*ibid.*). I intend to review sociological research that concentrates on the quality of working life, such as that of Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), which seeks to build on Marxian and other normative insights. Their research seeks to conceptualise 'good' and 'bad' work in the creative industries, including television production. In

developing such a model of good and bad work, they examine four characteristics of alienation that characterise bad work, focusing upon how these characteristics impact the quality of working life. The four characteristics include: powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation and self-estrangement. In order to better define good work, they suggest a list of terms opposite in meaning to those characteristics of alienation: autonomy, meaningfulness, sociality and self-esteem. Using these characteristics, they conceptualise bad and good work in creative industries.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker create a model of good and bad work that allows them to explore the quality of working life in three creative industries: magazine publishing, music and television. In my research, I will measure the quality of working life by drawing on some of the concepts that Hesmondhalgh and Baker use. Similar to the efforts of Hesmondhalgh and Baker, this research also aims to explore ‘subjective states and people’s reflections about them (and the forces that might shape such experience)’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 31). While their work explores three different sites of creative industry, my research focuses on a single television organisation that produces programmes for Muslim communities in Britain and abroad. It explores the ways in which economic, organisational and sociocultural factors shape the production of the magazine talk show *Living the Life*. In the following section, I discuss four key concepts to the study of creative labour. I refer to sociological research projects, such as those of Gillian Ursell (2000), when analysing exploitation in television industry. I further refer to Mark Banks’ (2007) study to address issues common to creative work, such as self-exploitation.

Four Key Concepts in Studies of Creative Labour

This section includes four key concepts that are used to analyse the quality of working life in Chapter 6: *exploitation*, *self-exploitation*, *creative autonomy* and *emotional well-being*. Upon examining Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s conceptualisation of good and bad work within the creative industries, I acknowledge that there are other concepts that might be applied to the study of creative labour. My choice of these concepts, however, is supported by the previous research projects that have engaged with them in order to explain the factors that shape creative decisions, the dynamics of power in creative/cultural labour, as well as the physical and emotional well-being of creative workers (e.g., Ursell, 2000; Grindstaff, 2002; Banks, 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011).

3.3.1 Exploitation

Exploitation is a term frequently used to describe a situation wherein 'one group or individual is structurally in a position enabling them to take advantage of others' (Himmelweit, 2006). Arguments surrounding the exploitation of labour are central to the Marxist tradition with regard to work or paid labour under capitalism. Critics focus on situations in which employers/business owners make use of, or 'steal' their employees' time, to enhance company profits. Using a Marxist lens, Peter Nolan (1993) describes the state in which workers experience exploitation by their employers: 'because the working day is longer than necessary to produce their wages and the remainder of their day is spent producing a surplus profit for their capitalist employer' (pp. 716-717). Such Marxist definitions of exploitation are relevant to this thesis, but they are not used to address issues concerning minimum wage, long working hours or the size of profit gained by the Islam Channel. Instead, in this thesis the term 'exploitation' refers to the ways in which the Islam Channel deploys the idea of a religious mission in order to encourage hard work amongst television production staff. The adoption of the exploitation here differs from the Marxist concept which focuses upon the exercise of power by an employer/organisation over their employees in order to secure economic and material gain. The concept of exploitation can also refer to an ideological power structure, explaining how the channel exploits a social, religiopolitical mission in order to motivate their television production employees to work hard and to tolerate low salaries.

Studies show that television production is often seen as a site rife with labour exploitation. Gillian Ursell describes exploitation in the working life of television workers:

The willingness of individuals to work in television production is partly to be explained by the tantalizing possibilities thereby for securing social recognition and acclaim, that is, self-affirmation and public esteem, and partly by the possibilities for self-actualization and creativity (be it aesthetic or commercially entrepreneurial). For the workers, television production is simultaneously a source of potential rewards, both material and existential, and a source of definite exploitation [...] (Ursell, 2000, p. 819).

While Marxist critics focus upon the exploitation of labour under capitalist employers, Ursell's research describes an employee's motivation to work in television production, as well as how both reward and exploitation are involved in the job. By using monetary or material rewards and social recognition, for example, employers urge staff to

work harder and endure longer hours. Exploitation in Ursell's sense demonstrates the exercise of power by those at the top of the organisational hierarchy, i.e., the manager or the CEO.

In addition to luring workers with material rewards and social recognition, television organisations also use strategic management techniques to make a position in television production more appealing to potential employees and new entrants to the field. Ursell describes the way in which television management exploits 'flexibility employment techniques' to secure greater flexibility from workers in television production. Studies show that such flexibility techniques may lead to exploitation, a common experience of workers in television industries (see Tunstall, 1993; Banks, 2007). My study not only addresses concerns similar to these, but also aims to explore the ways in which the Islam Channel's mission is strategically used by its management to motivate employees to work harder. This conception of exploitation is useful to assess the quality of working life of the production community at the Islam Channel in Chapter 7.

3.3.2 Self-exploitation

While exploitation involves the exercise of power by those at the top over employees at the bottom of the organisational hierarchy, 'self-exploitation' is a situation in which employees push themselves very hard whilst doing their jobs. Hesmondhalgh and Baker define 'self-exploitation' as a situation where 'workers become so enamoured of their jobs that they push themselves to the limits of their physical and emotional endurance,' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 20). They categorise self-exploitation as an aspect of 'bad work' in television production. Like Hesmondhalgh and Baker, Mark Banks (2007) addresses the issue of self-exploitation amongst cultural workers without regard to particular industries. Rather, Banks views self-exploitation as prevalent within creative industries, where 'self-employed fashion designers, web designers, television workers, artists and so on [involved in] working long hours, often through the night or over weekends, taking no holidays, drawing a minimal (if any) salary, skipping meals and rest, forever pushing themselves to the limit in order to not only satisfy their own passion for creative self-realisation, but also (and perhaps more often) to meet deadlines and contractual obligations imposed by others' (Banks, 2007, p. 58). Angela McRobbie (1998), Rosalind Gill (2002), and Gillian Ursell (2006) that self-exploitation is pervasive amongst creative workers.

The concept of self-exploitation is worth exploring within the context of religious television production because such programming is ‘a different sort of genre’ and the resulting media products ‘cannot be considered neutral entities’ (Noonan, 2008, p. 10). Given such a distinct characteristic of religious television, workers in religious television production require a special approach to study their experience and challenges. Television employees who work for religious television might self-exploit for different reasons. For instance, workers may be driven by religious concepts, such as perceiving ‘work as a mission’ or as religious vocation. In Christianity, the notion of good work originated with Lutherans and Calvinists and set ‘a cultural norm that doing a ‘good job’ for its own sake has a positive moral value as a service to God,’ (Schaltegger and Torgler, 2010, p.99). Max Weber (2001), in his *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, argued that the Calvinist doctrine of *predestination* acknowledges that people need to seek ‘evidence’ to prove that they are among the ‘elect’ (God’s chosen).²¹ Similar notions can be explored to describe the Muslim motivation for self-exploitation, as this motivation might also be based upon scriptural sources that address the promise of such deferred reward for doing good work in this world:

Whoever does righteousness man or woman, and has faith, verily, to him. We will give a new life, a life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions (Qur’an 16:97 translated by Yusuf Ali, p. 663).

These examples demonstrate how a religious calling and the promise of ‘deferred reward’ in the afterlife might encourage workers to self-exploit. Because of the distinct experiences that a religious television organisation may offer its employees, I will explore what motivates television production staff at the Islam Channel to self-exploit and the extent to which power dynamics within the channel encourage self-exploitation.

3.3.3 Creative Autonomy

Creative autonomy is another important aspect in the study of creative labour. Derived from ‘Kantian and utilitarian philosophy’s conceptions of the person, and of personal morality’, the term ‘autonomy’ is widely used in multidisciplinary studies and cannot be detached from its philosophical roots (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 40). In their

²¹ The idea is that God chooses the saved and the damned in advance. Cited in Davidson, J.C. and Caddell, D.P. 1994. Religion and the Meaning of Work. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 33(2), pp.135-147.

research, Hesmondhalgh and Baker use 'autonomy' to describe the self-determination' of creative workers and emphasise two types: 'workplace autonomy' and 'creative autonomy'. Hesmondhalgh and Baker address the creative autonomy of creative labour and the ways in which struggles over autonomy 'generate tensions and contradictions in cultural production (ibid., p. 81).

The notion of the 'creative autonomy' of media producers is central to the analysis of sociocultural factors. Hesmondhalgh (2006, p. 2) argues that 'during the production of media texts, media producers draw upon knowledge, values and beliefs circulating in society'. But the creative autonomy of media producers may be limited. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 81) address the creative autonomy of creative labour and the ways in which struggles over autonomy 'generate tensions and contradictions in cultural production'.²² The point I am making here is that sociocultural factors can shape media production in ways that challenge the creative autonomy of media producers. The circulating knowledge, values and beliefs in the society from which media producers draw whilst making creative decisions, therefore, must be negotiated. In agreement with them, I recognise that creative autonomy is limited. Drawing on the idea of 'limited' creative autonomy, I aim to explore the extent to which creative decision-making is enabled or constrained by forces that are internal and external to the Islam Channel.

Studies show that possessing autonomy within creative work can be both good and bad for workers. While Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) regard autonomy as characterising good work, Banks (2007, p. 61) argues that 'the seduction of autonomy' is strong enough for workers 'to deny the hardships of individualised work and to eclipse the feelings of exhaustion and despair'. Here, creative autonomy can function as a double-edged sword for creative labour. For example, having a certain degree of creative autonomy increases worker satisfaction, as they operate free from influence whilst making creative decisions. However, having a certain degree of creative autonomy can also lead to

²² According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker, these tensions and contradictions are categorized in a form of 'contrastive pairing', e.g., tensions between art and capital (Ryan 1992), art and commerce (Banks 2007), culture and commerce (Slater and Tonkiss 2001), creativity and commerce (Negus and Pickering 2004), culture and commodity (Frow 1996), and culture and economy (Ray and Sayer 2004). Cited in Hesmondhalgh, D. and Baker, S. 2011. *Creative labour : media work in three cultural industries*. London: Routledge. p. 81

over-work/self-exploitation, which affects their work-life balance. Workers tend to self-exploit to maintain the freedom (creative autonomy) that they struggle for (ibid.).

This thesis will explore the creative autonomy of the producer and researchers at the Islam Channel. I aim to discover the extent to which the creative autonomy of the producer is challenged by representational issues relating to Islam and Muslims that are circulated by western media.

3.3.4 Emotional Well-being

Emotion is an important aspect of creative labour. I intend to explore it as a subject that shapes the quality of working life. Some Marxist writers (e.g., Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and Maurizio Lazzarato) have conceptualised 'immaterial labour' and/or 'affective labour', as 'labour that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product knowledge, or communication', and 'human communication and interaction as well as gendered caring and health work' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 159). In line with Hesmondhalgh and Baker's critique of these concepts, I maintain that they pay insufficient attention to questions of emotional well-being and are not explored sociologically.

Since early 2000, media sociologists have included emotion in their analyses of creative labour (see Grindstaff, 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). In their study of the production staff of a British television talent show, David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker (2011) examined the emotional well-being of the staff. They prefer the concept 'emotional labour' to immaterial and/or affective labour. 'Emotional labour' was conceptualised by Arlie Hochschild in her ground-breaking research of the commercialisation of human feeling within service industries (see Hochschild, 1983; 2012). Hochschild (2012) concluded that 'emotional labour requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others', (p. 7). Using Hochschild's conceptualisation of emotional labour in order to analyse the staff involved in a talent show production, Hesmondhalgh and Baker suggest that these staff members perform emotional labour, which involves 'the suppression of anger and frustration in the name of good working relations', while handling the emotions of contributors and their families (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 177). Like Hesmondhalgh and Baker, I also aim to explore the emotional well-being of the television production staff at the Islam Channel. Confronting representational issues and ideological constraints also impacts the emotional well-being of

members of the production community at the Islam Channel. The concept of emotional well-being is useful to analyse the ways in which the television production staff respond to constraints and manage their emotions whilst producing the magazine talk show.

Because talk shows constitute a distinct television genre, the ways in which the production staff deal with their own emotions and those of others might differ from workers involved with documentaries, news or drama productions. Grindstaff's work, in particular, is useful to my analysis of emotional well-being. Her study of confessional daytime talk shows addresses the 'emotional work' that production staff are required to perform. Like Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), Grindstaff also applies Hochschild's concept of emotional labour within her observations of production staff who must manage programme contributors and their own emotions at the same time. Such a distinct experience of making a television talk show, according to Laura Grindstaff, involves 'managing one's own feelings' by 'pretending to care about guests or not to care too much' (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 132). Critiques of different kinds of talk shows also suggest that they also have different production rituals, though the experiences of staff may differ from one work role to another (i.e., an assistant producer or researcher as well as paid and unpaid staff). For example, BBC1 researcher Rebecca Whitefoot notes her experience in the production of the magazine talk show *The One Show*. She points out the difference between her previous experience as a broadcast journalist and her current position as a researcher of *The One Show*. Whitefoot describes her feelings upon learning that she had received an assignment requiring her to conduct interviews with famous celebrity guests:

I really love this part of the job. I'm testing the ground ahead of the show, discovering which questions will prompt a sit-up-and-listen response from the guests and which questions will trigger tumbleweed [...] (Whitefoot, 2014).

Her excitement tells us of her emotional state upon experiencing routines that differ from those of her previous job as a broadcast journalist. Despite the similarities between a talk show routine and a newsroom routine, the pressures that talk show production present to the producers and staff are different from those of journalists (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 82). As Grindstaff argues,

Prior media experience does not necessarily prepare one for working on a talk show, where the normal pressures of television production are complicated by the genre's focus on ordinary people and more important,

by the ways in which ordinariness gets constructed in this context (ibid., p. 70).

Both the Whitefoot and Grindstaff studies provide accounts of the implications of talk show production for emotion. Their studies have also inspired me to explore the emotional implications of producing the magazine talk show *Living the Life* at the Islam Channel.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

In order to conceptualise the production culture of religious television, I have combined the media sociology and cultural studies traditions (Section 3.1). I have explored research into television talk show production, which is the main focus of this thesis. The mapping of the literature on media production studies offers a broader view of how these factors shape production culture across media organisations, media products and television genres. Further, a review of the literature regarding talk show production allows me to understand how these factors have shaped particular forms of talk show.

In Section 3.2, concerning production studies of religious television, I examined the limited research available on religious television production. With the exception of the studies by Ailsa Hollinshead (2002) and Caitriona Noonan (e.g., 2008; 2011; 2013), research into religion, media and culture often focuses upon representational issues, aiming to separate the analyses of religion and media from traditional, institutionally dominated definitions whilst refocusing on ‘the intersections of institutions, authorities and production with popular practices, circulation, and reception’ (Morgan, 2008a, p. xiii). Although these studies examine media as ‘instruments for converting ideas or intentions into mass-produced forms for mass dissemination’ (ibid.), research into the production culture of religious television has received little attention.

I seek to conceptualise the production culture of religious television by engaging with Caldwell’s concept of a production culture, which examines the power dynamics within institutional context and how values, norms and rituals shape television production. This concept assists me in answering questions such as how a religious television programme comes to take the form it does, and how and under what conditions television production employees produce a religious television programme.

In Section 3.2, I have discussed studies that show that advertising pressure affects creative decision-making in religious programming. Producers tend to create programmes, which not only embody the religious mission, but also include moral and ethical values (Noonan, 2008). In my analysis of the organisational factors shaping religious television production, I have looked at both Christian and Islam-based television perspectives in order to identify issues surrounding these organisations. Studies show that both Christian and Islamic broadcast organisations face pressures from within and outside their organisations. Both face criticism from religious authorities and media regulators.

Given the limited research into Muslim cultural production, I use research stemming from the traditions of media sociology and cultural studies to analyse sociocultural factors shaping religious television. My aim is to identify how sociocultural issues affect Islam-based television. I argue that sociocultural factors can shape media production in ways that challenge the creative autonomy of media producers. I locate literature that focuses upon sociocultural aspects, such as gender, race and class, and examine how these aspects shape workers' creative autonomy and professional identity, as well as media production processes. Exploring these sociocultural aspects helps to conceptualise the production culture of religious television programming, like that of the Islam Channel.

Finally, in Section 3.3, I have discussed four key concepts relating to the studies of creative labour: exploitation, self-exploitation, creative autonomy and emotional well-being. These concepts are relevant to my thesis as they allow me to establish the link between poor quality of working life and the poor production quality of television programme. I review sociological research that focuses on television production, comparing the various concepts sociologists use to theorise the experience of creative workers. I adopt some of these concepts, justify why I have chosen them and explain how it is that I intend to apply them in this thesis. I will use the concept 'exploitation' to explore the channel's strategy of encouraging production staff to work harder in order to accomplish daily production tasks, as well as the meaning of strategic motivation to the production staff. I will then apply the concept of 'self-exploitation' in order to explore the quality of working lives of the production staff, discovering their own motives for self-exploitation and the extent to which advertising forces, internal and external challenges, and sociocultural factors result in self-exploitation among these workers. Then, using the

concept 'creative autonomy', I will examine the extent to which the producers' and researchers' creative autonomy is affected by the constraints resulting from economic/resources and institutional mission/control and sociocultural factors. Finally, based upon Grindstaff's (2002) argument that talk show production is a site of emotional displays and involves pressures, I will explore the 'emotional well-being' of the television production community. These four concepts will form my analysis in Chapter 7 of the experiences of the production culture. To conceptualise the production culture of the Islam Channel, I need to approach both the magazine talk show and the production community. While the review of literature in sections 3.1 and 3.2 helped me to conceptualise the production culture and analyse the production quality of the magazine talk show *Living the Life*, Section 3.3 supports my analysis of the experience of television production staff involved in *Living the Life*.

Chapter 4

Research Design and Methods

The purpose of this thesis is to conceptualise the production culture of religious television. In doing so, it asks two questions: 1) How does a religious television programme come to take the form it does; and 2) How and under what conditions do television production employees produce a religious television programme? To answer these questions and to address how I have carried out my analysis, I have structured this chapter into four sections. Section 4.1 addresses the social constructivist research paradigm. Section 4.2 considers my ethnographic research design and methods. Section 4.3 deliberates on my ethnographic experiences. And finally, Section 4.4 discusses the procedures used to analyse data and the verification of the findings.

4.1 The Social Constructivist Research Paradigm

In this research project, I apply social constructivism as a qualitative research paradigm and interpretive framework in order to conceptualise the production culture of the Islam Channel. As a framework, social constructivism assumes that ‘individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work’ (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). As a social constructivist researcher, I seek to comprehend how members of the Islam Channel’s production community understood their daily television production routines. I also examine the daily working lives in which their production rituals are embedded and the quality of the magazine talk show, *Living the Life*. Understanding knowledge itself as a social construct bears enormous philosophical implications for this type of research project. The ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions help to address these consequences.

Ontologically, I assume that participants experience multiple realities. Therefore, I intend to report ‘multiple forms of evidence and themes using the actual words of different individuals and presenting [the] different perspectives’ that I encountered during the fieldwork (ibid., p. 20). As a research site, the Islam Channel is comprised of various individuals who expressed to me their varied personal views and experiences on the culture of their everyday working lives.

The epistemological assumption was based on the subjective meanings of participants' experiences and upon my interpretations as the researcher. Like Creswell, I argue that these subjective meanings are varied, not simply imprinted on the participants, but formed on the basis of interactions with others (hence, social construction) and in response to historical and cultural norms, values and rituals in an individual's life (ibid., p. 25). When approaching the research participants, I examined the historical background, religious values and cultural norms of British Muslims. I linked these realities with the television staff's subjective experiences of working at the Islam Channel. I also acknowledged the tensions and ideological conflicts within Muslim communities that might affect television production.

Additionally, I reflected upon my own previous experience as an employee at a large broadcast organisation. Prior to joining academia in 2009, I was a news translator/announcer for the Al-Jazeera Arabic News Unit at Astro All Asia Broadcast Network Plc. (Astro) in the year 2000.²³ My job included executing voice-overs for the Arabic News provided by Al-Jazeera. I was then offered a permanent position as a 'presentation editor' at Astro within an in-house censorship department, the 'Network Presentation Unit' (NPU) in 2001. My responsibilities were to remove the incoming foreign commercials and to replace them with those assigned by local advertisers; filter and edit programmes in accordance with the Malaysian Film Censorship Board (LPF);²⁴ identify that the correct television programmes were received via a MEASAT satellite and then ensure the quality of their output before transmitting them (via satellite) to home

²³ Astro is a digital Direct-To-Home (DTH) multi-channel commercial TV service based in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. Details on Astro are available from: <http://www.astro.com.my>

²⁴ The Film Censorship Board's (LPF) function is to implement policies for film censorship and the censoring of films and media contents across Malaysia. The first Act adopted was the Cinematograph Films Act 1952 (Amendment 1966), followed by the Film Censorship Act 2002 (Act 620) which remains in force. Details on the Film Censorship Board (LPF) are available from: <http://www.moha.gov.my/index.php/en/maklumat-korporat/maklumat-bahagian/lembaga-penapis-film/>

viewers.²⁵ Working alongside the Astro Regulatory Department, my job also involved preparing reports for the banning of television programmes and films that were due for broadcast on Astro channels. I was required to liaise with the Malaysian Film Censorship Board (LPF) and Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) before making any suggestions concerning the banning of films or television programmes on Astro.²⁶ As a large broadcast company, Astro has several subsidiaries. Towards the end of my seven-year tenure within the Network Presentation Department, I accepted a job offer as an interactive TV executive from one of Astro's subsidiaries, the Astro Digital Five.²⁷ My tasks at Astro Digital Five included the overseeing the tally of votes during the 'live' broadcast reality talent show *Akademi Fantasia* Series 6 and completing a weekly analysis of audience ratings in light of these votes. As a social constructivist researcher, too, when drawing upon epistemological assumptions, I must recognise the participants' cultural norms and values in addition to my professional experiences.

Axiologically, I acknowledge that this research is 'value-laden, and biases are present' when interpreting my experience and that of others (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). This philosophical assumption underscores how I position myself as a researcher – that is, as an ethnographer (ibid.). As a participant observer, former television employee, and a gendered intern, who worked alongside members of the production community, I must acknowledge similarities and differences between my own religious and cultural values and norms and those of the research participants. I also acknowledge how I have addressed various ethical issues and maintained a critical distance throughout my everyday interactions with the research participants, helping to ensure the validity of the ethnographic research conducted (see my discussion on this in Sub-section 4.3.4).

²⁵ The launch of MEASAT-1 and MEASAT-2 led to a rapid increase in Malaysian infrastructure development in both the telecommunication and broadcasting industries, including the launch of the technologically advanced digital Direct-To-Home (DTH) Multi-Channel TV Service, Astro. Details on MEASAT are available from: http://www.measat.com/corp_profile_history.html

²⁶ Details on the Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) are available from: <http://www.skmm.gov.my/About-Us/History.aspx>

²⁷ Available from: <http://productlisting.mscomalaysia.my/msc-company/astro-digital-5-sdn-bhd-formerly-known-digital-five-sdn-bhd-formerly-known-multimedia>

Methodologically, a social constructivist worldview involves knowledge which is 'inductive, emerging and shaped by a researcher's experience in collecting and analysing data' (ibid., p. 22). I applied the concept of 'production culture' to my research design to study a religious television production within an organisational context. In addition to the concept of production culture, I also adopted ethnographic research methods to gather data for this research as well as to identify how such a production culture comes to shape the programme that is produced. I have employed three types of strategies pertinent to ethnographic research to collect data; these are: a primary method of participant observation; a secondary method of semi-structured interview; and a tertiary method of textual analysis, in order to assess the production quality of the magazine talk show *Living the Life*.

4.2 Ethnographic Research Design and Methods

Ethnography is central to studies of television production. Researchers like John Caldwell (2008), Laura Grindstaff (2002) and Georgina Born (2004) in particular, employed an ethnographic research design to study television production, but their studies are different in geographical, sociocultural, industrial and genre contexts. Caldwell, for example, adopted a cultural-industrial approach to study television and film industries in the USA, whereas Grindstaff applied a sociocultural-institutional approach to the study US-American television talk shows production. While Caldwell and Grindstaff combined media sociology and cultural studies traditions, Born, on the other hand, used an anthropological lens to examine cultures in television production in the UK. Despite such distinctions among these studies, they used a similar methodology: an ethnographic research design to observe television professionals in their natural setting and engage in their production rituals. Among these ethnographic approaches to television production, I mainly refer to Caldwell and Grindstaff's studies in the following, since I have chosen a similar theoretical approach as outlined in the previous chapter. Caldwell's analysis of television production workers' experiences 'as forms of cultural negotiation and expression' allowed me to examine the dynamics of power at the Islam Channel (Caldwell, 2008, p. 2). Grindstaff's study guided me in examining 'the norms and practices that circumscribe [talk show] production, as well as the ways in which [production workers] makes sense of the genre' (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 34). In my research, ethnography allowed me to observe and participate in a television production in its

organisational context, engaging with a particular group of television production workers and the genre of religious programming.

Although I have borrowed Caldwell's term 'production culture', I did not adopt his research design. It is because, Caldwell's ethnographic research design was based upon what he defines as 'critical industrial practices', a three-part concept which can be summarised as follow: 1) 'the critical' dimension involved interpretive schemes of trade/business methods and conventions, which he deployed within specific institutional contexts and relationships; 2) 'the industrial' environment as a television and film production ecology; 3) labour 'practice' that manifest during the technical production tasks or professional interactions (ibid., pp. 5-6). I did not adopt Caldwell's research design for three reasons:

First, it is unsuitable for studying a single media organisation like the Islam Channel because it analysed a number of television organisations, which he positioned within a large ecology of television and film industries.

Second, Caldwell applied a political economy approach to his 'critical dimension' of production workers in television and film industries ecology. In contrast, I applied a sociological approach to study television production workers, using four key concepts in studies of creative labour (see Section 3.3 of this thesis).

Third, Caldwell examined economic and technological influences on television/film workers' practices, which are not the focus of this thesis. I sought to examine how the sociocultural environment in which the Islam Channel exists and the institutional influences shape television production and working life in the channel.

What I have learnt from Caldwell's ethnographic research is how he critically analysed television production workers using the Geertz's (1973) sociological lens that aims to 'look over the shoulders' of television workers. By looking over the shoulders, Caldwell aims to examine an 'interpretive nature' of television workers practices. This suggests how his and television employees 'industrial reflexivity' locate the power dynamics within various institutional contexts, and subsequently, 'express an emerging and unstable economic and social order in Hollywood' (Caldwell, 2008, p. 5) (I have discussed this in Section 3.1).

Thus, the ethnographic research design of this thesis can be characterised as a small-scale cultural-institutional design to examine a microsocial level of religious television, which was based upon a four-layer analytical framework. These layers include: sociocultural environment, institutional context, television production community and genre conventions. Figure 1 illustrates the analytical framework for conceptualising the production culture of religious television. Further, I elaborate upon how this particular analytical framework helped me to map my ethnographic experiences.

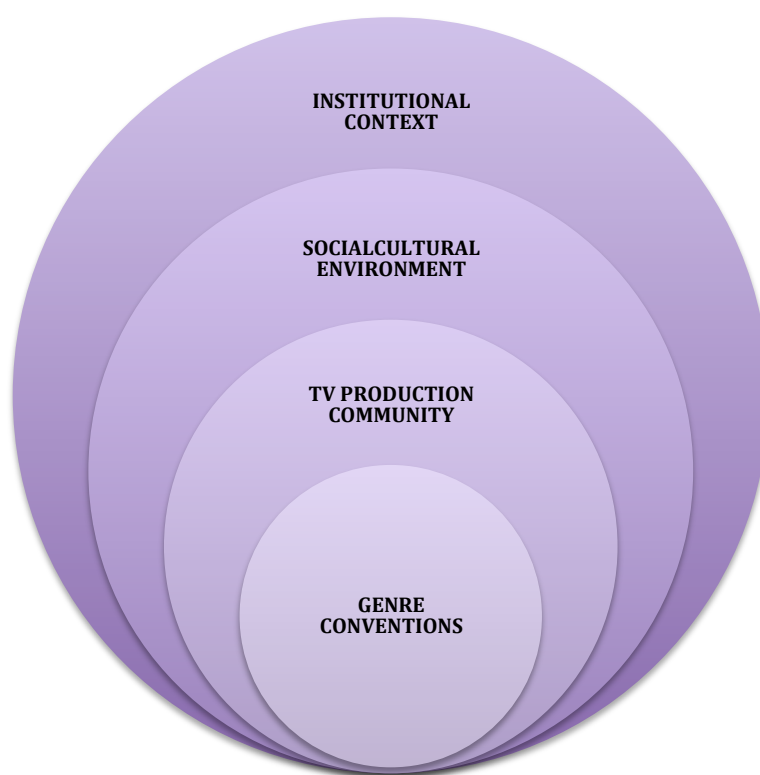


Figure 1: An Analytical Framework for Conceptualising the Production Culture

The four-layer analytical framework indicates aspects that I have examined in my ethnography and linked them to the empirical chapters 5 through 7.

The first layer symbolises the sociocultural environment, which I discussed in Chapter 2. Unlike Caldwell, whose study covers a large television and film ‘industrial environment’, my research was mapped against the sociocultural canvas, which represents

the environment in which British Muslim society, including production community lives and work. A sociocultural environment is an external factor that shape religious television production. My approach to such external factor is sociological rather than political economy like that of Caldwell. The reason for adopting sociological approach because it allows me considers the religious ideology as a power that shapes the production culture of the Islam Channel.

The second layer examines power dynamics from an institutional context. The power dynamics represent tensions and contradictions within the Islam Channel. Caldwell notes that the production culture of the Hollywood television and film industries includes 'a collective, daily cultural performance involving symbolic codes, [and] conventionalized power hierarchies' (Caldwell, 2008, p. 342). Much like Caldwell who sees 'culture as an interpretive system' that 'always embedded in the play of power and politics', I examined power dynamics within the Islam Channel (ibid., p. 2). Knowledge of production culture offers an understanding of the dynamics of power that are both internal and external to a religious television organisation. An understanding of the production culture might equip broadcast institutions and television producers with better solutions to negotiate those constraints relating to the treatment of religious elements within an entertainment genre. Thus, to examine the culture of television production present at the Islam Channel, I need to examine the power dynamics from an institutional perspective.

The Islam Channel is a fairly convenient site in which to conduct ethnographic research because it offers a small, unified space and a group of participants to observe and communicate with on daily basis. A medium-sized organisation, the Islam Channel consists of a group of people who make decisions, negotiate, and work creatively on the themes, social issues, segments, scripts and overall content of this television programme. Unlike many commercial broadcasters, Islam Channel was driven neither by viewers' ratings nor revenue figures. The unique thing about the channel was its business strategies, which embedded in its mission: the *da'wah*/proselytization goal. I will discuss the three mission goals of the Islam Channel and reflect on its uniqueness in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis. In Section 4.3, I consider more closely my ethnographic experience, especially given the specificities of the Islam Channel as a research site. I reflect upon the possibilities and limitations that the setting presented in terms of its structures, the relationships

between teams, the cultural norms regarding gender and religion, and the interactions between the production team and other areas of the Islam Channel's staff.

The third layer involved an analysis of members of production community. Similar to Caldwell, I also 'look over the shoulders' of members of television production community at the Islam Channel. I observed television production workers as 'cultural expressions and entities involving all of the symbolic processes and collective practices that other cultures use to: gain and reinforce identity, to forge consensus and order, to perpetuate themselves and their interests, and to interpret the media as audience members' (Caldwell, 2008, p. 2). By approaching these workers in that way, allowed me to comprehend power dynamics that shapes creative decisions in the magazine talk shows production. Knowledge of production culture might assist creative producers in managing at both the managerial and television production levels those conflicts that potentially arise from such constraints.

Finally, the fourth layer symbolises textual analysis of the magazine talk show genre conventions that I have included in my ethnography. My approach to text however, is different from Caldwell's analysis. While Caldwell analysed 'the trade and worker artifacts' (Caldwell, 2008, p. 4), I assessed the genre conventions of the magazine talk show *Living the Life*. Caldwell analysed such artifacts as, studio press kits, making-ofs, behind-the-scenes documentaries, DVD bonus tracks, show-biz reports, and cross-media film/TV franchises. While Caldwell adopted an 'integrated cultural-industrial' method to analyse trade and workers' artifacts, I took a cultural-institutional approach to analyse production quality of talk show genre, and subsequently, identify the problems that shape its quality. Caldwell analysed pre-recorded reflexive talk (trade artifact) by the producers, directors and other members of production community as a cross-checking approach to analyse production practices (worker artifact, e.g., interview data). According to Caldwell,

A method of 'cross-checking' proves useful when interrogating production practices where, for example, the rhetoric of studio press kits does not jive with explanations provided by the production crafts-people; or when demo tapes used to market equipment conveniently elide or gloss labour issues raised through more macroscopic industrial analysis or spin [...], (Caldwell, 2008, p. 4).

The purpose of textual analysis that Caldwell adopted is different from mine because he used it to identify the tensions in television industry, 'the self-representation,

self-critique, and self-reflection' of production community regarding the industrial environment (ibid., p. 5). He examined 'the interpretive nature' of television workers practices, and subsequently, suggest how his 'industrial reflexivity' 'express an emerging and unstable economic and social order in Hollywood' (ibid.). This indicates that Caldwell's analysis did not include the aesthetic of TV text produced by these workers of which my research project focuses.

In contrast, I used textual analysis to assess the production quality/aesthetic of a magazine television talk show by using BBC's *The One Show* as an exemplar. Like Caldwell, the analysis also involved 'cross-checking' approach to the assessment results. However, unlike his approach which engaged with a large register of ethnographic data (textual, observation, interviews, political economy), I mapped the results of textual analysis against personal reflexivity about the channel mission (Chapter 5), in relations to their understanding of good TV (Chapter 6), and links with and consequences for the working life of production community (Chapter 7). Therefore, when I discuss textual analysis as ethnographic methods in the following section, I refer to the aesthetic of the television talk show as articulated by Hanne Bruun (2001). I consider how well the producers have achieved success in realising their aesthetic goals and in matching generally accepted professional standards. I will discuss this in detail in Section 4.2.3.

I have mentioned at the outset that I applied social constructivism as a qualitative research paradigm and interpretive framework to conceptualise the production culture of the Islam Channel. Using social constructivism, I sought to understand the sociocultural environment in which the production community of the Islam Channel live and work (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). Ontologically, I managed to report 'multiple forms of evidence and themes using the actual words of different individuals and presenting [the] different perspectives' that I encountered during the fieldwork (ibid., p. 20). Epistemologically, I draw the subjective meanings of participants' experiences and upon my interpretations as the researcher. When approaching the research participants, I examined the historical background, religious values and cultural norms of British Muslims. I linked these realities with the television staff's subjective experiences of working at the Islam Channel. I also acknowledged the tensions and ideological conflicts within Muslim communities that might affect television production. I recognised the participants' cultural norms and values in addition to my professional experiences. Axiologically, I acknowledged that this

research is 'value-laden, and biases are present' when interpreting my experience and that of others (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). This philosophical assumption accentuates how I position myself as a researcher, a participant observer, a former television employee, and a gendered individual, who worked alongside members of the production community. I must acknowledge similarities and differences between my own religious and cultural values and norms and those of the research participants. I also acknowledge how I have addressed various ethical issues and maintained a critical distance throughout my everyday interactions with the research participants, helping to ensure the validity of the ethnographic research conducted (see Sub-section 4.3.4). Methodologically, a social constructivist worldview involves knowledge that is 'inductive, emerging and shaped by a researcher's experience in collecting and analysing data' (Creswell, 2013, p. 22). In addition to the concept of production culture, I also adopted ethnographic research methods to gather data for this research as well as to identify how such a production culture comes to shape the programme that is produced.

Ethnographic research is a common approach in production studies. Scholars like John Caldwell (2008), Laura Grindstaff (2002) and Georgina Born (2004) employed an ethnographic research design to study television production. They adopted ethnographic methods such as participant observation to observe television professionals in their natural setting and engage in their production rituals. They used interview to gain insights into tensions and conflicts experienced by production workers. They also conducted textual analysis of products made by workers in television production to understand how these products come to take the form that they do. In my research, ethnography allowed me to observe and participate in a television production in its organisational context, engaging with a particular group of television production workers and the genre of religious programming. In the following sub-sections, I will expand on ethnographic research methods that include participant observation, interviews and textual analysis, where I also compelled to reflect upon my role as a researcher, an intern and a gendered individual, who possesses extensive professional experience within the television industry, as well as specific personal norms and values.

4.2.1 Participant Observation

Media products, including television programmes, are relatively easy to access for research purposes. Media content can be analysed primarily through types of content and

discourse analyses. Surveys, document analyses and statistical data, on the other hand, provide information about television organisations, including information concerning their policies and ownership. These research approaches, however, provide little information about the processes and practices involved in making media content.

Participant observation combines the participation in the lives of the people being studied with the maintenance of a professional distance in order to allow for adequate observation and recording of data. It is a process of immersion in a culture that afforded me the ability to observe television production within its natural setting, recording experiences and events as they came to my attention.

As a participant observer, I spent four months at the Islam Channel, researching for *Living the Life*. I worked closely with key employees at the managerial level (the human resource manager, the manager of production and his assistant) and production employees, such as the producer, assistant producers and researchers. I also worked with technical crew members, including the multi-skilled operators involved in the production of the programme. Such contact with the employees allowed me to examine the factors that shape production on a day-to-day basis (e.g., interview questions, the choice of story items, etc.) and that might reflect changes made at the development and pre-production stages.

When reflecting upon my experience as an intern at the Islam Channel, I refer to Grindstaff (2002), for there is little scholarship examining talk show production ethnographically (p. 34). Her experience as an intern for a television talk show offers insight into its daily production rituals. Participant observation includes collecting 'the inside perspectives of producers and guests, and with an eye open toward understanding how the norms and practices of the production process itself shape and inform the talk show as text' (ibid.). Grindstaff asserted that participant observation of a talk show not only involves working with producers and other crew members, but also involves interacting with the various guests/contributors that appear daily and often without television experience. Following in Grindstaff's footsteps, I assisted the producer 'turn them [an everyday guest] into a hometown celebrity because they have no television experience' (ibid., p. 47). Also, talk shows feature individuals who are willing to step forward and relate their woeful life stories on camera' (ibid., p. 48). Thus, participant observation is suitable for gathering data for this research project.

Grindstaff's (2002) ethnographic experience proved particularly useful in her study of television talk show production. She argues that 'at its best, ethnography evokes a world that is dense, richly textured and nuanced, one that treats people as participating subjects and not just passive objects of research' (ibid., p. 34). This encouraged me to examine the processes of television talk show production using a similar approach, focusing the everyday working lives of individual production staff members in their natural settings.

However, participant observation has its shortcomings. It is a time-consuming method of qualitative inquiry (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, p. 15). Also, as Hansen points out, it is a 'reflexive method, open to the contingencies of the field experience and, therefore, less than strictly linear in its execution or predictable in its findings' (1998, p. 48). Nonetheless, participant observation remains a highly valuable method by providing 'evidence for the dynamics as well as embedded nature of cultural production' (ibid., p. 46). I found participant observation to be a very useful method for this research as it helped me to gather data first-hand when identifying the power dynamics within the production of *Living the Life*.

4.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

While observation allows me to view and analyse behaviour, interviews afford me the opportunity to listen to respondent opinions. Yet, interviews do have disadvantages, as people may lie, attempt to please the researcher with his/her answers, or even reply in a cautious or secretive manner. To some extent, participant observation can 'reveal' certain elements or values that participants might try to conceal during interviews. The semi-structured interview is a supplementary method intended to accompany participant observation, as the openness offered by such interviews might allow me to capture the unexpected and possibly gather greater depth of information. It may also complement the observation with data on how workers themselves perceive their experience to explore their motivations, emotions and reflections on their work.

Similar to conversations and general exchanges, semi-structured interviews can generate an avalanche of data (Hansen, 1998, p. 56). A semi-structured intensive interview permits 'a wider range of contexts and situations to be examined than the in-depth study of a single case' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 16). Interviews give researchers 'the accounts of interviewees about their experiences and products, and the

opportunity [to listen] to some of their accounts of what happens to them, and why they think that things happen in the way that they do' (ibid. p. 15). They also offer insights into creative autonomy (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) and the 'constrained or surprised world of television production' (Cottle, 1997, p. 12). As a valid method to examine or analyse the lived experience of media producers, the semi-structured interview has been deployed in some media production studies (e.g., Gitlin 1983; Grindstaff 2002), including those of religious broadcasting (e.g. Noonan, 2008) and documentary film (Zoellner, 2010).

Before the fieldwork, I designed an interview based upon the research questions: [H]ow and under what conditions do television production workers produce religious programmes? I adopted a format similar to that used by Maruta Herding (2013, p. 65-67) when studying Muslim youth culture. Figure 2 illustrates the format of the semi-structured interview that I have used to gather data for this thesis.

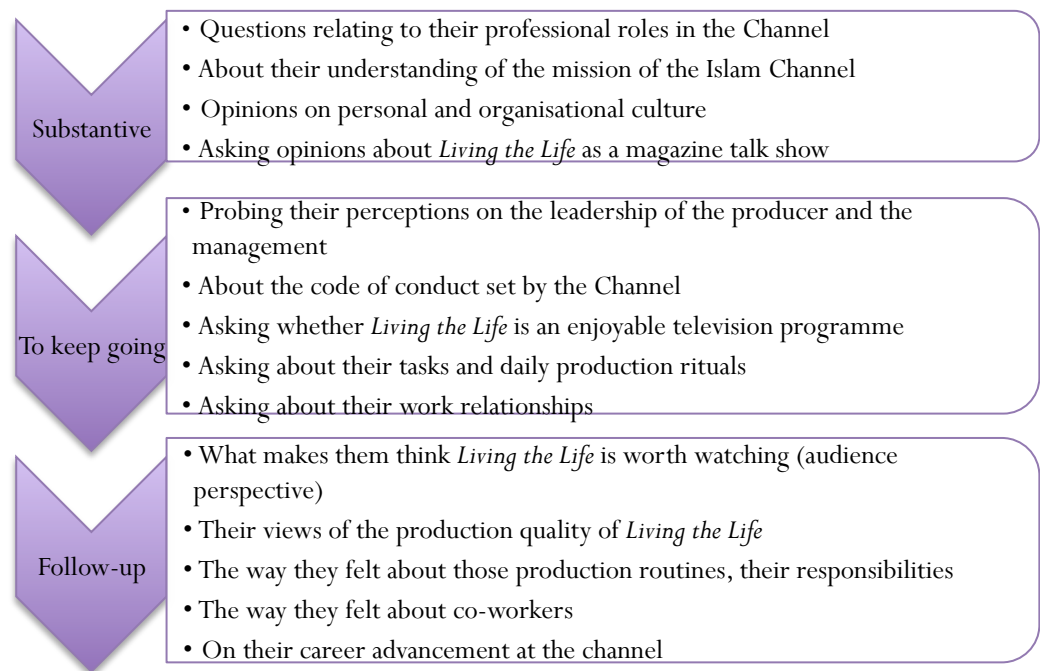


Figure 2: A Semi-Structured Interview Format

The format includes questions that: 1) cover substantive aspects of participants' lives at the Channel; 2) encourage participants to elaborate upon their answers when desired; and 3) follow-up on various answers. Such a format includes questions that move from general-to-specific categories (e.g., from their professional roles in and opinions

about the Channel and the programme to their motivations and feelings about production rituals and work relationships.) These sorts of questions offered insights into the everyday lives of participants, including considerations of their working conditions, the tensions and contradictions, and the extent to which their experiences have challenged their creative autonomy and emotional well-being. Moreover, their answers also provide the grounds for me to assess the production quality of *Living the Life*, which I have used to respond to the question: How does the religious television programme come to take the form it does?

I conducted semi-structured interviews with a total of fifteen (15) Islam Channel staff, of which three are employed at the managerial level: the human resource manager, the manager of programming and the assistant manager of programming. Additionally, I interviewed twelve other employees from the creative team (9 people) and the technical team (3 people). I interviewed each respondent after explaining details about what my research consisted of, why their opinions mattered within the scope of my study and how I intended to present them within the thesis. Depending on their work roles and availability, I spent 15 minutes to an hour with each respondent. I engaged in these interviews near the end of my four-month period spent within the field. I did so in order to avoid interrupting research participants while they were involved in production processes. If I were to have probed them from time to time, they might have been suspicious of me and refused to answer my questions. Another reason would be that I have built up trust in the period of my participant observation, making them more approachable for interviews.

Nonetheless, I realised that my professional experience helped me to negotiate with (a few) participants in convincing them to speak to me, revealing their thoughts and feelings about how members of the Channel management treated them and about their relationships with the producer and other members of the production crew. In Malaysia, I worked for a large company, Astro, which required me to communicate with co-workers and clients of multiple races and religions. Seven years' of this industrial experience has made for excellent communication and negotiation skills. For instance, as a presentation editor my job regularly required me to convince my superior or the head of regulatory that particular TV programmes would be suitable or unsuitable for Malaysian viewers. Hence, my professional experiences aided me in collecting data for this research project.

Such professional skills helped me both in doing participant observation and in interviewing at the Islam Channel.

4.2.3 Textual Analysis

I adopted textual analysis in order to supplement the methods of planned participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Whereas semi-structured interviews allow me to listen and understand participant opinions directly, particularly regarding how they feel about and perceive their professional roles, textual analysis gave me an opportunity to examine the output of the magazine talk show *Living the Life*. While becoming a participant observer offered me experiences involved with production routines and in creative decision-making, textual analysis of the magazine talk show allowed me to identify factors that shaped its output by mapping these factors against the data gathered during my fieldwork (i.e., a field notes and my interactions and informal conversations with other members of the television production community).

I analysed episodes of *Living the Life* as a way of evaluating its production quality in aesthetic terms. I refer to the aesthetic of the television talk show as articulated by Hanne Bruun (2001). I mentioned in Chapter 3 that Bruun found ‘uncertainty’ and ‘sociability’ as critical factors capable of accentuating the viewers’ experience, subsequently, determining the quality/aesthetics of a television talk show. The tension between the uncertainty and the sociability factors can affect the viewing experience and the production quality of television talk show. In addition to these two factors, Bruun suggests that the ‘experiential consequences’ of a talk show for viewers determine its aesthetics/quality. As a television genre, the talk show requires its producer to imagine his/her audience, designating the particular group of the audience that the programme he/she produces actually aims to serve. As Bruun argues, ‘what constitutes the experience of uncertainty and sociability in actual programmes depends very much on who the viewers are’ (ibid.). The producers’ proper management of the uncertainty and sociability factors on a talk show is necessary in order to maintain the production quality of the talk show (p. 251). Bruun’s study is relevant because it helps to describe production quality, a term which I will apply throughout this thesis and especially when discussing the results of textual analysis of the magazine talk show *Living the Life* in Chapter 6.

As this thesis argues that poor quality of working life contributes to poor production quality of the magazine talk show *Living the Life*, a textual analysis of Episode 144 (20th

March 2013) helped me to make judgments concerning its quality, particularly with an eye toward genre conventions and camera work (see Chapter 6). Textual analysis allows me to assess particular video clips extracted from the output of *Living the Life*, revealing the reasoning behind the producer's creative decisions and the working conditions under which he made such decisions.

When analysing the output of the episodes of *Living the Life*, I sought to maintain a critical distance, ensuring that my evaluation of the production quality was fair and not influenced by my own sense of belonging to the production community with whom I shared similar religious beliefs. The feeling of solidarity with other Muslims might have affected my value judgements and could have resulted in unbalanced criticisms. To avoid such bias, I used the BBC magazine talk show *The One Show* as a yardstick to assess the production quality of *Living the Life* (see Chapter 6 of this thesis). My aim, again, was to answer the question of how the religious television programme comes to take the form it does.

Using *The One Show* as an exemplar, I evaluated the generic conventions of *Living the Life* (see Table 5). Both the programming manager and the producer admitted that *The One Show* was their model, the type of magazine talk show that they hoped to emulate upon first deciding to produce *Living the Life* in 2012. Second, I outlined the genre conventions of both magazine talk shows and presented the criteria and generic conventions that shaped the production quality of *Living the Life*. Finally, I analysed other episodes, including Episode 136 of *Living the Life* (6 March 2013). I found that this episode is relevant to highlight issues related to the physical appearance of women (see Section 6.4.3).

I combined the method of textual analysis with those of interviews and participant observation in an effort to study the production culture of the Islam Channel. I refer to Caldwell (2008), who cross-checked between textual analysis with interviews in order to explore the production culture of television industries (ibid., p. 342). However, unlike Caldwell, I have focused upon a single television organisation, not the television industries. Nonetheless, his study has guided me in examining the power dynamics of the Islam Channel. I referred to Grindstaff, who used participant observation in conjunction with interviews of the workers involved in television talk shows, as well as to Whitefoot, who provided rich insights into the production of the magazine talk show. Combining

these methods of data collection have provided me with a holistic view of the quality of production and the working lives of the staff members at the Islam Channel. As such, these methods are pertinent to the media ethnography.

4.3 Ethnographic Experience

When reflecting on my ethnographic experience, I refer to Laura Grindstaff's (2002) role as a researcher of daytime talk show production within the US and to Rebecca Whitefoot's role (2014) as a researcher on the magazine talk show *The One Show* at the BBC. Like Grindstaff, I am also an academic and a researcher who participated in the production routines of a television talk show.

As I asserted at the outset of this thesis, I refer to the Whitefoot experience because it provides an appropriate account for the study of working life in magazine talk show production. Although I am not a researcher like Whitefoot who works for an established television station such as the BBC, the subjective experiences of a similar work role (e.g., the researcher) contained within the account makes it relevant to this thesis. Whitefoot's reflection on her work as a researcher with *The One Show*, even if a form of publicity (because it appears on the BBC Website), provided insights regarding the magazine talk show, including its genre conventions and production rituals.

Prior to being an academic, I was a television employee. I could relate with Whitefoot's anxiety of fulfilling the daily production rituals and thinking about how to serve audience. I could empathise regarding her anxiety to finish the job efficiently and to create a television programme that both attracts audiences and accomplishes the BBC's mission: to educate, inform and entertain its viewers. Thus, while doing an ethnography of the Islam Channel, my own professional experiences within television production have helped me to recognize the operation of power dynamics, as well as to empathise with other workers confronted with creative and ideological tensions.

Combining the insights of Whitefoot and Grindstaff, with past insights from my own professional experiences, aided my fieldwork at the Islam Channel and was essential to my achievement of reflexivity. Entering the field with professional work experiences to draw upon was particularly advantageous, especially concerning strategies to: 1) acquire access to the Islam Channel; 2) work and interact with the channel's key television production personnel across the production hierarchy; and 3) communicating/negotiating

with potential guests/contributors before inviting them onto *Living the Life*. Having extensive professional experience helped me to accomplish these three strategies while doing an ethnography. I will discuss these further in a more reflexive fashion in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, emphasizing that I am a gendered individual with specific personal values, who has lived and worked within a culture that maintains different norms than my research participants.

Despite such advantages, there was one disadvantage to my experience within the industry: at the beginning of my research, I was denied access to the channel because the management was hesitant to allow a participant observer who still enjoyed a great working relationship with her previous employer. In particular, the management of the Islam Channel was concerned that I might share their 'new' (at the time) programme pitch (e.g., magazine talk show *Living the Life*) with my colleagues in television production at Astro. In the end, however, my prior experience in working within a broadcast organisation was a definite advantage for it helped me access the research site, communicate with talk show guests and negotiate with people from various professional backgrounds at the Islam Channel. In the sub-sections that follow, I reflect on three aspects of ethnographic experience; these include: 1) gaining access to the research site; 2) field relationships; and 3) limitations of and ethical considerations involved in doing media ethnography.

4.3.1 Gaining Access

One of the first challenges commonly encountered by researchers is gaining access to the research site. A number of studies that involved participant observation report researchers' experiences and the importance of securing access to media organisations (Grindstaff, 2002). Gaining access to the BBC, for instance, was not an easy task for Phillip Schlesinger (1978; 1992) as he has recounted how the BBC initially refused to grant him access. Georgina Born (2004) also described her challenge in getting access to the BBC, by which the gatekeeper at the Corporation was suspicious of her and disallowed her access (cited in Szczepanik and Vonderau 2013, p. 114). Participant observation cannot occur when researchers fail to secure access.

My search for 'an insider' or a contact person at the *Islam Channel* began in February 2012. I sent an email expressing my intentions to the manager in charge of recruitment and internship. There was, however, no written or verbal reply from the manager.

Several of my telephone calls went straight to voicemail messaging. Disappointed, I devised another plan to gain the necessary access.

In June 2012, I became one of the volunteers at an event organised by the Islam Channel the Da'wah Project at Leyton. Dressing up as the channel's mascot, a teddy bear, was an interesting experience, as I was able to observe the different backgrounds of the Islam Channel's audience. Entirely by chance, I met the assistant manager of programming, who reluctantly listened to my research plans. He initially expressed his concern that the channel had attracted a great deal of negative attention from various parties. The report by the Quilliam Foundation (Rajab, 2010), which accused the channel of promoting religious extremism, was one of the reasons for not allowing researchers access to the Islam Channel. After a long conversation to explain intentions and the value of the research (Hansen, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), I succeeded in gaining his trust. Nevertheless, my accessibility challenges did not end there. The legal officer denied my recently granted access the following day during a visit to the Islam Channel's Head Office in London. After re-negotiating with the assistant manager of programming, I signed an agreement in August 2012 to become an intern, and I officially joined the production community in February 2013. Participant observation took place at the head office in London.

I realised that my previous professional experience aided in surmounting the multiple barriers posed by the Channel. For instance, as a presentation editor at the Astro All Asia Broadcast Centre, I communicated with personnel within the organisational hierarchy, both internal and external to Astro. This responsibility required me to liaise with people from the Local Programming, the International Programming, the regulatory and the post-production departments. Also, every two or three months, I accompanied the internal regulator to meetings with the Film Censorship Board (LPF) and Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). These experiences helped me to negotiate with the management of the Islam Channel. I succeeded in persuading the human resource manager, who then convinced the CEO, to grant me access to the Channel. He thought that my professional experience would benefit the production community and the Channel during an internship.

Gaining access to the Islam Channel was not an easy experience. I had to persevere through various stages before the management granted me access to the channel. Upon

reflection, I noticed that other factors obstructed me from securing a position at the channel, too. These included the Islam Channel's anxiety over accepting a female researcher, not only from a foreign country but also bent on accomplishing a 'mission': to conduct ethnographic research at the channel. I had to 'manage' the gatekeeper and the participants by securing their trust, as ethnography often draws much suspicion from some people within the fieldwork site (Szczepanik and Vonderau, 2013, p. 114). Georgina Born (2004) reflected upon how BBC staff were suspicious of her and perceived her as someone with an agenda, referring to her as 'the anthropologist woman' (ibid.). Hence, I understand the Islam Channel's caution and suspicion, as my presence at the site might have engendered anxieties. Given the Islam Channel's reputation in the wake of the Quilliam accusation regarding the channel serving as hub of extremism, the CEO especially could have been worried about my presence.

In comparison to Caldwell's (2008) experience, gaining access to the various research sites in Hollywood was not as challenging as mine. His role as both an academic and television/film practitioner (director and producer) allowed him to conduct ethnography at both television and film industries (p. 349). Whereas for Caldwell, having a professional experience and good industrial contacts was a value-added, my own professional experience, on the opposite, had both an advantage and a disadvantage. The channel might see me as both a threat and an accessory to its reputation due to my dual role: as a researcher and an academic. An advantage of having me as a researcher is that the channel perceived my professional experience to be helpful to the *Living the Life* production crew. A disadvantage is that, in contrast to Caldwell, my academic role seemed problematic for the channel. The channel experienced with Talal Rajab (2010), a researcher/academic from Quilliam who conducted observation and published a report (perceived accusation) on the Islam Channel has affected my position as an academic researcher at the channel. Hence, my presence could be a threat to the channel's reputation as well as a second pair of hand (as one assistant producer put it) to the production community.

4.3.2 Field Relationships

My role as a researcher in this project and on the *Living the Life* production team shaped the way in which the production community of the Islam Channel interacted with me. Beyond religion and professional role and experience, I positioned myself as a gendered

individual. A key to successful ethnographic research is the 'forming of useful relationships' (Hansen, 1998, p. 53). Self-reflection, personal conduct, familiarisation with the research site and interaction with the research participants were important considerations for my observations. It was vital to be sensitive to the various cues presented by others during their interactions and to adjust and renegotiate relationships as occasions demanded (ibid., p. 54). Throughout the fieldwork at the Islam Channel, I managed to maintain good relationships and productive rapport with all of the employees, regardless of their professional roles. Establishing good relationships with employees and members of production community at the Islam Channel opened up a greater opportunity to explore the power dynamics inherent to the production culture of religious television.

On my first day in the field, a young woman wearing a pink *hijab* approached me at the entrance of the Islam Channel's head office on Bonhill Street in central London. She introduced herself as Maryam, the assistant producer, and told me that the producer of *Living the Life* anticipated my arrival. I introduced myself to her as we took the elevator to the first floor, where the programming department was located. As the elevator door opened, I saw that the seating arrangement of staff was segregated by gender. I saw people sitting at their workstations, where some were gazing at their PCs and others were engaged in whispered discussions. The whole floor seemed crowded. As we both emerged from the elevator, Maryam led me to the female section, which was located on my right. Maryam headed to her desk, located opposite to mine. She arranged to brief me later on that day regarding my role and responsibilities. I had a quick glance at the opposite side, where the male workstations were located. As a gendered individual, I was curious and wondered which one of the men was the producer with whom I would work and which one was the head of programming, charged with 'monitoring' me. Suddenly, a man walked toward me and introduced himself as Aswad, the producer of *Living the Life*. Welcoming me, he asked about my trip to London and the Islam Channel. He stood approximately 5 feet and 4 inches, had a fair complexion, and was Pakistani and mid-twenties. Pointing out two other men sitting at their desks, Aswad told me that their names were Amar and Zain, his assistants. Both men simply waved their hands at me from their desks. From a distance, I nodded my head at them as a sign of respect. Aswad then took me to meet Malik, the human resource manager, followed by Iqbal, the programming manager, and Sara, his assistant. After meeting these key personnel, Aswad excused himself to make some phone calls. Then, I sat at my desk, eager to write several

notes reflecting upon what had happened during my first day in the field (Fieldnotes, February 2013).

I was assigned to work with the team that produces the programme *Living the Life*. It broadcasts live Monday to Thursday from seven to eight o'clock in the evening. The show looks into the lives of Muslims to see how Islam has affected them. Aswad, the producer, characterised the programme as having a balance of religion, entertainment and lifestyle elements. Nevertheless, the most salient consideration for me at the time was how I was supposed to work in a gender-segregated workplace. In Malaysia, I had worked in an environment mixed in gender, race and religions. In the production department at Astro, for instance, women worked directly alongside men. Both genders occupied the organisational and production hierarchies equally. Females were employed within managerial, executive and below-the-line positions. They earned similar wages and shared responsibilities that were comparable to male workers. As I believe in the combined efforts of both genders, especially when it comes to creative work, I was unfamiliar with working in a gender-segregated environment. The segregation reminded me of *Salafi* fundamentalism or the Wahhabi tradition. The Saudi Wahhabi worldview affirms norms and principles that are focussed upon gender segregation and purifying their culture of western influences; this is enforced through ritualistic behaviour in prayer, dress, and social relations (Al-Rasheed, 2007; Doumato, 1992 in Kraidy, 2009, p. 359). I found the practice of gender segregation at the Channel, not only contradictory to the organisational culture of my previous employer, Astro, but also to the Malaysian culture into which I was born and raised.

The first few weeks at the Islam Channel involved getting accustomed to the channel's working hours, understanding the rules and regulations, complying with the employee dress code, contributing to morning production meetings and getting to know the other staff involved in religious programming, current affairs and lifestyle programming. There are three sets of professionals involved in the development of television production at the *Islam Channel*. The first group consists of employees at the management or executive level, who are involved in decision-making. These employees include the human resource manager, the manager of programming and the assistant manager of programming. They oversee the hiring, budgeting and promotion of TV programmes, as well as the creative decisions. The second group includes the

professionals who are involved in the creative side of producing *Living the Life*. They include paid/permanent staff and unpaid/researchers or interns who assist in the production. The permanent staff includes those in managerial positions, such as the human resource manager, the manager and assistant manager of the programming department, producers, assistant producers and technical staff. The unpaid volunteers/interns included the researchers. A third group is comprised by technical staff and are expected to perform a variety of tasks. The Islam Channel named this group of staff the 'multi-skilled operators'. Multi-skilled operators performed a variety of tasks, including camera operation, visual directing and sound engineering during live broadcasting.

I maintained a good relationship with the manager and the assistant manager of the programming department, as they were the personnel who oversaw my performance. I felt uneasy about being constantly watched by them, but also I understood their watchfulness because they were the 'eyes and ears' of the Islam Channel's CEO. Throughout the fieldwork, I observed the rules regarding behaviour and dress code set by the channel for its employees. Meanwhile, I established a good relationship with the human resource manager, both because of his position at the channel as well as because I needed to liaise with him every time I needed petty cash to buy props for a cooking demonstration or another performance by the guests of *Living the Life*.

The producer and other members of *Living the Life* production crew perceived me to be helpful. One assistant producer expressed that I acted as a second pair of hands for the producer, helping to generate fresh ideas and assist the talk show contributors/guests of *Living the Life* (Assistant Producer, June 2013). When a guest cancelled or none was available for an episode, the producer would commonly 'recycle' contributors and/or modify story items. Thus, the producer claimed that having an experienced intern like me on his team was a great advantage. He did not have to train me regarding how to communicate or negotiate with potential guests, as I was long accustomed to such routines.

Being relatively new to the TV industry compared to myself, the producer and other crew members admitted that I served as their mentor and role model. According to certain other producers at the Islam Channel, I was seen as an 'intern from Malaysia' who had managed to feature several new 'interesting' guests, thereby enhancing the programme. These guests included a famous Malaysian Chef, Norman Musa, from

London; a chef cum author of the cookbook *Veggiestan*, Sally Butcher, from London; a surgeon who had performed an open-heart operation in Gaza, from Liverpool; and a traditional martial arts (*silat*) group from disparate cultural backgrounds. Among the fresh story items featured on the show was the founder of *Skateistan*, a project that aims to empower young Afghan girls by teaching them to skateboard. My professional experience helped me develop strategies to communicate with potential guests effectively, making them more likely to agree to appear on *Living the Life*.

Despite the fact that the producer noted the above characteristics as assets, he nonetheless still monitored me carefully. He appeared controlling when he did not allow me to write a script on my own, nor to independently make creative decisions that might enhance the programme. I found that a controlling superior/TV producer have affected the creative autonomy of a subordinate/researcher like me. As a gendered individual, working beneath a male superior, I found such treatment to be patronizing. I wondered how Maryam, the assistant producer, felt about being in a position subordinate to such a controlling superior.

I also maintained professional relationships with other staff within the programming department, especially the female staff of Lifestyle programming; these staff members included Huda and others whom I could not interview. They helped me significantly during my time at the channel, which imply some kind of gender solidarity. I considered those who were not directly involved in my project to be potential sources of information for advice on possible guests to contact and invite onto the show. Among my observations as a researcher, I noted that the key to successful fieldwork is to be pleasant and maintain professional courtesy with everyone in the field at both the managerial and production levels, including the creative and technical staff, because each day in the field offered different experiences. Such experiences have shaped my interpretations of the behaviour of the people I interacted and worked with outside the organisational setting.

Other data included in my analysis were the production meetings, which I attended along with five other members of the creative staff, and the manager's briefings, which were attended by the entire staff of the programming department. These meetings discussed the production routines, the execution of the generic conventions of *Living the Life*, the treatment of story items for both the main segment and the 'story of the day segment', the guests booked or cancelled by the creative staff, and potential storylines and

guests. Details of the issues, proposed story items and guests discussed during the production meetings were recorded in my observation notes.

The execution of *Living the Life's* generic conventions was another important part of the research process. As a participant observer, I took notes on processes in the production routines that involved me and/or other staff. These processes included: researching the guests and story items, booking the guests, creating questions that presenters could ask the guests during the filming of the show and selecting the VTs for each segment. On the 'show day' (so termed by Whitefoot, 2014), the guests needed to be contacted and their arrivals, confirmed. How certain issues including the last minute cancellation of a guest, were handled by the producer, his assistants and the researchers was also observed and noted.

4.3.3 Limits and Ethical Considerations

Despite its suitability for studying the lived experience of television staff within the natural setting of institutional and television production, ethnographic research has limitations that apply here. These limitations include: first, its reliance upon information seen through my interpretive lens, which could involve biases, shaped by my personal values and norms. The danger in doing ethnography is that it can produce or reinforce 'a stereotype of a group, sub-culture, or culture' (Fetterman, 2010, p. 24). Second, the lengthy time commitment required of an ethnography could have been problematic. I might have been criticised by ethnographers from such fields as anthropology or sociology for spending too short of a period of time with the group studied, affording (at its best) only minimal coverage of 'many aspects' of life/culture of this group of people. On the other hand, a lengthier period of time committed to fieldwork presents the risk of 'going native' or 'siding with participants' (Creswell, 2013, p. 59).

My response to such limitations of ethnographic research is two-fold: first, I acknowledge that ethnographers 'are not expected to take responsibility for providing a full and complete account' of a group of people under study (Wolcott, 1999, p. 29). Following the opinion of Bronislaw Malinowski's (1967), Harry F. Wolcott suggests that ethnographers should study a culture-sharing group and report an analysis 'in context' because reporting on all aspects of the life of such a group is an 'unattainable' goal to achieve (ibid.).

Second, the length of time that I spent in the field to conduct ethnographic research at the Islam Channel was limited to a period of time within the three-year span of my PhD programme (four months: February through June, 2013). Limited funding from the research sponsor also restricted the amount of time that I could spend at the channel. According to David Fetterman (2010, p. 9), 'In many applied contexts, limited resources compel the researcher to apply ethnographic techniques in a contract deadline time frame rather than to conduct a full-blown ethnography'. Time and resource constraints aside, I believe that the amount of field data gathered is sufficient 'to describe the culture or problem convincingly and to say something significant about it' (ibid.). During the short period of time at the Islam Channel, I managed to identify the values, norms and rituals of the production community under scrutiny. There is also an argument of data saturation; for example, my findings/observations start repeating itself after a certain period. Although we shared similar religious values (as we are all *Sunni* Muslims), our culture, values, norms and rituals in television production differ. As a Muslim from Malaysia, I hold a moderate Islamic view. I am a practicing Muslim woman who wears the hijab, loves music and entertainment. I believe that Muslims should interact with people outside of their culture. Yet, based upon my observation of the segregated-gender workplace, I recognized an influence of fundamentalism (see Kraidy and Khalil, 2009). Such a cultural difference facilitated my maintenance of a critical distance, from which I could identify problems and thus 'say something significant' about the working life in television production at the Islam Channel (ibid.).

By doing ethnography, I was obliged to acknowledge and respect the rights, needs and values of the participants. As a participant observer, I could have easily invaded their personal space, contradicted religious beliefs and practices, or broached sensitive matters that they could not or would not disclose. I needed to respect their loyalties toward the Islam Channel and their wish that I avoid asking about confidential information, such as salaries or Islam Channel funding. Also, I could not question confidential matters regarding the company financial resources during the fieldwork.

To ensure participant confidentiality, I have masked their names by giving them pseudonyms. However, their work roles have been maintained for easy identification and referencing when I report the findings. Each participant provided me informed consent by signing a consent form. I have underlined the two participants who were members of the

production community that I observed and with whom I interacted, but who refused to be interviewed. Although I did not conduct interviews with ‘Rima’ and ‘Ayden’, I added them to the list and gave them pseudonyms because both of them played a role in my observational data. In addition to masking participant identities, researchers often mask the research site. In my case, I have obtained the written consent of the Islam Channel’s CEO, allowing me to use the actual name of the channel throughout this thesis. Nevertheless, when publishing an article or a book, for instance, I must remain cautious of how I mask and describe the identity of the participants. Since the Islam Channel is considered a small institution, I need to make sure that the participants are unrecognisable, especially when they [have] revealed to me something sensitive. Sensitive issues relating to ideological tensions or a participant’s treatment by the Islam Channel might risk participants’ job security if I were to describe or present them in a manner that allows for their recognition. Table 3 illustrates the list of pseudonyms and their work roles.

Table 3: List of Research Participants and their Pseudonyms

| | Work Roles | Pseudonyms |
|-----|--|-------------------|
| 1. | Manager, Human Resource Department | Malik |
| 2. | Manager, Programming Department | Iqbal |
| 3. | Assistant Manager, Programming | Sara |
| 4. | Producer, <i>Living the Life</i> | Aswad |
| 5. | Assistant Producer 1, <i>Living the Life</i> | Maryam |
| 6. | Assistant Producer 2, <i>Living the Life</i> | Amar |
| 7. | Assistant Producer 3, <i>Living the Life</i> | Zain |
| 8. | Presenter 1, <i>Living the Life</i> | Fadhil |
| 9. | Presenter 2, <i>Living the Life</i> | Shadi |
| 10. | Researcher, <i>Living the Life</i> | Akram |
| 11. | Junior Multi-skilled Operator 1 | Omar |
| 12. | Junior Multi-skilled Operator 2 | Salem |
| 13. | Senior Multi-skilled Operator 1 | Kamal |
| 14. | Producer, Lifestyle Programming | Huda |

| | | |
|-----|--|-------|
| 15. | Producer, Current Affairs | Jahd |
| | Participants refused to be interviewed yet played a role in my observational data: | |
| 16. | Presenter 3, <i>Living the Life</i> | Rima |
| 17. | Senior Multi-Skilled Operator 2 | Ayden |

4.4 Data Analysis Procedures and Verification

My research is inductive, in that I used the data gathered from the field and formed analytical themes using the concept of production culture, posing generalisations based upon my data as well as my past experiences, and relevant scholarship in the field.

During my fieldwork I compiled field notes that were updated daily and following my observation period I transcribed the interviews I carried out verbatim. All this data was analysed and categorised in themes using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. The items were coded according to categories, which I drew from the semi-structured interview format (Figure 2). I discovered key themes and organised categories based on the analytical framework defined at the outset of this chapter (see Figure 1). Given the fact that the participant observer is the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research (Creswell, 2011), I then attempted to understand and explain these emerging themes based on my interpretative framework.

To ensure the validity of the data analysis, I adopted the following strategies from Creswell (2009, p. 192):

- 1) I clarified the researcher's bias when using an ethnographic research design at the outset of this chapter (sections 4.2 and 4.3). I reflected on my experience in the industry and my limitations as well as personal biases.
- 2) I presented negative information that counters the general Muslim perceptions of the Islamic television channel. In the context of this thesis, the use of religious notions by the Channel, such as 'work as a mission', encourages hard work amongst workers in the hopes of being rewarded in the afterlife (see Section 7.1)
- 3) I spent a prolonged period at the Islam Channel. A four-month span of time in the field allowed me to develop an in-depth understanding of the

organisation's production culture and to discover data, such as economic, organisational and sociocultural factors, that shaped the production quality of *Living the Life* and the working lives of the staff.

- 4) I used peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of accounts and results of analysis. I chose another doctoral candidate, to whom I explained my research experiences from time to time, to check the accuracy of my interpretations. In fact, my colleague appeared once on *Living the Life* as a guest who shared her passion for underwater photography with the Islam Channel audience (Fieldnotes, 1 April 2013). It is relevant to feature my colleague on the show because it familiarised her with the research context. This makes the peer debriefing more valuable.

An extended description was used to a) convey the experiences of the television production staff and the meanings they attach to their narrative experiences, b) express the manager's opinions and the CEO's desire to accomplish the mission of the Islam Channel and c) illustrate the production quality of *Living the Life*. The participant voices and my observations provide readers with vivid accounts of the challenges encountered, the constraints and tensions experienced and the insights drawn from personal, institutional and sociocultural contexts. While chapters 5 through 7 of this thesis present the findings of this ethnographic research, Chapter 8 concludes it. In Chapter 5, in particular, I will discuss in greater details what makes the Islam Channel unique and different from many Islam-based television institutions by reflecting on my ethnographic experience and data gathered from interviews with television production staff.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

Drawing on the social constructivist research paradigm, I employed the ethnography of media production research design to conceptualise the production culture of religious television. I referred to Grindstaff and Whitefoot when reflecting upon my ethnographic experience within an institutional context, television production culture and textual quality. I drew upon Grindstaff's research when discussing talk show production culture. I merged Grindstaff, Whitefoot and my professional experiences when reflecting upon conventions of the genre. The ethnography of television production is a suitable research design for this research project. It allows me to explore various aspects of lives in religious television production. Doing ethnography at an institution like the Islam Channel requires

passion and patience. As I was trying to gain access, challenges were present at the beginning of my journey at the channel. Likewise, the Islam Channel has furnished me with fun yet stressful working experiences. Despite the short period of time, these experiences told me enough about the structural issues, tensions and dynamic of powers in television production. I maintained my critical distance and endeavoured to analyse matters based upon my professional experience and my interpretive framework: a gendered individual and a Muslim with personal values, norms and culture. All these allowed me to conceptualise the production culture of religious television.

Chapter 5

The Mission of the Islam Channel

This chapter analyses the institutional mission of the Islam Channel. I divide the analysis into two sections. The first section elaborates upon the three goals comprising the channel's mission, which include: 1) to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims; 2) to educate Muslims; and 3) to represent the voiceless and oppressed Muslims. The second section discusses reflexivity as it relates to these missionary goals, exploring both the possibilities and the limitations that these goals present to management and television production staff. This chapter lays the groundwork for an analysis of the ways in which this avowed mission shapes the television production rituals and the output of *Living the Life* (in Chapter 6), as well as the characteristics of working life that the employees of the station encounter (in Chapter 7).

5.1 An Overview of the Three Mission Goals

This section discusses the three missionary goals of the Islam Channel, as indicated by the channel's website, explained by the CEO's statement of mission, and articulated by management staff. This section also leads onto issues of reflexivity concerning the channel's mission, which I discuss in Section 5.2.

5.1.1 The Goal to Convey a Moderate Form of Islam to Non-Muslims

The first missionary goal of the Islam Channel is to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims. The channel sees television as an important broadcast medium capable of fulfilling such a goal. As a television broadcaster, it assumes that two roles relate to its mission: first, it functions as a platform for *da'wah* (proselytization) of non-Muslim communities by conveying moderate Islamic messages through its religious and light-entertainment programmes. Second, it perceives itself as a platform for dialogue (as one of the *da'wah* principles) via its current affairs programmes.

As a platform of *da'wah*, the channel represents itself as an Islam-based television station that observes moderate views by balancing religious programming with lighter forms of entertainment. In 2013, religious programming included *IslamQA*, a 'live' call-in

programme; *Journey through the Qur'an*, a recorded series; and *Journey of Faith*, a recorded series of lectures. In an effort to balance this religious programming, key lighter forms of entertainment offered by the Islam Channel included the following programmes: *Living the Life*, a live evening magazine talk show; *Street Challenge*, a recorded vox-pop; and *Women's AM*, a live breakfast talk show. By balancing the genres of programming offered, the channel attempts to represent itself as adhering to a moderate form of Islam.

As a platform for encouraging dialogue, the Islam Channel addressed its responsibility to invite non-Muslims to engage in dialogue explicitly. Iqbal, the manager of programming, emphasised the intention of Mohamed Ali, CEO of the Islam Channel, as providing a platform for interreligious dialogue:

The Islam Channel CEO, Mohammed Ali on one occasion, stated that Muslims are always being 'talked about' in the media. One of the reasons to establish the Islam Channel was to join the conversation. If 'others' are talking about 'us' (Muslims), we could say to them, 'let us join the conversation so we can discuss the topic properly'. Otherwise, their discussion will likely be with non-Muslims. So, if they express opinions about Islam, better to come and discuss them with us [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013).

This eagerness of the Islam Channel CEO to foster a dialogue with non-Muslims by specifically inviting them to 'join the conversation' affirms the third Qur'anic Methodology of *Da'wah*: 'reason with them in a better way'. Dialogue is one of the three methods mentioned in the Qur'an. In the Meaning of the Holy Quran, Abdullah Yusuf Ali explicates the verse, emphasising how Muslims should approach non-Muslims:

- To invite every human being to Islam with wisdom and discretion, meeting people on their ground and convincing them with illustrations from their own knowledge and experience, this may be very narrow or very broad.
- To adopt a 'beautiful way of preaching'. The preaching must not be dogmatic, self-regarding or offensive, but gentle, considerate and such as would attract their attention.
- The manner of argument/dialogue should not be acrimonious, but modelled on the most courteous and most gracious example [...], (Yusuf Ali, 2011, p. 669).

Modelling this practical guidance in the Qur'an, the channel aims to achieve its goal of representing a moderate form of Islam through interreligious dialogue. By televising dialogue with non-Muslims, the channel appears to be a Muslim institution that remains tolerant of and includes the Western Other. Such moderate Muslim characteristics greatly

differ from the way in which fundamentalists treat non-Muslims (Ramadan, 2004; 2009). This particular missionary goal explains the channel's aspiration to spread a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims by offering a balance of religious and light-entertainment programmes, as well as by encouraging interfaith dialogue.

5.1.2 The Goal to Educate Muslims

The second missionary goal of the Islam Channel is to educate Muslim audiences. The channel prioritises two main groups amongst the British Muslim audience. These groups include the young and women (assistant manager of programming, interview, 18 June 2013). This particular missionary goal targets findings of the 2011 government census, which indicates that 33% of the Muslim population was aged 15 years or younger (British Muslims in Numbers, 2015). It also responds to the discovery of rates of lower academic achievement amongst British Muslim youth (see Wilkinson, 2014). By assuming the role of an educator, the Islam Channel aims to support young Muslim audience members, developing their religious identity and encouraging the practice of Islam. Sara, the assistant manager of programming, suggests:

The Islam Channel aims to offer programmes that inspire young Muslims to do good deeds. By presenting Islamic principles to them, they might find their Muslim identity within the programme. Something that tells who they are and encourages them by telling them that their deen (religion) is good, something that educates them [...], (Interview, 17 June 2013)

Feeling an obligation to spread Islamic teachings throughout Muslim communities in the UK, the Islam Channel provides content that helps reinforce Muslim religious identity through its programming. Many factors result in rates of lower academic achievement amongst Muslim youth in Britain. Such factors include English language barriers, their parents diminished engagement with mainstream curricula and the removal of Islam from the academic learning environment (Wilkinson, 2014, p.399). Having detached their education from both national and Islamic curricula, young Muslims are at risk of being persuaded by fundamentalists or, even worse, extremists as they search for and develop their religious identities. In response to such a risk, the Islam Channel aims to teach young Muslims, guiding them through programmes that allow them to have fun whilst simultaneously preserving their religious identity (assistant manager of programming, interview, 18 June 2013).

The Islam Channel also targets a female audience. Muslim women in Britain include women of Asian, South Asian, African, South American, European, Mediterranean, Arabic and Middle-Eastern Islamic cultures (Mirza, 2012, p. 121). The 2001 census indicates that the majority of Muslim women in the UK, based upon their ethnicity, are Pakistani or Bangladeshi. Data also shows that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women exhibited the lowest rates of economic participation: in fact, only 22% of Bangladeshi women age 16 years and older and 27% of Pakistani women of a similar age range were economically active (Abbas, 2005, p. 29). In 2011, the percentage of Muslim women employed had increased to 29%, but this was not a significant increase (British Muslims in Numbers, 2015). Because Muslim women occupy a marginalised position in Britain, the channel considers it their responsibility to educate these women (assistant manager of programming, interview, 18 June 2013). In particular, the channel claims it a responsibility to help Muslim women feel safe and comfortable when practising their religious duties, such as wearing the *hijab* and other religiously sanctioned clothing, in public places. Hence, the Islam Channel claims that its role is to educate Muslims and counter the negative representations of Muslim women in the West (as addressed in Chapter 2). Condemning the misrepresentation of Muslim women in the West, Iqbal, the manager of programming argues that Islam has been protecting women and their rights,

Some in the viewing public may be puzzled when Western countries assert that Islam does not provide women with individual rights. Islam gave women some rights 1434 years ago. The first documented business woman, Khadijah, the Prophet's beloved wife, engaged in commerce [...] In the UK, however, women were given individual rights only in more recent times. The West has a long and complicated history, but over the past centuries have women's rights become available to them. Compared to Islam, it has been giving women their rights since 1434 years ago. So how come the West come and preach to us (Muslims) that their values are superior when they just recently talked about giving women equal rights, not to beat women, not to put people in slavery, not to treat black people or all people with different colours badly? [...] (Interview, 20 June 2013).

Muslim women are often seen in the West as 'victims' of Islamic law (*shari'a*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Western prejudice towards and stereotypes of Islam and Muslims are attitudes that victimise Muslim women, Iqbal commented. For instance, a Muslim woman is commonly only represented as either a romantic heroine struggling for freedom from her cruel father or a victim fighting against her backwards and traditional Eastern culture (Puwar, 2003; Ahmed, 2003 in Mirza, 2012, p. 128). On this basis, the Islam Channel

takes pride in educating Muslim women in a way that emphasises their rights. Western representations of Muslim women as oppressed by Islam encouraged the channel to continue educating women, helping them to find their identities and providing them with a voice through a variety of programming options.

The missionary goal ‘to educate Muslims’ indicates that the channel has assumed its role as an educator of young and female audience members. The channel specifies that these two groups within British Muslim communities are often victims of Islamophobia due to their underprivileged positions. While the channel considers Muslim youth to be an audience that needs to strengthen its religious convictions, it offers Muslim women the type of support that it believes might help them to preserve their identities (e.g., wearing the *hijab*) whilst still socialising with the broader British society.

5.1.3 The Goal to Represent the Voiceless and Oppressed Muslims

The third aim of the Islam Channel is to become the ‘voice’ of both local and global Muslims (*Ummah*). Available via satellite and the Internet, the Islam Channel broadcasts to over 132 countries, making it one of the most influential Islamic satellite channels in Europe and the world. Given such a level of influence, the Islam Channel has characterised itself as the televised voice of British Muslims and the *Ummah*, using the banner, ‘Voice for the Voiceless, Voice of the Oppressed’. Figure 3 illustrates the slogan montage inserted during the commercial break:

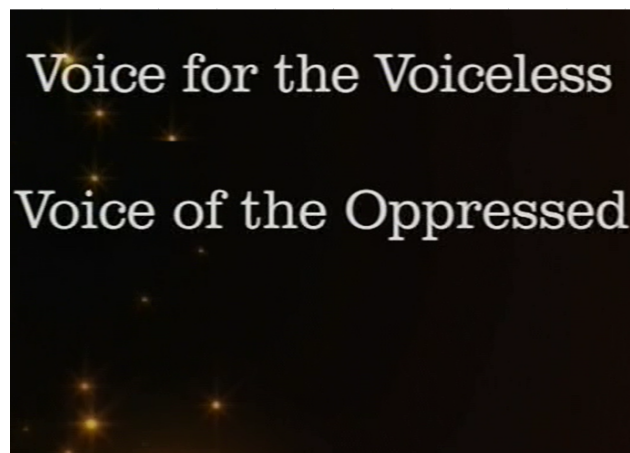


Figure 3: The Islam Channel’s Montage

The Islam Channel broadcasts the motto ‘Voice for the voiceless, voice of the oppressed’ during each commercial break in programming. The ‘voice for the voiceless’ signifies that the Islam Channel endeavours to speak on behalf of Muslim communities

whose voices are unheard by the government and/or unnoticed by the public. In doing so, the channel addresses stories that receive little attention in the mainstream media. For example, in May 2013, through its programme *Politics and Media*, Islam Channel Current Affairs produced a five-part discussion entitled *Bangladesh in Crisis*. The story concerned the rioting of anti-government protesters, led by an alliance of the fundamentalist group Jama'at Islami (JI) and the Bangladesh National Party Bangladesh (BNP), which caused social, political and economic unrest in the country. While the BBC framed the crisis only as a 'civil war', the Islam Channel reported on its religious and political aspects, addressing issues relating to Islamic laws of blasphemy, as well as comparing the extremist perspective of the blasphemy law with the moderate one. While many news programmes attended closely to conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, mainstream media had marginalised the crisis in Bangladesh despite the fact that thousands of civilians were killed. Thus, by using the 'voice for the voiceless' slogan, the channel assumed its role as a spokesperson for Muslims who live amidst civil war and conflict.

In addition to covering stories that are marginalised by the mainstream media, the Islam Channel claims to be a 'voice' for 'voiceless British Muslims' who have become victims of Islamophobia. In doing so, the Islam Channel attempts to counter negative media and British government representations of Islam and Muslims. A growing number of negative representations of Islam and Muslims in the media (Knott et al., 2013, p. 80) result in Islamophobia, rendering Muslims 'a suspect community' (Kundnani, 2015). Therefore, to counter these negative representations in the western media, the Islam Channel recognizes a need to speak up on behalf of Islam, British Muslims and the entire *Ummah*.

With the slogan 'the voice of the oppressed', the Islam Channel also expresses solidarity with the *Ummah* (the global Muslim communities), acknowledging oppressed Muslims under various regimes, such as the Palestinians under the Zionists and the Syrians under the Asad administration. A sense of solidarity with the *Ummah* and responsibility towards British Muslims underpin the channel's claim to be the 'voice'.

5.2 Reflexivity about the Mission

This section reflects on the channel's mission, interrogating the possibilities and limitations that it poses to the channel. Examining reflexivity concerning missionary goals is essential for this thesis, as it supports our understanding of how and under what conditions

television production workers make creative decisions whilst remaining mindful of the channel's mission. The following four sections (5.2.1 to 5.2.4) analyse the missionary goals. Section 5.2.1 reflects on the goal 'to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims,' and thus considers how the channel perceives its *da'wah* (proselytization) agenda. Still related to this first missionary goal, Section 5.2.2 addresses the channel's response to external challenges. Section 5.2.3 discusses the second missionary goal, 'to educate Muslims', which, I argue, is not only limited to youth and female Muslim audiences (as mentioned in the prior section), but also includes conservative business clients. Finally, Section 5.2.4 criticises the third missionary goal, speaking on behalf of Islam, British Muslims and the entire Muslim *Ummah*. Section 5.2.4 points to the ways in which this goal contradicts the first missionary objective: to convey religious moderation to the public. Considering reflexivity as it relates to the three missionary goals is essential for this thesis, as such an understanding of the channel's mission supports an analysis of the power dynamics shaping the production quality of *Living the Life* (in Chapter 6) and the quality of working life encountered by the station's employees (in Chapter 7).

5.2.1 *Da'wah* Agenda and Business Model

The first missionary goal, 'to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims', signifies the Islam Channel's *da'wah*, or agenda for proselytization, as well as its business model. This section demonstrates how, through the *Da'wah* Project, the channel aims to spread a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims whilst generating revenue through its business model. The channel seeks to spread a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims by balancing the genres of televised programming that it broadcasts and by promoting interreligious dialogue. In revealing itself as adhering to a moderate form of Islam, the channel hopes to attract non-Muslim audience members, who wish to learn about and subsequently convert to Islam. Although it is quite common for religious broadcasting organisations to include proselytization within their agendas (Abelman and Hoover, 1990; Kraidy and Khalil, 2009; Al-Najjar, 2012; Ayish, 2012; Hroub, 2012), the Islam Channel is unique amongst religious broadcast institutions. The channel's *da'wah* agenda serves not only as a strategy for enticing non-Muslims to convert to Islam, but also as a means of capital development.

In order to remain in the industry, the Islam Channel relies on a unique business model, which generates four sources of income through the *Da'wah* Project as well as

sales and marketing revenues (human resource manager, interview, 19 June 2013). These sources include: 1) fees collected from individual subscriptions to the *Da'wah Card*; 2) fees received from business subscriptions to the *Da'wah Card* (allowing for three different sponsorship options); 3) stall booking fees collected during the annual Global Peace and Unity (GPU) event; and 4) the air-time sales and advertising charges received from non-subscribers to the *Da'wah Card*. Under the Da'wah Project, the channel then uses these resources for television production and missionary initiatives via radio, publication and its website. Figure 4 summarises the Islam Channel's business model, reflecting its *da'wah* agenda, which includes conveying a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims and providing support for British Muslim individuals and enterprises:

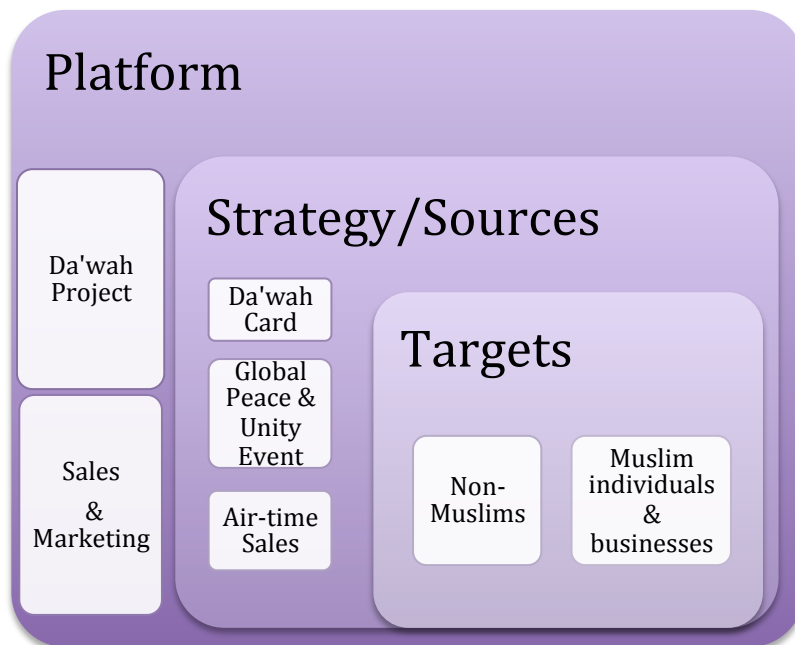


Figure 4: Business Model of the Islam Channel

The Da'wah Project has been in operation since 2007. In 2013, it officially launched an initiative to manage fundraising events and the *Da'wah Card*. The goals of the Da'wah Project include promoting an understanding of Islam, eliminating misconceptions and providing everyone with a free Islamic education (The Dawah Project, 2012). In 2013, for example, the Da'wah Project launched two radio projects in particular African countries and Indonesia in an effort to demonstrate continuous support for Islamic education and proselytization projects in those regions. Such aspirations of the Da'wah

Project reflect the channel’s mission, ‘to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims’.

The Da’wah Project contributes to the channel’s revenue through the *Da’wah Card* scheme. Through this project, the Islam Channel not only executes its *da’wah* agenda, spreading Islam through the media and eliminating misconceptions amongst non-Muslims, but also contributes to the growth of the British Muslim economy. The channel promotes the scheme to Muslims living in Britain as an initiative that encourages consumer support for ethical businesses, thereby providing a win-win situation for both consumers (business and individual) and the channel (ibid.). By subscribing to the *Da’wah Card* scheme, the companies enjoy a reasonably priced business sponsorship package that allows them to advertise their services or products. For individual subscribers, the *Da’wah Card* offers its holder a discount at participating business outlets. Table 4 summarises the benefits that the *Da’wah Card* holds for both individual consumers and companies:

Table 4: The *Da’wah Card* Scheme

| Type of Membership | Benefits to <i>Da’wah Card</i> holders |
|--|---|
| Individuals (consumers) | The <i>Da’wah Card</i> offers cardholders discounts at participating stores (a full list of stores can be found in the <i>Da’wah Card</i> Directory). |
| Businesses & Sponsors | For a small yearly fee, businesses will be promoted through one of the Business Sponsorship packages. |
| Source: http://www.theDa’wahproject.com/Da’wah-card/about-the-Da’wah-card/ | |

The management of the Islam Channel claimed that it receives financial support primarily through Da’wah Project membership subscriptions, such as the *Da’wah Card* scheme, which offers advertising space on the channel’s website as well as during its on-air advertisements (Human resource manager, Interview, 18 June 2013). Table 4 illustrates how individuals and business outlets participate in the Islam Channel’s Da’wah Project initiatives to spread Islam through broadcast media. It is also a strategy of the Islam Channel to gain the financial support necessary to continue producing television programmes and missionary initiatives, like those in Africa and Indonesia. While individual subscribers can contribute ‘shares’ to these missionary projects, e.g., through

charity, businesses can take part in these projects by subscribing to business sponsorship packages.

The sales and marketing department of the Islam Channel offers its clients three options in the *Da'wah Card Business Sponsorship Package*: Gold, Silver and Bronze. Customers who subscribe to the *Gold Package* have their products and/or services advertised on-air up to ten times a day for three months; under the banner of the Islam Channel's Da'wah Project website for three months; and on the *Da'wah Card* online directory for one year. *Silver Package* subscribers have their business logos advertised on-air for three months and are included in the *Da'wah Card* online directory for one year. Finally, *Bronze Package* subscribers receive advertising space within the *Da'wah Card* online directory. A subscriber to any package receives advertising space in an e-newsletter that is sent out to over 30,000 subscribers, as well as a 10% discounted fee for stall bookings at any Da'wah Project event.

| Dawah Card Business Sponsorship Packages | | |
|--|--|--|
| GOLD PACKAGE | SILVER PACKAGE | BRONZE PACKAGE |
| £2400 | £600 | £300 |
| Advertised on both Islam Channel Adverts 1. Business Advert* 2. Logos Advert (3 Months) | Advertised on Islam Channel Logos Advert only (3 Months) | Advertised on Dawah Card Online Directory (1 Year) |
| Advertised on a banner on The Dawah Project's Website* (3 Months) | Advertised on Dawah Card Online Directory (1 Year) | Advertised on our monthly e-newsletter sent to over 30,000 people* |
| Advertised on Dawah Card Online Directory (1 Year) | Advertised on our monthly e-newsletter sent to over 30,000 people* | 10% Discount on stall bookings at all Dawah Project's Events (1 Year) |
| Advertised on our monthly e-newsletter sent to over 30,000 people* | 10% Discount on stall bookings at all Dawah Project's Events (1 Year) | |
| 10% Discount on stall bookings at all Dawah Project's Events (1 Year) | | |

* Shared with 4 businesses up to 6 seconds and played up to 10 times a day
* Rotating lead board banner size of 468*60 pixels shared with other businesses
* Advertising space of 87mm*51mm for the first three months

Figure 5 : The Da'wah Card Business Sponsorship Packages

Source: <http://www.thedawahproject.com/dawah-card/register-your-bbusiness/> (The Dawah Project business flyer, 2013, accessed on 4, September, 2015).

Figure 5 illustrates the details of these three sponsorship package options that the sales department of the Islam Channel offers, including their subscription costs, the duration of on-air advertising and the size of each allotted advertising space.

The second source of income derives from on-air time and on-line advertising space charged to businesses that do not subscribe to the *Da'wah Card* sponsorship packages (described above). The list of clients advertising with the Islam Channel may be found in Figure 6:



Figure 6: The List of the Islam Channel Advertising Clients

Source: <http://www.thedawahproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/The-Dawah-Project-Business-Flyer.pdf>. (*The Dawah Project business flyer*, 2013, accessed on 4, September, 2015).

These business sponsorship packages support the human resource manager's claim that they support the Islam Channel financially with a sustainable income. In addition to the *Da'wah Card* scheme, the Islam Channel receives revenue from other sources, such as stall booking fees paid by business outlets during events organised by the Islam Channel, like Global Peace and Unity, an annual event which attracts the participation of thousands of people around the world.

It is worth reflecting on aspects of the socioreligious and socioeconomic (Da'wah Project) agendas of the Islam Channel – in particular, its mission to spread Islam to non-Muslims – as doing so allows us to discern ideological influences that affect the operations and resources of the channel. Studies of Middle Eastern broadcasting institutions often indicate fundamentalist influences in their ownership (Kraidy and Khalil, 2009) and religious television production (Hroub, 2012; Al-Najjar, 2012). In contrast, no evidence suggests that the Islam Channel is affiliated economically to a particular religious ideology that provides the channel with its financial support. This information offers insight into how the channel sustains its business. Because the CEO and manager refused to disclose any additional sources of funding for the Islam Channel, little is known regarding the amount of income that the channel has received from sources other than the clients listed and the respective amounts charged for advertising available upon the channel's website.

5.2.2 Response to External Challenges

Though remaining with the same missionary goal, 'to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims', this section highlights the channel's response to external challenges. It discusses how the channel has deployed this missionary goal strategically in order to defend its reputation. The CEO of the Islam Channel, Mohamed Ali Harrath, has indicated that the channel aims to promote moderate Islamic views to non-Muslim viewers (Zarnosh, 2008). Such a claim signifies the CEO's effort to separate the channel from other organisations with reputations for spreading religious extremism, for instance, the British-based extremist movement *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* (<http://www.hizb.org.uk/>). By underlining this moderation on the Islam Channel website, as well as in marketing leaflets and exclusive interviews (with Zarnosh, 2008), Mohamed Ali attempts to maintain both the reputation of the Islam Channel and his personal reputation, which have been discredited by the public regularly. In particular, the media regulator Ofcom is a constant source of criticism, and the counter-extremism think tank, the Quilliam Foundation, accuses the channel of spreading extremism via its religious programme *IslamQA*. For these reasons, the channel constantly finds itself on the defense.

In response to the publication of the Quilliam Report in 2010, the channel restricted access to its premises by researchers, as the Islam Channel is anxious that research findings might prove harmful to its reputation (see my reflection in Chapter 4). Although the CEO did not express this caution directly, I sensed his uneasiness during my

observations and personal communications with him and the other employees at the channel. The denial of access to the channel in June 2012 and the CEO's refusal to be interviewed reveals that a 'culture of caution' is at work within the channel in its response to external pressures, such as the Quilliam accusation. When I requested an interview with the CEO, his reactions toward me indicated his discomfort. He gave excuses, such as 'the information about the channel is available on the Internet' as well as insisting that I could get 'the same information from my interview with Iqbal, the manager of programming, or with Malik, the human resource manager'. The next thing I knew, he excused himself, refusing to be interviewed, and told me that he needed to meet with the legal officer (Fieldnotes, 20 June 2013).

Although the CEO chose not to directly respond to such external pressures, (e.g., the accusation) Iqbal, the manager of programming, suggests that the channel has attempted to reclaim its reputation and separate itself from extremism. He feels that the channel should educate the non-Muslim audience about the misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims in the media. According to Iqbal,

I think there is much undue attention on Muslims and Islam. It is about educating the public about what Islam stands for and why people do what they do. Some people do some silly stuff and the whole of Islam gets tainted by their notions [...] (Interview, 20 June 2013).

By 'silly stuff', Iqbal refers to terrorist activities. Iqbal condemned extremist militant terrorist activities, as these actions tarnish the images of both Islam and Muslims. He feels that it is the responsibility of the Islam Channel to counter this sort of tarnishing, defending Islam and Muslims by conveying a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims through its programming.

However, the reaction that I received from the CEO and the manager is a common response of employees of broadcast institutions. Caldwell once argued, 'the media [television, film] companies are resolutely proprietary in nature; they guard many internal processes and on-screen decisions possessively' once their employees enter 'the public world' (Caldwell, 2008, p. 14). The media regulators, like Ofcom, Quilliam or myself, belong to 'the public world'. I understood his position at the time of our conversation as one that showed he was deeply traumatised by the Quilliam Foundation's accusations of recruitment of young Muslim audiences to extremism. Likewise, I was once an employee of a television organisation. My role as presentation editor included 'guarding' the

reputation of my employer, which meant responding to various media regulators in ways that would not place the reputation of the company for which I worked at risk. Thus, I do understand why Iqbal responded to me in that fashion because, in my previous job, I needed to represent Astro. The job required me to speak positively about Astro, too. For instance, I was required to inform clients about the National Censorship Board (LPF)'s monitoring of the content broadcast, thereby affirming Astro's requirement to follow certain standards in maintaining the quality of their programme outputs.

I comprehend the dilemma within the CEO's situation, which is one, not only of political exile but also one responsible for refuting the Quilliam accusation concerning the channel's encouragement of extremism. Arun Kundnani (2015) elaborates upon the dilemma faced specifically by leaders of Muslim organisations, like Mohammed Ali, the CEO of the Islam Channel. According to Kundnani,

Because ideologies circulating among Muslim populations have been identified as precursors to terrorism, the perception grows that Muslims have a special problem with radicalization. In this context, leaders of targeted Muslim communities have become intimidated by the general mood and aligned themselves with the government, offering themselves as allies willing to oppose and expose dissent within the community. Everyone who rejects the game of fake patriotism falls under suspicion, as opposition to extremism becomes the only legitimate discourse (ibid., 2015, pp. 13-14).

To exclude the channel from being considered 'a suspect community' (Kundnani, 2015) – that is, a Muslim community that opposes an agenda of social integration – the management tends to declare its goal to convey a moderate form of Islam. Such a cautionary response by the CEO towards outsiders (myself included) is understandable. Noonan (2008) found that the television staff of the BBC's Religion and Ethics section also practised a certain degree of caution during their creative decision-making. Because religion is perceived as requiring a 'distinct style of programming' (ibid., p. 11), the corporation needs to represent it with caution to serve the public interest. Although caution is a common concern within the production of television, my concern is not with the 'act of caution' within the Islam Channel. Rather, it is the 'form of caution' that I intend to analyse here, including the extent to which it affects the production quality of television programmes. I will discuss in detail in Chapter 6 the degree to which caution impacts the production quality of *Living the Life*.

5.2.3 Young, Female and Conservative Audiences

The second missionary goal of the Islam Channel is to educate Muslims. As mentioned in Section 5.1.2, this particular mission is inflected by the channel's perception of its audiences as young and female. This mission goal, however, is challenged by an ideological clash within the channel. A conflict between the CEO-inspired moderate Islam and the *Salafi* fundamentalists that dominate the programming department may shape the production of light-entertainment programmes, such as *Living the Life* (Researcher, Interview, 13 June 2013). Because the channel aims not only to serve an audience comprised of Muslim youth and females but also conservative fundamentalist audiences, the producer might face problems when attempting to balance religious and entertainment elements on *Living the Life*. The business clients, e.g., the *Da'wah Card* subscribers and advertising sponsors are among the channel's conservative fundamentalist audiences. The business clients are considered primary to the Islam Channel as they provide it commercial revenue. A report by the Islam Channel stating that 80% of the channel's programming is religious programming supports the claim that the channel prioritises its conservative audiences (*Spreading Islam through the Media, 2013*). Religious programming includes live phone-in programmes, such as *IslamQA*, and those that feature religious sermons, such as *Hajj and Ramadan*, Qur'anic recitation, or discussions of traditions regarding the Prophet Muhammad and/or Islamic jurisprudence. This report indicates that the channel aims to cater to its conservative business clients in addition to its young and female audience members.

In consideration of the young and female constituents of the audience, moderate Muslim staff attempt to strike a balance in the treatment of religious and entertainment elements, but those who adhere to *Salafi* fundamentalism tend to be uncomfortable with all forms of entertainment. The notion of balance is central to moderate Islamic views. Moderate Muslims believe in the need to strike a balance in their lives between practising religion and enjoying life. One programme that the channel feels to be striking a balance between light-entertainment and religious elements is *Living the Life*. The channel hopes that *Living the Life* attracts young and female viewers. Like Sara, the assistant manager of programming puts it:

We are living in the society where technology is sophisticated, in which TV production is sophisticated. However, there is also a need for light-heartedness and fun. Having fun in Islam is good. Otherwise, young

people cannot relate anymore. So for us, we put *Living the Life* at the time where people come home after a long day at school or college. They do not want anything heavy to watch. So, what we have given them is light-hearted [...], (Interview, 17 June 2013).

The management perceives *Living the Life* to be a programme that encourages audience members to preserve their religious identity whilst having fun. The ideological clash within the Islam Channel, though, could hinder the producer in accomplishing the channel's mission to educate young Muslims and to simultaneously assert notions of 'halal and fun' or 'cool' Muslim identity (Herding, 2013) on *Living the Life*.

By growing up as a minority in a country like Britain, young, female British Muslims are exposed to a Western lifestyle, which (some argue) could place their religious identities at risk (Ramadan, 2004, p. 52). The channel finds that it is hard for a person to be simultaneously young, female and Muslim whilst maintaining a religious identity (producer, personal communication, 1 March 2013). With the emergence of different forms of Islam in Britain, such as fundamentalism, moderate Islam and extremism (as published in the Western media and circulated within the society), the task to educate young Muslims and participate in their identity formation has grown more complex (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). The channel perceives *Living the Life* to be a television programme that helps both young Muslims and Muslim women 'have fun' whilst maintaining their religious identity. In particular, Herding's (2013) study explains the dilemma faced by Muslim youth in the West when their attempts to appear 'cool' are challenged by conservative fundamentalism. The dilemma involves promoting both a 'religious identity' and one of a 'British Muslim'; for being British means acknowledging British cultural values, some of which conflict with Muslim religious values. Therefore, it is challenging for the Islam Channel to balance religious and British values in its programming. For example, Muslim youth especially resist acknowledging themselves as 'British Muslims' on account of their disagreement with British foreign policy towards various Middle Eastern crises and the war in Iraq (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Kundnani, 2015). Also, such frustrations can turn their loyalties toward the *Ummah* (the global Muslim) and away from the UK government and the Western Other. This type of young Muslim attitude has become a chief concern to both the British government and the Islam Channel, as Muslim youth could become extremists due to their lack of British patriotism and feelings of solidarity with the oppressed *Ummah*.

The values of moderate Islam expressed within the Islam Channel include the balancing of religious programming with light entertainment in order to support the concept of ‘*halal* and fun’ that so resonates with moderate Muslims (Herding, 2013), as well as to show support for an integrationist agenda. In contrast, *Salafi* fundamentalists set themselves against many British, and more broadly, Western values. The *Salafi* fundamentalists reject the notion of ‘*halal* and fun,’ which results in the portrayal of Islam as a ‘sombre’ and ‘austere’ religion (Masood, 2006, p. 62).

In the case of the ideological clash experienced within the Islam Channel, I found, on the one hand, the moderate values expressed within the statement of mission (‘to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims’) to be affirmed by the aspirations of the CEO, the producer of *Living the Life*, and a few of its assistants, including researchers like myself. On the other hand, the programming staff, including the programming manager, the producers of religious programmes and an assistant producer of *Living the Life*, reflected fundamentalist religious values. Verbal evidence supports my argument concerning the existence of *Salafi* fundamentalism at the Islam Channel. One of the researchers of *Living the Life*, Akram, explained to me the ideological clash inside the channel:

The religious programming is dominated by the *Salafi*, which is fine as it is one path of Islam [...] But the point I am making is that there is a lot of Islamic items (for *Living the Life*) in this country which are not *Salafi*-inspired, which will do a lot for the channel and Muslims and non-Muslims in the UK. These items are not being given airtime because the department holds a different view. As far as I can tell, the content is being filtered. If it does not accord with the *Salafi* way, it does not get shown [...], (Interview, 13 June 2013).

Salafi fundamentalism, which seems to exert a pronounced influence at the heart of the programming department, might hinder the channel’s mission to educate Muslims by viewing ‘*halal* and fun’ as objectionable. This ideological clash is particularly problematic for the production of *Living the Life*, as its generic conventions require the producer to include light entertainment and religious elements. The following provides additional verbal support of managerial approval of the fundamentalist influence that impacted *Living the Life*. As Iqbal, the programming manager put it:

We have non-Muslims; we have presented Jewish organisations and Christian organisations. You have seen all these on *Living the Life*, such as rabbis and Christian priests. So, we have no issues on that because we

believe it is a platform for everyone. However, when it comes to religious issues, we have to make sure that it is in line with our set of ideology (Interview, 20 June 2013).

This statement suggests a conflict between the CEO's desire for moderate Islam and the manager's inclination towards fundamentalism. Because *Living the Life* is a light-entertainment programme, presenting a serious discussion regarding religion would be complicated and needs to be handled with caution. For that reason, Iqbal, the programming manager, suggested that Aswad, the producer, must always consult him to make sure that the religious elements presented are 'in line' with the 'department ideology'. The reference to 'our set of ideology' above can be understood either as the programming department's *Salafism* or the channel's moderate Islam, or possibly both. However, when compared to Akram's claim above, 'our set of ideology' can be understood as favoring the programming department, for according to the organisational hierarchy, the producer of *Living the Life* is under the direct supervision of the manager of the programming department.

The channel's perception of conservative audiences impacts upon television production at the Islam Channel. In order to respond to these particular conservative audience members, the management/programming department tended to deploy a stringent monitoring procedure, particularly concerning the light entertainment made available on *Living the Life*. In an effort to avoid offending its conservative audience members, the channel tends to exercise caution. My greatest concern here is the extent to which such control and caution affect the production quality of *Living the Life*. Because elements of control and caution betray power dynamics within the Islam Channel, it is essential to examine their roots. While the controlling of a light-entertainment programme, such as *Living the Life*, was meant to ensure its contents would not offend conservative audience members, this caution resulted from the production community's responses to the programming department's control over their creative decisions. Chapter 6 discusses in detail the implication of this control for the production quality of *Living the Life*.

5.2.4 Problems with the Solidarity Agenda

The 'voice' that the Islam Channel claims for itself indicates its religiopolitical mission. The missionary goal also suggests the channel's solidarity with the entire Muslim community/*Ummah*, not just British Muslims. This section addresses two possible ways in

which this agenda of solidarity might threaten the channel's reputation. First, if it declares its solidarity with the *Ummah*, then the channel might appear resistant towards the government's foreign policy, particularly regarding the war in Iraq and the crises in the Middle East. Second, expressions of solidarity by the channel with particular Muslim individuals or groups might draw the attention of media regulators to the channel, e.g., 'potential due impartiality issues' in the reporting of these crises (see Ofcom, 2011 for details, pp. 5-25). The channel risks being accused of bias towards those guests and contributors who are associated with individuals or groups identified as upholding a certain religious ideology, Muslim charitable organisations or politically affiliated Muslim organisations featured on *Living the Life* (see Chapter 6). Thus, the agenda of solidarity with oppressed Muslims appears to be the greatest threat to the channel's reputation, as it might attract unnecessary attention by the media regulators.

It is essential to address the possibilities that such missionary goals might threaten the channel's reputation. There is nothing wrong with standing in solidarity with other Muslims, especially given that television production workers engage in 'cultural expressions involving all symbolic processes and collective practices that other cultures use to gain and reinforce identity' (Caldwell, 2008, p. 2). Thus, the sense of belonging to a cultural and/or religious group is strong, but also as television workers, they are bound both by the institution that employs them and their religion (Islam), which encourages cooperation (e.g., the concept of *al-Ta'awun* in the Qur'an).²⁸ In this light, the solidarity agenda may put the channel at risk, for example it might be accused of being an ally of the form of Muslim political organisations unsanctioned by the government.

The roots of political Islam are varied. The struggles of political Islam are not limited to the quest for liberation of the state from the control of the corrupt government or a non-Muslim government's occupation of a Muslim state. The rise of political Islam also strives against Western cultural imperialism, which it perceives as an enemy to Muslims (Bayram, 2014, p. 11). Islamic political movements struggling against corrupt governments and the West include the *Al-Ikhwān ul-Muslimīn*, or Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt (strongly connected to the fundamentalists), as well as Ennahda in Tunisia. Examples of political Islam's struggle for independence include Hamas (a fundamentalist

²⁸ Al-Quran, 5:2.

offshoot) and Fatah (a moderate form of Islam) in Palestine, fighting for liberation from Israeli occupation. In particular, the Islam Channel shows its support for the 'freedom fighters' of Hamas. The channel risks damage to its reputation whenever it features any group (e.g., the Muslim Brotherhood or Hamas) that the Western media has portrayed as politically affiliated and/or violent on *Living the Life*, even if by doing the channel means to demonstrate solidarity. Infact, Ofcom did issue a report impugning the Islam Channel's 'due impartiality' in its reporting on the Arab-Israeli conflict for its current affairs programme (Ofcom, 2011, pp. 5-25). Such reports risk the reputation of the channel.

The channel's mission to represent the 'voiceless and the oppressed' amongst British Muslim communities includes supporting victims of Islamophobia. An example of a tragedy that triggered Islamophobia during my fieldwork in 2013 was the Woolwich Attack.²⁹ As a Muslim myself, I was terrified to walk on the streets of London following the attack. The Woolwich incidence has triggered my fear of Islamophobia. Living in student accommodation near the Finsbury Park Underground Station in North London, a densely populated Muslim area, came to seem an unwise choice after all. I thought that remaining closer to *my* Muslim community (nearby the Finsbury Park Mosque) would be a safer option for a foreign individual, like me. However, my perception was wrong. During my fieldwork, Finsbury Park Mosque was a frequent target of authorities like the London Metropolitan Police and the UK National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO); I began to worry about my safety.³⁰ The NaCTSO officers increasingly monitored places of worship, such as the mosque, and crowded places, such as the underground stations. A few times upon my return from fieldwork, I encountered a group of police officers responsible for securing areas, such as the underground station and the nearby mosques. The Woolwich incident increased my empathy for British Muslims, who I now perceive even more keenly as victims of Islamophobia as well as being 'a suspect community' (Kundnani, 2015). As a Muslim woman who was born into a

²⁹ British Soldier Lee Rigby was killed by Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebolawe using knife and a cleaver to stab and hack him to death on 22 May 2013 near Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich.

³⁰ See security measures taken by the NaCTSO with regard to places of worship and crowded places: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-protective-security-advice-for-places-of-worship>,
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crowded-places>

moderate Sunni family and raised within a country where Muslims constitute the majority of the population, it is hard for me to fully understand the fear and the caution that British Muslims experience in their everyday lives. I have never personally encountered events that trigger Islamophobia in Malaysia. Nevertheless, as a Muslim, I could comprehend the sense of belonging and the emphasis upon solidarity that the Islam Channel seeks to spread via its programming. The solidarity that the channel aims to promote to its viewers includes support for Muslims, who have been under the oppression of political regimes, detained under counter-terrorism legislation or have been victimised by Islamophobia.

As a television genre that allows the producer to feature a variety of issues, *Living the Life* is also a potential platform for expressing solidarity with the voiceless and oppressed Muslims. However, such an agenda might constrain the production of *Living the Life* due to the two potential risks highlighted at the outset of this section: the channel risks appearing resistant towards government foreign policy, and the solidarity of Muslim individuals and groups that might include those with links to violent extremism. Such constraints might affect the creative decisions of the producer, thereby resulting in poor production quality.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter maps the structural challenges that shape the production culture of the Islam Channel. Considering reflexively as it pertains to each missionary goal informs us of the possibilities and limitations that the mission poses to the channel, as well as to the production of *Living the Life*. Also, such reflexivity helps us to identify how and under what conditions television production workers make a television programme. The mission serves both as an inspiration to and a challenge for the channel. Moreover, it can serve as an excellent motivation to promote interreligious harmony, spread Islam and support the channel's capital development (through the Da'wah Project). Equally, it can cause negative consequences for the channel and members of its production community. The mission to educate Muslims reflects the channel's perception of its audience. The Islam Channel's emphases upon educating young and female viewers through a balanced treatment of religious and light-entertainment programmes were challenged by the motivation to serve the conservative audience. The *Salafi* fundamentalists that dominate the programming department tend also to challenge this particular notion of balance, although it is central to the moderate Islamic views reflected in the aspirations of the CEO

and the producer. This clash between the moderate and the *Salafi* fundamentalists, as well as the channel's perception of its audience, also affects the production of *Living the Life*. Furthermore, the mission can also become a potential threat to the channel's reputation, resulting in the exercise of caution by its employees. The channel's (implicit) goal to serve conservative audience members and to express solidarity with the oppressed Muslims/*Ummah* can threaten the channel's reputation. A better understanding of the meanings of the channel's mission offers ground for this thesis to examine the extent to which each goal facilitates or constrains the production rituals (discussed in Chapter 6) and the quality of working life of its production community (in Chapter 7).

Chapter 6

The Production Culture and Institutional Context of the Islam Channel

This chapter revolves around the production quality of a magazine talk show, *Living the Life*. By ‘production quality’ of the magazine talk show, I refer to Bruun’s study of aesthetic of [the] television talk show, which suggests that ‘uncertainty’ and ‘sociability’ are critical factors that accentuate the viewers’ experience, subsequently, determine the quality of a television talk shows. To identify the production quality of a magazine talk show, I conducted a textual analysis of *Living the Life*. The purpose of the textual analysis is to answer the question of how does a religious television programme comes to take the form it does. To respond to such question, I divide this chapter into five parts. Section 6.1 provides an overview of the genre conventions and production rituals of television talk shows. Section 6.2 discusses the results of textual analysis of *Living the Life* by examining its genre conventions and using *The One Show* as a yardstick to assess its production quality. Sections 6.3 through 6.5 discuss three primary constraints connecting to the results of the textual analysis. These limitations include 1) lack of resources, 2) problems relating to the mission of the Islam Channel, and 3) the conflicting notions of what constitutes a “good” television programme.

6.1 An Overview of Television Talk Shows: Genre Conventions and Production Rituals

The genre conventions are the primary definer of any forms of television talk show. The genre conventions differentiate one type of talk show from the other. The daytime talk show, celebrity chat and magazine talk show, for example, all vary with regard to narrative and stylistic characteristics. Although there are distinctions between these talk shows, they tend to share three essential elements: presenter, guests and audience. This section aims to identify the differences and similarities between talk shows regarding genre conventions and production rituals to assist the analysis of production quality of the magazine talk show, *Living the Life*, which this thesis concerns. While textual analysis allows me to examine the genre conventions and identify how it shape the production

quality of the magazine talk show, the analysis of production rituals involves an investigation of 'collective space as social negotiations' experienced by the production community (Caldwell, 2008, p. 71).

6.1.1 Genre Conventions

In their study of daytime talk shows in the 1990s, Livingstone and Lunt (1994) point out that the genre conventions of a daytime talk show include a presenter and guests discussion recorded in front of a studio audience. Their study indicates that daytime talk shows allow the voices of ordinary people to enter the public sphere. This form of talk show focuses on a single topic of discussion. It deals in opinions about, or reactions to, a particular problem concerning the public. One of the shows they analysed was *Kilroy* (on BBC1, 1986-2004), was an example of a daytime talk show in the UK in which a presenter moves through a studio audience inviting opinions on various social issues. Another form of the talk show is celebrity talk/chat shows of which *The Graham Norton Show* (from 2007 to present) is an example. On this talk show, the invited celebrity guests discuss with the presenter a variety of topics related to their latest films, album releases, books or recent community projects. This form of talk show concerns 'conversations among entertainment elites about the entertainment industry' (Shattuc, 1997, p. 11).

Although daytime and celebrity talk shows are different forms of talk shows, created for various purposes and aimed at specific audiences, they adopt similar genre conventions that involve the pre-recorded conversation of a presenter talking to guests in front of a studio audience. In contrast, the genre conventions of the magazine talk show, which involves a conversation between a presenter and guests, includes the following elements: a) visual features (VTs), b) forms of viewers participation (i.e., via email and Twitter) and c) 'live' broadcasting. The primary example of the magazine talk show on UK television is *The One Show* (BBC1, 2006-present) (Chandler and Munday, 2011, p. 248). To answer my question about how does a religious television programme comes to take the form it does, this thesis focuses on the production of a magazine talk show, *Living the Life* through the analyses of genre conventions and production processes to investigate and conceptualise the production culture of the Islam Channel.

A talk show production involves creative decision-making among producers and their team members (e.g., assistant producers, researchers and writers). Genre conventions guide the producers in making creative decisions and help them to create a

television programme for a particular group of audience. Given the various forms of television talk shows (i.e., daytime, celebrity and magazine), the genre conventions also vary from one talk show to another. Grindstaff (2002) suggests that the genre conventions of a daytime talk show often include guests, presenters/host and visual footage related to the topic under discussion. These are prerecorded talk shows in front of a studio audience who is sometimes invited by the presenter(s) to participate in the discussion between presenter and guests. In their research into daytime talk shows in the UK, Livingstone and Lunt (1994) also highlight similar talk show genre conventions.

Similar to Livingstone and Lunt (1994) and Grindstaff (2002), Hanne Bruun (2001) also looks into the three core aspects of a talk show (presenter, guests and audience). However, Bruun's approach to the analysis of genre conventions of the talk show is different. Unlike Grindstaff, who identifies the presenter, guests and the visual footage (VTs), Bruun suggests that the studio, presenter, and the interview are among the conventions of such form of talk show. She asserts that TV studio is the space of the programme where she observed 'the genre unity of time and place' (ibid., p. 244). Bruun suggests that the 'studio' where a talk show takes place serves two functions: first, to 'give viewers an experience of simultaneity between the time of the programme and its transmission', and second, 'to create an experience of mergence of space between the programme and the viewers' so that the viewers feel as if they are 'participants in the programme as opposed to spectators (ibid.). Furthermore, Bruun describes the 'studio presenter' as a 'central dramaturgic/aesthetic element who functions as an intermediary between the programme and the viewers' (ibid.). Finally, 'the interview', which 'focuses on people and conversation between people' is the most important element in talk show because it contributes to a significant portion of the genre conventions. According to Bruun, these three genre conventions 'are vital in deciding how each talk show is perceived and experienced' by the audience (ibid., p. 245). I refer to both Grindstaff and Bruun studies as they provide me an overview of the genre conventions of television talk show. I refer mainly to Bruun's analysis of genre conventions and aesthetic of television talk shows when analysing the production quality of a magazine talk show, *Living the Life*.

As with a magazine talk show like *The One Show*, Whitefoot (2014) notes that the genre conventions include two presenters, guests, three light story items presented in pre-recorded visual footage and 'live' broadcasting from the studio. I refer to the

Whitefoot article, *A One Show Researcher's First Recollections* because it provides appropriate accounts for the genre conventions of a magazine talk show as well as its production rituals. I acknowledge that Whitefoot may be biased in her reflection because she works for the BBC. One might argue that her article is more promotional than academic, aiming to promote the BBC's standards of professionalism and its employees' experiences. I refer to her article not only due to the dearth of scholarly publications regarding these matters, but also because it is the only piece (for now) that tells us about the magazine talk show, its genre conventions and what constitutes the daily responsibilities and routines of a researcher involved in the magazine talk show's production.

I use *The One Show* as an example of a "good" magazine talk show. Not only is *The One Show* the current best example of a magazine talk show, but it was also an aspirational goal for both the programming manager and the producer of *Living the Life* since its first transmission in 2012 (Interviews, 20 June 2013). The manager of programming at the Islam Channel perceived *The One Show* as a good example of a magazine talk show that would allow the channel to engage with its viewers on a daily basis while attempting to accomplish its religious mission. According to the manager,

When we saw *The One Show*, we liked that concept. We were looking at how we can engage with our viewers on a daily basis and show what the Muslim community have done out there [...] everyone who comes to *Living the Life* has done extraordinary things. So, *Living the Life* gives us an opportunity to show to the Muslim community what people have done and how they can become a role model to the entire Muslim community [...] (Interview, 20 June 2013).

The Whitefoot (2014) reflexivity on the genre conventions of *The One Show*, in particular, guides me through the analysis of the production quality of *Living the Life*. By 'production quality' of the magazine talk show, I refer to the 'aesthetics of [the] television talk show' (Bruun, 2001). I consider how well the producers have achieved success in realising their aesthetic goals and in matching generally accepted professional standards. Hanne Bruun points out that viewers' experience determines the quality of television talk show. A good television talk show delivers such elements as the 'uncertainty' and 'sociability' to its audience. Bruun applied these concepts to analyse the aesthetic of television talk show. By 'uncertainty', Bruun refers to the unpredictability embedded in the unscripted conversation between the presenter and the guest that gives viewers an

element of surprise. According to Bruun, ‘it is this degree of unpredictability which might conceivably be one of the talk show’s strong points in relation to viewers’ (ibid., p. 248).

Table 5 summarises five aspects of the genre conventions of a magazine talk show that make *The One Show* a suitable yardstick to assess the production quality of *Living the Life*.

Table 5: *Living the Life* and *The One Show* Genre Conventions

| <i>Living the Life</i> (2012 – present) | <i>The One Show</i> (2006 – present) |
|---|--|
| Two presenters: male and female/two males. | Two presenters: male and female |
| Two or three sets of guests representing two/three story items. | Three sets of guests representing three story items |
| Three separate features/VT inserts: | Two/three short features/VT |
| Stories are selected from the Reuters feed subscribed by the Islam Channel. They act like fillers, inserted in-between the presenter-guests conversations. | Pre-recorded feature presented by the journalists/researcher in the production team |
| Not related to the story items discussed by the presenters. | Often presented in conjunction with the highlighted story items. |
| Broadcast ‘live’ from the studio | Broadcast ‘live’ from the studio. |
| No studio audience. Using the segment ‘Story of the Day’ to encourage home viewers to participate via email and Twitter | Occasionally involved outdoor filming. The studio audiences sit among the BBC staff. This gives home viewers an impression of studio audience watching the talk show with them. |

Bruun builds her argument on the notions of sociability in [the] television talk show. She uses the term sociability to describe ‘atmosphere of togetherness’ sought by such talk on radio and television, ‘ritual activity’ which emphasises ‘human personalities and qualities’ (Bruun, 2001, p. 249-50). She considers the presenter-guest dramaturgy in the talk show as ‘a ritualised acting out of the hospitality’, which is a significant part of its

conversational structure (ibid., p. 250). Bruun suggests that ‘the talk show must act out of hospitality as a ritual to relieve or avert the hostility that viewers might have being invaded by strangers (e.g., through the presenter-guest conversation) in their private sphere’ (ibid., p. 251). While the ‘uncertainty’ factor of the talk show gives audiences the element of surprises, the ‘sociability’ effect of talk show offers them such experiences as the ‘atmosphere of togetherness’, of being part of ‘ritualised activity’, and the ‘hospitality’ in the presenter-guest conversation (ibid.).

Although the uncertainty and sociability are two essential elements that determine the production quality of a talk show, Bruun argues that both can be conflicting against each other (ibid.). The tension between the two elements depends on who are the talk show viewers (ibid.). Thus, a magazine talk show like *Living the Life* that targets the Muslim youth and women, the inclusion of the two dimensions must be thought out about these groups of audience. While the tension between uncertainty and sociability is inevitable, in the analysis of production quality of *Living the Life*, I need to consider the way the producer manages these elements during the execution of genre conventions and about his perception of the audience. According to Bruun, ‘How this tension is administered depends on the actual use of the genre [and] the way in which this tension is managed by the individual programme will have experiential consequences for the viewers’ (ibid.). As with *Living the Life* production, the poor management of the tensions between uncertainty and sociability (as two characteristics of good production quality) might affect the execution of the genre conventions, subsequently, impact its production quality.

6.1.2 Production Rituals

Caldwell perceives ‘rituals’ in television production as ‘a collective space’ where ‘social negotiations’ amongst television workers take place (Caldwell, 2008, pp. 81-104). Caldwell asserts that ‘taking this approach means considering how film/TV creators function as industrial actors in a larger ensemble of creative workers [who] choreographed through tried and tested modes of institutional interaction create film and television’(p. 81). Caldwell’s analysis of television production is based upon two aspects of rituals: the ‘pitching’ and ‘networking’. These rituals, according to Caldwell, ‘serve as mechanisms for personal fulfilment and career advancement of which are identifiable as meaningful personal motives’ (p. 104). In contrast, in this

thesis, by using the term 'production rituals' I refer to the daily routines that producers and members of *Living the Life* apply to execute the genre conventions of magazine talk show. Nonetheless, like Caldwell, in Chapter 7 I examine whether or not production rituals in *Living the Life* production involved 'employees' personal motives'. This section discusses rituals in television talk shows in general and the magazine talk show in particular.

Television talk show production has similar routines to news production. The current nature of the stories presented on talk show provides them with a topicality similar to news (Crisell, 2006). In her ethnographic study of daytime talk show production, Laura Grindstaff (2002) highlights such parallels. She likens the television talk show production offices to newsrooms, describing them as follows:

Certainly, in a physical sense, talk show offices resemble newsrooms, with producers sitting in cubicles behind desks piled high with papers, files and clippings as well as an assortment of coffee cups and disposable food containers. Messages scribbled on Post-it notes sprout from every surface: bulletin boards, filing cabinets, and telephones. While producers use computers for researching stories and writing scripts, telephones are the lifeblood of the business. They ring constantly and producers spend the better part of every day on the phone, their voices blending to form a steady drone of background noise punctuated occasionally by a loud exclamation or peal of laughter. In general, there is an air of the hustle and bustle in this space that can take on a frantic, abrasive edge in the hours just prior a scheduled taping (p. 80)

The above quote provides a vivid description of the behind the scenes experience of talk show producers and their daily production routines. Grindstaff further argues that Mark Fishman's (1980) description of the newsgathering process and journalists' experiences parallel her observations of daytime talk show production. Like newsgathering, talk show production routines include researching, scriptwriting and 'repackaging information according to the mandates of the organisation' (cited in Grindstaff, 2002, p. 81). According to Grindstaff, 'the world of the daytime talk show is similarly organised, despite the often makeshift, seat-of-the-pants appearance of the programmes' (ibid.). Unlike newsgathering, however, talk show producers are required to improvise, researching possible story ideas from other media texts, such as newspapers, magazines, and other television programmes or talk shows, and pitching the story ideas to the executive producer (ibid.).

Nevertheless, the ways in which talk show producers find their story resembles tabloid journalists. This process includes referring to other mass-media texts and ‘personalis[ing] it, making it friendly to the talk show audience’ (ibid. p. 82). Whitefoot’s (2014) experience as a researcher of BBC’s magazine talk show *The One Show* is particularly relevant here as it fits the description of the talk show as audience-friendly with light-hearted treatments of story items. She describes *The One Show* as ‘a live show with a distinct news angle to which my dad in Hereford, who does not watch *Newsnight* or *Panorama*, will tune in’ (ibid.). Thus, such talk shows target audiences who prefer light entertainment with news angles.

As described, the rituals in television talk show production involve searching for interesting story items drawn from wide-ranging sources. Grindstaff notes that it is difficult for the producers to ‘explicitly articulate the criteria that guided their choice of topics’ (2002, p. 83). In agreement with Becker’s (1982) observation, she asserts ‘people find it difficult to verbalise the general principles according to which they make decisions or even give any reasons for their decisions at all’ (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 83). From her analysis of a statement from the producers, Grindstaff suggests that when asked questions such as how they knew a good topic from a bad one, they responded with statements like ‘It looked good to me’, ‘It worked’, or ‘I just know’. Similarly, to a question like ‘How do you know a topic that would work from one that would not?’ their responses claimed such knowledge was ‘instinct’ or ‘an innate feeling’ (ibid.). Despite these vague responses, Grindstaff argues that ‘producers are in fact guided by some specific considerations, each of which presumes it’s taken-for-granted stock of knowledge’ (ibid.). She suggests that the producers of daytime talk show often ask the following questions when making creative decisions on topics and story items:

- Will it appeal to the target demographic?
- If it has been done before, does it have a fresh angle?
- Can real [ordinary] people be found to talk about it?
- Most important, is it ‘visual’? Does the topic involve controversy, conflict, or confrontation? These questions marked the ‘money shot’ because by ‘visual’, the producers mean ‘emotional’. If not, where will the drama come from? (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 84).

Grindstaff suggests that aside from looking for fresh and current story ideas, the producers also tend to recycle ‘the repertoire of stories’ to save time and energy trying to come up with original ideas (ibid.). Grindstaff also expresses her concern that if producers consistently handle the same categories of such heavy topics as ‘sexual assault, incest, harassment and marital disputes’ or light topics such as ‘miracle makeovers’, they will find themselves ‘occupying niches much like journalists who cover beats’. Tuchman (1978) highlights the dilemma between *light* and *heavy* treatment in her discussion of the conventional distinction between *soft* and *hard* news.³¹ Grindstaff specifies how the producers arrive at certain decisions about topics and story items.

Aside from managing the tensions between the uncertainty and sociability factors that bear experiential consequences for viewers, other elements that the producer needs to observe are the execution of genre conventions and production rituals. To manage all these factors, the producer and members of the production community need to have journalistic and television production skills (Grindstaff, 2002). Thus, the production quality of a magazine talk show is not only determined by experiential consequences (as indicated by Bruun, 2001) but also the ways in which the producer executing the genre conventions and manage the production rituals.

6.2 *Living the Life as a Magazine Talk Show*

Living the Life begins with the presenters introducing themselves to home viewers. During the interviews, the presenters talk to the guests in turn. They briefly ask the guests questions related to the topic of discussion. Each episode also includes the presenters reading viewer comments received via Twitter and email. Although it is typical to see a wide range of human-interest topics on most episodes of *Living the Life*, Episode 144, in particular, is relevant to conceptualisation of the production culture of Islam Channel. I have chosen this episode for analysis because it reflects the mission of the Islam Channel.

³¹ *Soft* news is mass-media journalistic features that are *not* factual reports of events e.g., entertainment and leisure stories. *Hard* news is an up-to-date factual reporting of consequential newsworthy events (usually on a national or international level). In her study of journalism work, Gaye Tuchman found that journalists have developed such a typification to ‘capture what reporters and editors view as problem in temporal processing and how the identification of facts is tied to organisational deadlines’. See Tuchman, G. 1983. Consciousness Industries and the Production of Culture. *Journal of Communication*. 33(3), pp.330-341.

The mission goals which I discussed in Chapter 5 include: a) to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims, b) to educate Muslims and c) to be the ‘voice’ for the voiceless and of the oppressed British Muslims and global Muslims (*Ummah*).

In this section, I will describe Episode 144 of *Living the Life* and discuss two problems that help explain its production quality. These problems are 1) poor execution of genre conventions and 2) lack of journalistic skills and television experience of the staff involved in *Living the Life* production. I will elaborate on each problem in turn after illustrating an episode of *Living the Life*. Table 6 presents Episode 144 of *Living the Life*, which demonstrates the kind of magazine talk show that the Islam Channel has tried to produce. The table illustrates the types of featured items (VTs) on the programme and how it has endeavoured to connect with its viewers (through the ‘Story of the Day’ segment).

Table 6: The Output of *Living the Life* (Episode 144, 20th March 2013)

| Time-code | Segments/items | Description |
|-----------|---|--|
| 00:00:40 | Opening Montage | |
| 00:00:42 | Introduction | Presenters greet viewers and take turns introducing each other |
| 00:01:10 | Introducing the first set of guests. | Welcoming all the guests seated in the ‘green room.’ Asif Nurani, the campaigner Ricky Cheema, the donor The guests are from the Anthony Nolan ‘Fit to Spit’ Campaign. |
| 00:01:18 | Introducing the 2 nd set of guests. | Welcoming the guests seated in the green room: Isabelle Alaya (founder of Chocolate Museum), Alessandra Ferrini (curator/art director) and Gaetan Sigonney (interior designer) The guests are individuals involved in the opening of the Chocolate Museum in London. |
| 00:01:50 | Introducing the 3 rd guest. | Welcoming the guests seated in the green room: Haneefa Sarwar, Helping Households under Great Stress (HHUGS) |
| 00:02:20 | Story of the Day (insert montage) The presenters chat | Concerning the barista who claims he has blended a famous cup of coffee called ‘The Death Wish,’ which contains 660 mg of caffeine. The second presenter relates this unusual dose of caffeine to the strangest kind of food that the first presenter has ever consumed. |
| 00:03:29 | Question of the Day | The presenter asks question related to the story of the day: |

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| | A caption appears at the bottom of the screen. Presenters chat | What is the most unusual food you have ever eaten? The presenter shares his experience tasting sheep brain curry and a dish that contained sheep eyeballs. He asks if his colleague has tasted anything perceived to be adventurous. [Presenters banter] |
| 00:04:32 | 30-second filler | Prompt viewers to respond via email and Twitter. |
| 00:04:55 | The presenter talks to the viewers | Repeat previous livingthelife@islamchannel.tv or on Twitter @islamchannel #LTLIFE |
| 00:05:00 | THE FIRST ITEM 'Fit to Spit' Campaign, the Anthony Nolan Trust | THE FIRST SET OF GUESTS: Talking to guests: Asif Nurani, the campaigner and Ricky Cheema, the donor The aim of this campaign is to find matching stem cell donors for patients (with blood cancer) in need of bone marrow transplants. The campaign targets ethnic minorities (mainly Asian) because there is a low number of donors from such communities. A patient who is white and European has a 90% chance of finding a matching donor while ethnic minorities have just a 40% chance. With a more diverse register of donors, the Anthony Nolan Trust helps to address this imbalance and works to ensure that nobody dies waiting for lifesaving stem cells, no matter their ethnicity. |
| 00:11:45 | Presenter chat | Repeat the purpose of the campaign |
| 00:12:20 | THE SECOND ITEM | The presenters discuss the upcoming feature (VT) Concerning a couple living in New York who have turned a shipping container into a home |
| 00:12:40 | VT 1 | |
| 00:15:26 | Presenters chat | Comment on the feature VT |
| 00:15:42 | Wrapping up the first item/ the 1 st set of guests | The guests reiterate the purpose of the campaign and how viewers can contribute to the cause. |
| 00:17:05 | Recap Story of the Day | Prompts viewers to stay tuned to the channel as their tweets may be read after the break |
| 00:17:50 | FIRST BREAK | Commercial |
| 00:22:25 | Welcoming viewers & recap Story of the Day | Are you an adventurous sort of person? Answer the question of the day: 'What is the most unusual food you have ever eaten?' |
| 00:23:17 | Reading the tweets | Read two tweets and discuss presenters' experience tasting unusual food. |
| 00:24:38 | THE THIRD ITEM | The presenters discuss the upcoming feature (VT) Concerns the first feature film ('Wadjda') produced by a female Saudi director, Haifa al-Mansour. Al-Mansour film challenges the conservative authority of Saudi Arabia as the film highlights female empowerment within the traditionalist, conservative society of the country. |
| 00:24:53 | VT 2 | |
| 00:27:44 | Presenters chat | The discussion focuses on the film as an artistic expression rather than a demonstration of female empowerment. |

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| 00:27:57 | THE FOURTH ITEM The Chocolate Museum London | THE SECOND SET OF GUESTS: Interviews with guests follow presenters chat. Isabelle Alaya (the founder of the Chocolate Museum), Alessandra Ferrini (the curator/art director) and Gaetan Sigonney (interior designer) |
| 00:30:45 | VT (courtesy of the Chocolate Museum) | The discussion with guests continues during the play out of the VT, featuring the atmosphere surrounding the opening of the Chocolate Museum. |
| 00:33:22 | Still photos | Engaging the guests with photos relating to the process of making chocolate |
| 00:35:50 | SECOND BREAK | Commercial and Azan (call to prayer) |
| 00:45:00 | Recap Story of the Day | Presenter welcomes back viewers Reading tweets |
| 00:46:00 | Studio activity: Chocolate tasting | While blindfolded, two guests taste chocolate presented by the Islam Channel. They try to guess the names of three different kinds: two that are available in the shops (e.g., Mars and Snickers) and one that is artisanal chocolate (made by Isabelle). |
| 00:48:00 | Wrapping up the fourth item/the 2 nd set of guests | Presenter informs viewers on how to get in touch with the guests or visit the Chocolate Museum |
| 00:48:28 | THE FIFTH ITEM | The presenters discuss the upcoming feature (VT) |
| 00:48:34 | VT 3 | Concerning a women's car rally in India – spreading the message of educating young girls and empowering women |
| 00:50:35 | Presenters chat | Tie back to the feature VT. The presenter discusses people's perceptions of women drivers [banter] |
| 00:50:45 | THE SIXTH ITEM The upcoming charity dinner: 'The Shattered Lives.' | THE THIRD GUEST: Haneefa Sarwar, a guest, representing HHUGS promote an upcoming charity dinner event. The event, called 'The Shattered Lives,' raises awareness of the need to support families whose breadwinners have been arrested/detained under UK anti-terrorist legislation (a number were arrested without charge). |
| 00:54:33 | Wrapping up the sixth item/ the 3 rd guest | The presenter discusses the HHUGS charity event. The guest reminds the viewers of the date (6 th of April, 2013). |
| 00:55:45 | THE END | |

Based on Episode 144 of *Living the Life* illustrated in Table 6 above, I will now discuss two problems that help explain its production quality. The first is poor execution of genre conventions; the second is a lack of journalistic skills and television experience. When addressing these problems, I refer to the list of the magazine talk show genre conventions deliberated in Table 5 (see Section 6.1). It outlines the genre convention of

The One Show which the Islam Channel aims to emulate and perceive it to be a “good” television programme of its genre.

6.2.1 Poor Execution of Genre Conventions

The results of the textual analysis suggest that the poor production quality of Episode 144 of *Living the Life* was arising from the poor execution of the genre conventions of magazine talk show. A magazine talk show has a distinct set of genre conventions that differentiates it from other forms of a talk show, such as the daytime talk show and celebrity chat programmes. Whereas daytime talk shows comprise a presenter, guests, studio audiences and live/pre-recorded forms of television programmes (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994; Shattuc, 1997; Grindstaff, 2002), a magazine talk show like *The One Show* has a distinct set of genre conventions that include: presenters, guests and features/VT, and involves ‘live’ broadcasting. On *The One Show*, two regular presenters discuss three items related to current issues and events happening around the UK. Except for the special ‘extravaganza episodes’, which usually cover special events (e.g., Glastonbury, British Music Festival, etc.), the daily episode is a thirty-minute programme; broadcast lives at 7:00 pm from Monday to Friday. The feature or VT helps to develop the issue discussed by the presenters. Conversations between presenters and guests are often related to the VT played out during the discussion.

The result of textual analysis of Episode 144 of *Living the Life* indicates evidence of the poor execution of genre conventions marked by unsystematic editorial planning regarding the selection of story items, guests and features (VT). The lack of relevance between the story items and the features (VT) played out on the programme has shaped the production quality of *Living the Life*. For example, the VT played out during the Anthony Nolan campaign was irrelevant to the discussion about stem cell donors. The VT inserted was about a couple living in New York who turned a shipping container into a home, which was totally unrelated to the Anthony Nolan campaign. Thus, the incoherence between the discussed topic and the VT played out on the programme impacted the production quality of *Living the Life*. Such disjointed presentation impacts the audience’s viewing experience, to the extent that the variety of information on the programme may have caused confusion or speculation as to what to make of such information. The producer’s decision on story items was either based on results of research into other media, e.g., newspapers, the Internet and news or stories proposed by

other creative team members (one of his assistants and two researchers in *Living the Life* production). Grindstaff (2002) noted that the daytime talk show also adopts a similar strategy. Occasionally, other staff members would suggest story items or guests to the *Living the Life* creative team. The selection of guests was not properly planned to match the episode discussion. The guests were often booked depending on their availability on the broadcast day. Sometimes these guests (who previously featured on the show) agreed to appear to help the producer fill in the empty segments on the episode or they just happened to be available on the day that the researcher contacted them. Such poor execution of the genre conventions in the creative decision-making, the unplanned story items and guest selection impacted the production quality of *Living the Life*.

In contrast, *The One Show* production demonstrates good editorial planning. For instance, *The One Show* researcher who worked on a piece about World War II described how she developed an episode and that it covered three items related to the war. As a result of good editorial decisions, all items featured seemed interconnected to a particular theme (World War II). In the first item, the team invited a family member of a soldier (who was involved in that war) to the show. The second story item, in VT format, was presented by the journalist/researcher who was a member of *The One Show* production team. This story item featured commandos in World War II. The third story item was about Royal Marines participation in an unarmed combat demonstration that had its roots in World War II training (Whitefoot, 2014).

Apart from editorial planning, the second aspect of the genre convention that shaped the production quality of *Living the Life* is the ways in which it engaged with its viewers. The segment called the 'Story of the Day' was the channel attempt to engage with the viewers at home. In each episode, the producer would prepare a question, which the presenter would announce (and which would also appear in a caption displayed onscreen) during the live broadcast, prompting the viewers to respond via Twitter or email. Newspaper columns or articles on the Internet inspired the choice of topics for the 'Story of the Day'. For instance, for this episode of *Living the Life*, the producer discovered an online news article about a strange blend of coffee called the 'Death Wish' (see Table 6). The producer chose the story because he perceived it to be unusual and thought it might capture viewers' attention. Subsequently, he drafted a question for the audience, asking them about the most unusual kinds of food any members of the audience had ever

tasted. To encourage viewers to respond to the question during the live broadcast of the programme, the presenters shared their experiences with unusual food. As an example, one presenter mentioned *durian*, a type of fruit that has a strong smell, which he found challenging to eat. Then, he reiterated the question of the day, reminding the viewers that their answers would be announced later in the programme. The 'Story of the Day' is a simulated audience experience created by the producer on *Living the Life*. This aspect of genre convention seems like a good effort not only to connect with the audience but also to distinguish *Living the Life* from *The One Show*. The segment indicates the failed execution of the genre conventions of a magazine talk show. It looks like one separate item, detached from the rest of the key story items presented on the programme, which distracted the audience from the central information that the programme sought to convey. This resulted in another example of poor production quality of *Living the Life*.

Finally, the third aspect of the genre convention is the 'live' mode of broadcasting. The failure to produce the live talk show affected its production quality. On *Living the Life*, for example, the presenter (as a sender of messages) created an atmosphere that makes viewers feel like they are 'with' the presenter and a part of the studio discussions. This encourages the feeling of being at the same time and space that 'live' broadcasting has developed. Furthermore, the instantaneous nature of the messages brought about by 'live' programming allows its viewers to respond immediately to the presenters, e.g., answering the 'Question the Day'. The producer failed to create the atmosphere of togetherness on 'Story of the Day' segment. Such an environment is central to sociability element of talk show because it determines the aesthetic of the programme (Bruun, 2001). The producer should utilise the 'Story of the Day' segment so that 'contact with viewers becomes an element in the programme' (ibid., p. 248).

A live transmission of talk show has its flaws. Bruun (2001, p. 247) notes that the 'live' talk show is challenging because 'the chance of something going wrong, or taking an unexpected turn is always present'. Also, the 'mini-planned interview', which is a part of the talk show genre conventions, can be boring for the audience if the producer does not manage it well during the live transmission. John Carlsen, the Danish TV producer, argues that 'live programme's unpredictability, incalculability, and fortuitousness' are among the uncertainty factors that viewers might expect, which also make a talk show entertaining (Carlsen 1984:126, cited in Bruun, 2001, p. 247). In the case of *Living the*

Life, the producer failed to infuse the uncertainty element during the interview for various reasons. These include ideological clash and tensions in Muslim society and other issues relating to the mission of the channel.

6.2.2 Lack of Journalistic Skills and Television Production Experience

I turn now to the second set of factors that impacted the production quality of *Living the Life*. This factor include the lack of skills and experience among the television workers, which I divided into three aspects: 1) journalistic 2) presentation, and 3) camera operation skills. It further elaborates the producer failure to follow the production conventions executed by *The One Show* (see Table 5).

The first aspect is journalistic skills. Like other forms of a talk show, creative staff in the magazine talk show production undergo similar routines to tabloid journalists. Grindstaff (2002) highlighted such similarity in her ethnographic work. Lack of journalistic skills among creative staff was problematic and compromised the production quality of *Living the Life*. The production routines of the programme required such journalistic skills from creative staff as a) good negotiating skills with potential guests or contributors and 'sources'/informants who provide story items, b) objectivity in presenting the stories and checking against secondary sources and c) good interpersonal skill while engaging with guests and audience.

Whitefoot (2014), a researcher for *The One Show* emphasises the importance of such skills among creative staff to maintain good production quality. As with *Living the Life*, the lack of journalistic skills among its creative staff has shaped the quality of its production. The story items presented on *Living the Life* were not properly researched and presented from a more meaningful angle. For example, there is an audience-capturing and significant story angle that the producer could have tried with the guest who represents HHUGS, such as showing empathy toward the 'silent victims'. Instead, the producer chose to downplay such an emotional angle and focused instead on a fundraising dinner event organised by the group. The lack of journalistic skill shaped the presentation of the story items. I will discuss this in detail in Section 6.4 when I examine the constraints in presenting Muslim charitable organisations on *Living the Life*.

The second crucial aspect concerns the presentation skills of the talk show presenters, which are vital to talk show production. Unskilled presenters on *Living the Life* impacted its production quality. They did not receive any professional training and relied

on their personal experience from hosting community or fundraising events (Interview, 20 June 2013). Broadcast talk is different from community events. An absence of uncertainty and sociability elements may affect the production quality of talk show (Bruun, 2001). The presenter lack of skills to deliver the element of surprise or offer viewers an atmosphere of togetherness and sense of hospitality (Bruun, 2001) and emotional response (Grindstaff, 2002) may affect the production quality. I will elaborate on this further in Section 6.3 in which I demonstrate how the lack of resources affected the production quality of the programme.

A third vital aspect of television production that defines the quality of any TV programme (not only talk shows) is camera operation skills. The lack of such skills in determining camera angles and movement are all evidence of the absence of professional training in both direction and camera operation. This problem links to the failure of executing the genre conventions of magazine talk show discussed in the previous subsection. For example, the lack of skills in filming a 'live' television programme has led to poor creative decisions and consequently affected the quality of the entire magazine talk show. On *Living the Life*, inexperienced camera operators who lacked professional training did the filming. I will discuss these issues related to lack of journalistic skills and television production experience in greater detail in the Sections 6.3 and demonstrate how they affected the production quality of *Living the Life*.

The Islam Channel aims to produce a magazine talk show like *The One Show*. The result of textual analysis of Episode 144 suggests two deficiencies that indicate the poor production quality of *Living the Life*: 1) poor execution of genre conventions and 2) lack of journalistic skills and television production experience. Section 6.3 through 6.5 discusses three main constraints connecting to the results of the textual analysis. These limitations include 1) lack of resources, 2) problems relating matters to the mission of the Islam Channel, and 3) the conflicting notions of what constitutes a "good" television programme.

6.3 The Lack of Resources

Like many media organisations that require capital, labour and resources to continue operations, the Islam Channel also relies on such basics to sustain its work. As discussed in Chapter 5, the management of the Islam Channel claimed that its primary financial support comes from the Da'wah Project membership subscriptions to stay in the business

(Human resource manager, Interview, 18 June 2013) (see Section 5.2.1). Though the Islam Channel may have managed to secure a certain amount of funding through *Da'wah Card* subscriptions and advertising, it continues to struggle financially. As Malik, the human resource manager puts it:

It is a medium-sized company with about 80 employees. We try our best to produce the best shows, the best programmes as much as we can. Unfortunately, we are not a massive company like the BBC and we are not as funded as much [...] (Interview, 18 June 2013)

This situation impacts on the ability of the channel to hire some staff and experienced professionals in television production. The Islam Channel has to rely on unpaid labour to cope with the lack of permanent employees working in television production. These unpaid labourers or so-called 'interns' are people (including myself) who work for the Islam Channel for free under the 'Internship Programme', an opportunity for school leavers, fresh graduates, unemployed individuals or anyone who wants to become a volunteer. Like other interns, I was not entitled to a monthly salary, annual bonus, annual leave, overtime payments, health insurance or any other type of benefit offered to the permanent employees at the channel. It was quite difficult to work with my limited experience in producing a 'live' magazine talk show. The tasks such as researching guests or assisting technical staff during 'live' broadcasts could be tough for inexperienced volunteers. As a result of both struggles in funding and lack of human resources at the Islam Channel, it was quite challenging to produce a magazine talk show anything like as accomplished as *The One Show*.

In general, talk shows are perceived to be a relatively inexpensive television genre with strong potential to attract an audience (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994; Shattuc, 1997; Grindstaff, 2002). This choice of genre indicates that the Islam Channel has been trying to deal with its financial constraints in that *Living the Life* is a programme that might help the channel to cope its lack of resources. The talk show may have been a cheap genre of television in the 1990s (Dovey, 2000), but its changing forms have created difficulties for producers, in particular for those programmes that require certain genre conventions. Laura Grindstaff's (2002) observations of the daytime talk shows indicate that production routines resemble those of a newsroom's. Citing Fishman (1980), Grindstaff describes the ways in which journalists rely on 'routine sources and established information channels to produce fresh news daily under the pressure of deadlines [...]' (Grindstaff, 2002, p.82).

The same is true for the *Living the Life* production in which the producer who works alongside an assistant producer and a researcher had routines similar to journalists. The only difference between the talk shows that Grindstaff observed and *Living the Life* is that the latter was produced 'live' in the studio. The pressure to meet a deadline (4:00 pm daily) heightened with a limited number of staff putting all three items and the individual features (VTs) together in one episode. In contrast, *The One Show* production involved twenty-six reporters, each producing their features (with the help of the production crew) and five dedicated researchers who planned for segments and potential guests at least three days before a live broadcast (Whitefoot, 2014). The issues regarding pressures on staff will be discussed further in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Ideally, *Living the Life* should also have its production crew members, focusing on research and producing individual features (VTs) like *The One Show*. Because the Islam Channel is a small television outlet that operates with a limited number of employees, it cannot afford to hire more paid staff (in addition to a producer and two assistant producers) to run the production of *Living the Life*. In the following, Malik, the human resource manager, confirms that the channel asks employees to try various tasks other than the jobs assigned to them:

We have got quite a few jobs for one person, which is very good. He or she can learn a lot quicker and your skills are enhanced [...] (Interview, 18 June 2013)

To cope with the shortage of staff, the Islam Channel opts for strategies that help the channel to reduce costs when hiring new employees. It chose such strategies as hiring individuals who have multiple skills and encouraging volunteers to work with television production. This was evident in the production of *Living the Life*. For example, a camera operator is expected to have skills in sound mixing or visual editing. Salem, a multi-skilled operator in the *Living the Life* production has a degree in camera operating. He told me that he accepted the job at the Islam Channel as it offered him a position as 'a multi-skilled operator'. Working with the *Living the Life* production crew is his first 'real' job after graduation about a year ago and excites him (Interview, 20 June 2013). When asked about the employee management of the Islam Channel, Malik admitted that creating a job position such as 'multi-skilled operator' and bringing more volunteers helps with the shortage of workers in television production:

If you look at the television crew, you may find out that a camera operator is helping out with the sound system, a soundman is helping out with the camerawork. Moreover, maybe, the producer is helping out with the same category, with the lighting or something [...] we would love to hire another ten people but it is just not really feasible in term of finances, budget and things like that, so we really have to encourage people to work, to be more flexible, and multi-skilling. That is why volunteers can support worker shortages at the channel [...] (Interview, 18 June 2013).

The strategy to hire multi-skilled operators to perform various technical works (e.g., camera work, sound engineering and visual editing) has proven problematic because it has impacted the quality of the programme. A multi-skilled operator might know how to do all these tasks. However, he or she will likely never be a skilled professional. In most cases, doing certain tasks for a short period (e.g., once a week) would not make a person an expert. To be an expert, one needs to perform the task repetitively for a sustained period. Harry Braverman's (1974) *labour process theory*³² criticises multiskilling by pointing out the risk of deskilling working-class jobs. Although Braverman's critique highlights the problem of deskilling among labourers impact on the product, his analysis paid little attention to workers' subjective experience. Television workers experience of multiskilling is one aspect of television production that this thesis intends to explore: to find out how such experience affects the produced text and the quality of working life of these workers (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 56 discussed this in greater details).

The Islam Channel's heavy reliance on interns has impacted the production quality of *Living the Life*. Interns working in the production of *Living the Life* have little or no experience in television production. Hence, their lack of professional experience impacted the production. In my interview with Akram, the intern (Interview, 13 June 2013), who has been unemployed for over a year, he informed us of his experience as a volunteer for the *Living the Life* production. Akram's tasks involved researching potential guests. He claimed that he did not care about the quality of *Living the Life*. He did not feel that the programme had much impact on its audience. Akram described *Living the Life*: 'It is not like good ideas, meaning, knowledge and inspiration'. He felt that the programme

³² Braverman's labour process theory is based on a Marxist approach to the study of labour. It has been criticised for its lack of empirical insights as it focuses on a larger industrial practice rather than workers' individual experience in multiskilling. Nevertheless, it is useful to look into his critique on deskilling of work as it supports my argument on how the deskilling of workers in the production of *Living the Life* was the reason for its poor quality.

'was not necessarily full of that element'. Instead, Akram preferred to help other producers who make religious programmes because it gave him a chance to learn more about Islam, thus allowing him to contribute to viewers' learning experience about Islam. For him, being an intern was just a stepping-stone. He looked forward to seizing either an opportunity to gain employment at the channel or to meet his 'potential' employer while dealing with various organisations and business owners at the channel (while researching for *Living the Life*). Ursell's work has emphasised such attitudes in new entrants to the unpaid labour market. She noted an intensification of the 'self-commodification processes' by which each seeks to improve his/her chances of attracting gainful employment (Ursell, 2000, p. 807).

The above examples illustrate a clear distinction in motivation between paid and unpaid labour in television production. These different motivations among technical workers, 'multi-skilled operators' and 'interns' explain the problem of output quality of *Living the Life*. On the one hand, paid television workers, especially technical workers (aside from being paid for their job), viewed multiskilling as a way to gain experience and skills, enabling them to experiment with various camera techniques and help improve the programme quality. On the other, unpaid labour, such as interns, perceived their work as an opportunity to gain employment within the channel or meet their future employers. The quality of *Living the Life* suffered from the channel's 'experimentation' with a small group of inexperienced, unskilled professionals as well as the exploitation of volunteers/unpaid labour seeking new employment contracts rather than being motivated to help the producer make good television programmes (in the case of Akram).

Lack of resources meant the channel could not hire professionals or recruit workers to become experts in their fields. This explains the poor execution of genre conventions discussed in Section 6.2. Because of resource constraints, the Islam Channel could not afford to provide professional training for the producer and creative staff, which might help them to execute the genre conventions more efficiently and consequently improve the production quality of *Living the Life*. The channel also could not afford to hire individuals experienced only in hosting community and charity events. These presenters have no journalistic skills and are unfamiliar with 'live' broadcast interviewing. Though they seemed to be confident in their conversations with guests, they failed to give the impression of professional presenters. The following conversation between the presenter

and the guest (from the Chocolate Museum) excerpted from Episode 144 indicates the presenter's lack of journalistic skills (e.g., as a TV anchor) and sensitivity to TV requirements (e.g., responding to cameras and the producer cues):

Male presenter: tell me if I am right, I know a little bit about chocolate. Is chocolate the only food that melts at body temperature?

Isabelle: Just below [pause] it is true. You are good, a good consumer.

Male presenter: I am a healthy eater [sic] I avoid all things that are fake and artificial. However, I do like chocolate. I go for a nice organic chocolate. I do not go for the artisan's so much because they are sort of Green & Black's, stuff like that. Moreover, we've some images coming up on our screen and maybe you could tell us a little bit about it.

The above conversation is an example of the lack of journalistic skill and sensitivity to TV requirements. I agree with Scannell's (2014) argument in which a conversation on live television requires special techniques. An abrupt change of topic performed by the male presenter above was clear – shifting from the discussion about healthy eating, organic chocolate and artisanal chocolate to the upcoming images on the screen. The cues (about the images) given by the producer via earphones startled him, forcing an immediate announcement of the next images. This is a clear example of how a lack of journalistic skills and sensitivity to TV requirements affected production quality of *Living the Life*.

The lack of experience in 'live' television production has impacted the quality of the output of *Living the Life*. 'Live' television production requires good skills in camera directing. Coordination among camera movement, script and producer/director's cue is crucial. The *Living the Life* production lacked expertise in coordinating these elements. The picture shows both presenters looking at their scripts while the camera focuses on them. It happened instantaneously as the male presenter was making the above announcement about upcoming images on the screen. Hence, the lack of professional skills in direction and camera operation is linked to weak output. Figure 7 illustrates poor camera work.



Figure 7: The Lack of Professional Skills in Camera Directing

Source: Episode 144, time code: 00:33:18

The lack of professional skills is a result of the limited channel resource to hire more staff in television production and skilled professionals or provide professional training for the presenters and producers (and creative staff) to produce a good magazine talk show. Moreover, the lack of resources also forced the channel to rely on volunteers and a small group of unskilled professionals to deliver the programme. This situation has affected the production quality of *Living the Life*.

The channel's unique business model which was built upon a combination of missionary/*da'wah* and economic strategies (to strengthen Muslims' economy through the Da'wah Project) seems problematic. While the channel emphasises the missionary strategy and how to generate revenue through business sponsorship (*Da'wah Card Scheme*), it tends to neglect the quality aspects of its programmes.

6.4 Problems Relating to the Mission of the Islam Channel

In addition to the lack of resources, there are strong ideological issues that shaped the production quality of *Living the Life*. In this section, I will analyse how problems relating to the mission of the channel affected the production quality of the programme and subsequently conceptualise the production culture of the Islam Channel. I have analysed the mission of the Islam Channel in Chapter 5; it comprises of three goals: a) to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims, b) to educate Muslims and c) to be the 'voice' of British and global Muslims (*Ummah*). My analysis of these mission goals indicates that there

are two major factors that shaped the production culture of the Islam Channel. These factors are 1) 'the culture of caution' at the managerial and production level and 2) an ideological clash between 'moderate Islam' and *Salafi* fundamentalism at the channel. Whereas an element of moderate Islam was found in the CEO's claim as well as in the Islam Channel's mission 'to convey a moderate form of Islam', an element of *Salafi* fundamentalism was found among the programming department staff (e.g., the manager, assistant manager, assistant producer). In this section, the analysis of problems relating to the mission of the channel is based upon these two institutional challenges. The purpose is to identify how these problems have shaped the production quality of *Living the Life*.

Earlier in Section 6.2, my analysis was based on the result of a textual analysis of Episode 144; I identified two key areas that indicated poor production quality at *Living the Life*: poor execution of the genre conventions (Section 6.2.1) and lack of journalistic skills and television production experience (Section 6.2.2). In the following sub-sections, apart from Episode 144, I also rely on other episodes of *Living the Life* and ethnographic accounts gathered during the production of those episodes to demonstrate how the problems relating to the mission have shaped the production quality of *Living the Life*. In doing so, I address three types of constraints: 1) constraints in presenting religious elements on *Living the Life*, 2) constraints in presenting music artists and performances and 3) constraints in presenting the physical appearance of women.

6.4.1 Constraints in Presenting Religious Elements

The production culture of the Islam Channel involves ideological clash and 'a culture of caution'. I identified 'the culture of caution' at the managerial level when analysing the mission of the Islam Channel in Chapter 5, which resulting from the channel control on the production effort to balance between religious and light-entertainment as well as by its response to its conservative fundamentalist audience, e.g., not to offend them. In this section, I will demonstrate how 'the culture of caution' shaped creative decision-making and editorial planning in the *Living the Life* production. The ideological clash between moderate Islamic views and *Salafi* fundamentalism is another structural factor that shaped the production culture of Islam Channel and production quality of *Living the Life*. I have discussed in Section 5.2 the clash between the CEO inspired moderate Islam (supported by the producer of *Living the Life* and a few crew members) and the *Salafi* fundamentalist

dominated programming department which results from control from the management and consequences for caution among production staff.

There was no agreed formula concerning the degree to which the producer ought to present religious elements on *Living the Life*. The producer, however, need to treat religious elements with caution. Such treatment resonates by Noonan's research on the BBC Religion in which the producers perceived religious television to be 'distinct style of programming' (Noonan, 2008, p. 11). Although there was no mechanism that guides the producer to balance religious elements on *Living the Life*, the treatment of religious elements can be observed in three execution phases of genre conventions: 1) researching for story items and guests, 2) deciding on the interview questions and 3) the 'live' broadcast of *Living the Life*.

'The culture of caution' can be observed during researching of story items and potential guests where the researcher and assistant producer would seek the producer's approval before booking the guests. If the religious elements were deemed to be controversial in that they might attract the attention of Ofcom, the producer would consult with the manager. To make sure that the religious elements presented on *Living the Life* did not contradict the mission of the channel, the producer chose the middle-ground while executing the genre conventions. The producer took such measure not only to avoid conflict with the manager/programming department's treatment of religious elements but also as a strategy to strike a religious balance with light-entertainment elements. Both religion and light entertainment are central to *Living the Life* genre conventions. *Living the Life* is a light entertainment magazine talk show that requires a religious thread running through it (producer, interview, 20 June 2013). The following illustrates the middle ground approaches that indicate the producer attempt to balance the treatment of religious elements on *Living the Life*. This include:

- 1) Presenting a religious personality on the show and keeping the discussion light, focusing on the purpose of inviting the guest to the programme. Any serious forms of doctrinal discourse during 'live' broadcast were avoided.
- 2) Presenting members of diverse religious groups was encouraged as it reflected the channel's mission to engage with non-Muslims and to educate Muslims.
- 3) The producer disapproved presenting Muslim charitable organisations associated with extremism; the conversation needed to emphasise the actual purpose of featuring the group, such as fundraising events, etc.

- 4) Presenting organisations associated with Muslim political resistance such as Interpal (Palestinian Relief and Development Fund) and the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution. Again, the on-air conversation would be confined to the event organised and a portrayal of humanitarian suffering to show the Islam Channel commitment to the causes of freedom and solidarity with fellow Palestinians or Syrians rather than any political agenda.

These constraints were the results of 'the culture of caution' and ideological clash among the production community of *Living the Life*. The execution of genre conventions such as researching of story items 'with caution' is common in *The One Show* production as well as in news and factual programming. Sharing her experience in researching the story items for *The One Show*, Rebecca Whitefoot (2014) says:

When I'm researching, I draw upon a wide range of sources which I always check against a secondary source. The biggest boo-boo I can make as a researcher is allowing Dan or Matt and Alex to make a statement on air which isn't factually accurate. I'll use the Internet to read news articles and browse trusted sites like The Commando Veterans Association, which has a wealth of photographs and letters from World War II. I'll go through the BBC archive, watching and listening to any programme the BBC has ever made on the soldiers. I'll order books like *Castle Commando* by Donald Gilchrist and *All in Fighting* by Fairbairn for reference and stack them up on my desk. Moreover, of course, I speak to people. I've just checked my research for factual errors with military historian, Stewart Allan from National Museums Scotland and Pete Rogers from The Commando Veterans Association.

Like newsgathering, the production routine of a magazine talk show also includes checking against other secondary sources to ensure the accuracy of the story items before presenting them on the show. This helps maintain the production quality of the programme as well the reputation of the media organisation that produced the programme. *Living the Life* also involved a similar process of checking, but the 'source' that the researchers and the assistant producers need to refer to is the manager of the programming department, in line with a particular 'set of ideology' (Manager, 20 June 2013).

What distinguishes *Living the Life* from *The One Show* process of checking is that the former involved the presentation of religion that required extra caution. In her research into the BBC religious broadcasting, Cairiona Noonan points out a similar situation in which producers at the corporation limited their risk-taking to maintain regulatory compliance. Noonan (2008) explains that 'producers increasingly occupied the middle

ground of production as risk-taking was sidelined for safer mainstream programmes' (p. 33). Similarly, Aswad, the producer of *Living the Life* chose 'the middle ground' in presenting the religious element of the programme. He avoided extremes not only to maintain the channel's regulatory compliance but also not to offend the conservative audience.

The following sections discuss the constraints in presenting religious elements. I categorised these elements according to the types of guests that have been invited onto the show or had their bookings cancelled. These four categories of guests are a) religious personalities, b) guests from other religious groups, c) Muslim charitable organisations and d) institutions associated with political resistance. I will discuss each category in turn by drawing on my argument concerning the ideological clash and 'the culture of caution' as organisational factors shaping the production quality of *Living the Life*.

Constraints in Presenting Religious Personalities

The 'the culture of caution' and an ideological clash resulted in limitations in presenting a religious personality (*sheikh/imam*) on *Living the Life*. In a production meeting, Aswad the producer had advised Maryam, the assistant producer and I that the topic discussed with the *sheikh* must be kept light. Maryam told us that she had booked *Sheikh* Abu Aliyah, who was engaged with a youth project (Episode 131, 26 February 2013). Aswad warned her that she must ensure interview questions are on the non-controversial subject matter and not touching on anything related to religion or doctrinal issues. Aswad suggested several questions so that Maryam could draft them later into a script. The issues that Aswad suggested to Maryam included trivial subjects related to the *sheikh's* personal background, such as hobbies, and the size of his family. Maryam argued that the reason for approaching the *sheikh* was due to his involvement in youth projects, his newly published book and the blog that he writes. She insisted on booking the *sheikh* with the manager's approval because she thought the *sheikh* had an engaging personality, which is consistent with Aswad's approach. Maryam sought manager Iqbal's advice. Iqbal told us that once, Sheikh Abu Aliyah had a connection with extremism. Despite a previous ideological background that was incompatible with the channel mission, Iqbal the manager permitted Sheikh Abu Aliyah to appear on *Living the Life*, but with one condition: the interview questions had to focus entirely on his blog *The Humble-I* and particularly on the section of

his writing that mentioned his family and their cat, Genie.³³ According to Iqbal, Abu Aliyah has a close relationship with Abu Muntasir whom he met in the 80s.³⁴ Abu Muntasir's ideological position was in conflict with that of the Islam Channel. Iqbal warned our team not to mention Abu Muntasir in the script because of his association with an extremist ideology. Iqbal said of Abu Muntasir that 'had gone off the rails, not in that sense of revolution, but there are few other things relating to extremism' [...] (Production meeting, 25 February 2013).

As a researcher, I took note of Iqbal's reminder of the above issue before scriptwriting. Iqbal also demonstrated the kind of questions that the presenter should ask while interviewing Abu Aliyah to maintain a light-hearted tone:

As a *sheikh* and a blogger, you are not an ordinary *Sheikh*, are you? That would be the line of questions you might want to go down. For instance, his appearance breaks the barrier of common religious figures (who usually wear a turban and *jubbah* /religious outfit). Instead, he wears jeans and not giving the *khutbah* (sermon) all the time. He is a bit of a different character, so that might be interesting to explore [...] (Production meeting, 25 February 2013).

The presentation of a religious personality on *Living the Life* is complicated because it requires thorough research into the guest's background to the level of trivial titbits. The case of Abu Aliyah involved negotiations between the production staff and the manager of programming. In the case of Abu Aliyah, although Iqbal agreed to a religious personality with a different ideological background from the channel (with specific instructions and warnings), Aswad needed to plan how to downplay the religious tone on *Living the Life*. The production quality of *Living the Life* relies on a combination of the directing skills of the producer, good camera work and the interviewing skills of the presenters during 'live' broadcasting. The following is an extract of the interview with Abu Aliyah from Episode 131 of *Living the Life*. It illustrates a sudden shift from a 'heavy' discussion (about

³³ The '*Humble-I*' is the name of the blog written by Abu Aliya. The name spelt out 'Hanbali' after Imam Muhammad Ibn Hanbal, a founder of the strictest *Sunni* school of Islamic jurisprudence. Hanbali's thinking has been manifested in *Salafi* fundamentalism. For details, visit: <http://thehumblei.com/>

³⁴ Abu Muntasir is a former radical Islamic preacher, described as the 'godfather of jihad' in Britain. On the ITV's exposure 'Jihad', he confessed to recruiting, training and raising funds for jihadists. Realised the futility of fighting 'for a false ideal and an unwinnable war'; he decided to turn his back on extremism. Reuters. 2015. Repentant 'godfather of British jihad' recalls extremism's lure. *Al Arabiya News*. 16 June 2015, pp.1-4.

knowledge transmission) to a light-hearted topic (about the *sheikh's* cat). At time code 00:45:14 of Episode 131:

Rima (presenter): What do you make of this move from traditional learning to something more engaging with technology like blogging?

Abu Aliyah: There is no doubt at all that modern technologies open up great opportunities for learning and democratise basic knowledge. That is fantastic! Moreover, that it becomes more accessible easily to everyone, which is good. However, only when there is a move from oral transmission to writing and from writing to printing, there are benefits but there is a danger in that. Then the scholars of Islam have to deal with that transition. So, we are in that transition period. Because not long ago, even in this country many people were illiterate: that kind of problem also affects the Muslim world. Then the literacy grows, which is a good thing. However, there is a challenge because some of these religious texts are actually at the deeper level only accessed by the instructors, the teachers otherwise they can be misread and misunderstand [...]

Fadhil (presenter): That is why your key things on your blog *The Humble-I* deals with contemporary issues, classical issues that are very easy to dip in and dip out and see what was going on at the time. Oh! I noticed there was a mention of your cat...the cat got mentioned now and then [...]

Abu Aliyah: [laughing] yes, Genie.

Fadhil (presenter): Genie. That is right. Well, look we do need to go for a break now [Note: the presenter continued talking about the Question of the Day before going to a commercial break]

An abrupt change of topic from a serious discussion of knowledge and technology to a question about the *sheikh's* pet indicates how the producer managed to divert the discussion from a serious to a trivial matter. Although the producer succeeded in downplaying the religious subject, he abruptly cut away from the discussion. This might leave viewers to wonder about the actual purpose of that inconclusive conversation. The interrupted conversation impacted the production quality of the programme. This entire editorial decision-making process involved seeking approval from the producer and the manager with the former making the final decision on the story angle (on what sort of interview questions that he or the assistant needed to come up with). The constraints in making creative decisions regarding the 'kind' of *Sheikh* or religious personality indicate 'the culture of caution' among creative production staff and the ideological clash between the manager and the producer of *Living the Life*.

Constraints in Presenting Religious Diversity

The second situation that exemplified the problematic process of balancing religion and light entertainment involved the presentation of diverse religious groups on *Living the Life*. The channel encourages this as it reflects the channel's mission to engage with non-Muslims and to educate Muslims. Again, similar rules applied to the previous situation despite the CEO's encouragement of interreligious dialogue. Aswad, the producer, however, felt that such dialogue is a far-reaching initiative and not suitable for a magazine talk show like *Living the Life* that aims to provide light entertainment to its viewers. According to Aswad:

Seven o'clock is when most people come home from work, looking after the kids and having dinner. They want something entertaining to digest easily [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013).

Aswad had also ruled that this particular group of guests should not be drawn into a serious religious discussion. He felt that Islamic values could be represented in a more subtle way rather than in an open dialogue:

Although we do not necessarily talk 'heavily' about Islamic-related items, there is always an Islamic thread running through the programme [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013)

Nonetheless, the portrayal of guests from different backgrounds is in line with *da'wah* principles which are a part of the mission of the channel: to invite every human being to Islam with wisdom and discretion, meeting people on their own ground and convincing them with illustrations from their own knowledge and experience which may be very narrow or very wide. Simultaneously, help the channel to accomplish its mission 'to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims and educate Muslims'. Aswad regarded such diversity of guests on *Living the Life* as an accurate representation of moderate Islam where Islam teaches Muslims to acknowledge contributions of non-Muslims:

There are so many things going on: positive things, events, initiatives that have been carried out by non-Muslims. So, as Muslims, why don't we recognise them? Being a part of the community, we have to embrace and celebrate their achievements. We have somehow been ignorant not to acknowledge work of other faiths and backgrounds. The Prophet has advised us in Islam and that He (God) created us in different tribes, to get to know each other. We try to achieve that in our ways. *Living the Life* is doing that, acknowledging different tribes, and diverse backgrounds.

Without knowing them, we say welcome on our platform; saying congratulations, well done on your work! [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013)

Aswad argued that Islam supports diversity. He draws his argument on the Quranic verse: *Mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other)*.³⁵ History has also shown that Islam supports diversity and coexistence. The Constitution of Medina under the Prophet Muhammad's leadership was the first example in history of a multicultural constitution (Modood, 2010, p. 88).

Huda, a lifestyle programme producer, described the beauty of sharing a common ground among people of Abrahamic religions:

Once we have a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim. They wrote a book together about the environment. That was nice that these Abrahamic faiths come jointly with this book. It was so beautiful when they came to *Living the Life*. It shows Muslims in a good light that they are interacting with people. There was a Jew on the sofa, a Christian. That does not matter because the main thing is to be together [...] (Interview, 22 June 2013).

Aside from acknowledging non-Muslim contributions to the common interest, the Islam Channel also encourages working together to achieve something that contributes to the wider community. Working for the public good was designed to present 'Islam in an inclusive way' by stressing that 'anything we do also has to benefit the wider community', (Modood, 2010, p. 91). The example given by Huda about the book on the environment written by authors of Abrahamic faiths indicates the channel's support for the concept of commonality, focusing on what these religions have in common rather than on their differences. The featuring of non-Muslims on the programme not only represented Muslim appreciation of their contribution but also showed that Muslims are willing to cooperate and interact with them for the benefit of the wider community. This approach creates a positive impression of Muslims and their religion. Negative reactions, such as Muslims preferring isolation to integration or being labelled 'a suspect community' (Kundnani, 2015), can also be improved with the presentation of diverse religious groups (see Chapter 2).

³⁵ Quran 49:13

Similar to featuring a religious personality, the representation of religious diversity on *Living the Life* also needed a balancing process. A discussion between two or more guests from different religious backgrounds had to focus on the purpose of their invitation. For example, a group of youths working on a London-based magazine, *Interact*, was invited to *Living the Life* to discuss the magazine's editorials. Guests represented Jewish, Christian and Hindu youth communities. They were interviewed on their experience in writing columns relating to sport, literature, lifestyle topics and so forth in *Interact* magazine, distributed at several locations in London (*Living the Life*, Episode 150, 1 April 2013).

The presentation of religious diversity on *Living the Life* involved the 'quantifying' of 'light' and 'heavy' featured items. The producer insisted that the balanced treatment of religious and light-hearted items was important so that viewers will not take the discussion on religion too seriously. Maryam, the assistant producer, once reminded me of the strategy of balancing religious and light-hearted items. According to Maryam, one religious personality is enough for each episode. If I booked two, then the programme would not be 'light' since *Living the Life* must have entertainment elements. Aswad, the producer, also offered constant reminders about the light and heavy treatment of story items:

The show must have something light to digest by viewers after a long day at work. They want to go home, having dinner with family, relax and watch *Living the Life*. So, the show should be entertaining, not heavy and controversial [...], (Fieldnote, 11 March 2013).

Aswad's reminder makes me recall one *Living the Life* episode (Episode 192, 13 June 2013) that featured the Reverend Robin Griffith-Jones, *Sheikh* Omar Suleyman and Chef Norman Musa.³⁶ Because Aswad was aiming for a diversity of religious presentation, both the *sheikh* and the Reverend, although perceived to be 'heavy items', were featured on the same episode. According to Aswad, to balance this particular discussion, he added a third

³⁶ Reverend Griffith-Jones and twenty other experts explore the evolution of English Law, the implications for Islam, Sharia and Jihad (martyrdom) and the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights, family law and freedom of speech in a book entitled *Islam and English Law*. Omar Suleyman is an Islamic scholar from New Orleans, USA who is a strong advocate of community service, interfaith dialogue and social justice. He served as a field coordinator for ICNA Relief in Hurricane Katrina. In 2010, the Mayor and City Council of New Orleans awarded him for 'Outstanding Civic Achievement' (Fieldnotes, 13 June, 2013).

guest: a celebrity chef from Malaysia who did a cooking demonstration. Beside the chef, Aswad added another two VTs entitled ‘Pakistan female pilot ’and ‘Gaza honey businesses’. Quantifying the items is an editorial approach to creating an impression of balance between heavy (religious) and light (entertainment) in *Living the Life* as a magazine talk show that features religious diversity.

Quantifying and classifying each item on *Living the Life* into ‘religious’ (as equivalent to ‘heavy’) and ‘entertaining’ (as equal to ‘light’) has compromised the production quality. Table 7 presents the script, which the producer had prepared to create an impression of light discussion with the two religious figures:

Table 7: *Living the Life*’s Script (Episode 191, 13 June 2013)

| Questions for Sheikh Omar Suleyman | Questions for Rev. Robin Griffith-Jones |
|---|--|
| 1. We mentioned in the introduction ‘kind-hearted, friendly giant from New Orleans’. You are quite tall, aren’t you? | 1. A reverend is talking about English and Sharia law. That is unique. |
| 2. You have been heavily involved with the Al-Maghrib Institute, a great experience? | 2. The project is very much forward thinking in its approach. Would you agree? |
| 3. People say you have a great way of relating to a western audience. That can be a bit of a cliché? | 3. Contributors to the book include theologians, lawyers and sociologists, a real mix there. |
| 4. Your journey in a way started in 2000 in the UAE where you studied under two prestigious sheikhs: Tariq Ibn Najah and Amr al Sheshany. | 4. The book asks how the rights of all citizens are honoured and responsibilities are met. How can this achieve? |
| 5. You are keen on community service, on interfaith dialogue. Do we have to keep justifying ourselves as ‘Muslims’? | |
| 6. You also worked as a field coordinator after Hurricane Katrina. Must have been a tough time for you as an American. | |

The conversation with religious figures (i.e., the *sheikh* and the Reverend) during the live broadcast was not deep enough for viewers to benefit from (this reminded me of Akram, the intern researcher who condemned the programme, saying it lacks ‘good ideas, meaning, knowledge and inspiration’). Although both guests are experts in their respective religions, their expertise in interfaith dialogue was absent from this episode because the producer perceived dialogue as a heavy subject not to be discussed on *Living the Life*. Good editorial decisions could have helped improve this episode of *Living the Life*.

Although each guest was interviewed separately, a *sheikh*, a reverend and a celebrity chef ended up sitting together on the *Living the Life* set. Unfortunately, this ‘beautiful moment’ (as described by Huda, the lifestyle programme producer) was not properly planned or presented. The most important message that the programme should have promoted was working together on common ground for the benefit of the wider community. This notion was absent from this episode of *Living the Life* due to poor editorial decisions.

While the *sheikh* was interviewed regarding his experience as a renowned preacher in the Islamic world, the Reverend was interviewed only about his new collaborative work on English Law and Islam. Both conversations were quite shallow because the producer wanted to maintain the lightness of the content. Moreover, neither guest was drawn into a discussion relating to their expertise: interfaith dialogue and comparative religion. Thus, viewers were exposed only to their biographies but were unable to experience the ‘beautiful moment’ whereby both persons from different Abrahamic faiths had come together to achieve a certain level of understanding to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of both religions in dealing with the law.

To make this presentation even less effective, the only point in this episode that linked the guests was during the ‘Story of the Day’ segment when the presenter invited both viewers and guests to respond to the question of the day: ‘Are you scared to eat food past its use-by date?’ Despite bringing the guests together, the question asked was not relevant to topics discussed by the religious figures. The disjunction between the ‘Question of the Day’ and the religious issue discussed with the guests impacted on the production quality of *Living the Life*.

I have previously considered the producer’s attempts to balance the degree of religious representation on *Living the Life* through an analysis of two groups of guests: 1) Muslim religious figures and 2) members of diverse religious groups on *Living the Life*. I illustrated how the producer presented these groups of guests to avoid any serious forms of doctrinal discourse during ‘live’ broadcasts of *Living the Life*, resulting in a poor quality magazine talk show. The following discussions illustrate how the producer presented Muslim organisations on *Living the Life*. I chose two types of Muslim organisations: 1) a charitable foundation and 2) an organisation associated with Muslim political resistance to demonstrate the producer’s attempt to balance the degree of religious representation on *Living the Life*.

Constraints in Presenting Muslim Charitable Organisations

Muslim organisations are a part of the general landscape of Muslim communities in Britain. Their presence is oriented toward education, social work and more specialised activities that focus on young people, women and students and toward Muslim representation at local and national levels (Ramadan, 2004, p. 157). Presenting Muslim charitable organisations known for their association with any particular form of Islam was often disapproved by Aswad, the producer, despite the channel's endorsement of their appearances on *Living the Life*. This reluctance was due to the guests who represent these organisations. Aswad once argued that these guests' appearances 'do not result from the research carried out by the production team' (Production meeting, 7 June 2013). Instead, these potential guests were often nominated by either the CEO or by the manager of programming (sometimes the staff) of the Sales and Advertising Department because these guests happened to enrol with the Islam Channel's *Da'wah Card Scheme*, which included an advertising package. In this manner, the sales department manager requested Aswad to book a representative from Helping Households under Great Stress (HHUGS) on *Living the Life* (see Table 6). Aswad was reluctant at first, but he had to agree later because the request 'came from the top'. This suggests that editorial decisions, at some point, are influenced by organisational pressure based on commercial imperatives.

'Conflict' is the 'main ingredient' for daytime talk shows and a 'topic without it just doesn't have any bearing for the show' (Grindstaff, 2002, p.84). On *Living the Life*, however, 'conflict' would be a 'disaster' according to the producer. To avoid controversy and negative criticism by the media regulatory body (Ofcom) or the counter-extremism think-tank Quilliam Foundation, Aswad employed a particular strategy when inviting a guest who represents a Muslim charitable organisation. HHUGS, for example, is known for its association with extremism or terrorism (both of which run counter to the Islam Channel's mission 'to convey a moderate Islam to non-Muslims and to educate non-Muslims'). Although Ms Haneefa (the guest) was invited to promote a fundraising dinner event ('Shattered Lives'), Aswad was afraid that she might speak at length about the experience of the convicts/detainees held under anti-terrorist legislation. Hence, to avoid any conflict or controversy which may have been caused by presenting this particular type of organisation, Aswad warned the presenters to confine their conversation with the guest to the actual purpose of inviting her on *Living the Life*: to promote the fundraising dinner event.

The treatment of a sensitive topic concerning anti-terrorist legislation affected the production quality of *Living the Life* because the conversation was kept at the surface/superficial. Some interesting points went untouched because the presenters were too cautious. At one point, the presenter was driven by a fear that the discussion might touch a sensitive area that Aswad perceived to be controversial. Additionally, presenting the story and showing sympathy towards convicts or detainees might accuse the Islam Channel to be charged of advocating extremism or supporting terrorists. The following conversation on *Living the Life* (Episode 144, 20 March 2013) illustrates the tensions between Shadi and Rima the presenters, which affected the production quality of the programme:

Shadi: Saturday the 6th of April, an organisation, Helping Households under Great Stress, known as HHUGS, will be holding an event in London.

Rima: that is right and it aims at creating awareness of the need to support the families whose relatives have been arrested or detained. Moreover, she will tell us what we have Haneefa Sarwar, welcome to the show, *Assalamu'alaikum* [Peace be upon you]

Haneefa: *Wa'alaikumsalam* [Peace be upon you]

Shadi: HHUGS is becoming more well-known now and the event that is coming in April known as the 'Shattered Lives'. Tell us why you chose that name, 'Shattered Lives'.

Haneefa: In some ways it is quite evident. The families that we help have been affected by the anti-terror legislation. Things like experiencing traumatic situations, like getting their homes raided and their family members imprisoned, at times without charge, you know. Moreover, that affects the whole family when someone like the breadwinner, for example, has been taken away, or the father or the son. Moreover, in the process, sometimes what happens is like an army of the counter-terrorism unit, officers will barge into a house, raid it, and turn it upside down.

Shadi: That affects people's sense of security, doesn't it? [Turning to the female presenter]

Rima: [Ignoring the question] and the event is coming up very shortly, only about three weeks now. What are the things that people expect?

While Shadi attempted to bring out some emotion from the conversation, showing sympathy towards the families, the cautious Rima tried to end the conversation about the relatives of the detainees/convicts by ignoring Shadi's facial expressions and his question

‘that affects people’s sense of security, doesn’t it?’ That was quite an intense moment for Rima. Although Rima managed to ‘push’ Shadi away from discussion about anti-terrorist legislation earlier, the next block of conversation shows how Shadi succeeded in turning the debate into a more serious one, delving more deeply into the topic:

Haneefa: Like you said, it is about raising awareness, but also about raising much money. We have got some speakers waiting to confirm, but we have got people like Othman Latif, I think you are presenting? [Asking the male presenter]

Shadi: Yes, yes I will be there.

Haneefa: We have got Cherie Blair’s sister errr...

Shadi: Lauren Booth³⁷

Haneefa: Yes, Lauren Booth.

Shadi: It is ‘Shattered Lives’. Often, they are silent victims, because somebody is arrested, sometimes they are not even charged and the whole family life destroyed. They were afraid in their home, being stigmatised, tough. What sort of support has HHUGS given so far?

Haneefa: Do you mind? I have got this brochure [request for the booklet from the presenter]

Shadi: Yes, of course. So you want to read that? [Pointing at the brochure on the coffee table in front of her]

Haneefa: Oh yes, just to answer your question. I can just sit here and tell you the bullet points of what we have done and what we have to offer. However, if I read to you directly a testimony from a family, it would be more interesting. It is a public statement and not confidential. It involved a family that has been affected not just by the legislation, but also by the media coverage.

Shadi: Yes of course...

Haneefa: So, basically, this is what they described: The press would stand outside the house and passers-by harassed us and signed a petition to

³⁷ Lauren Booth is a pro-Palestinian activist and a broadcast journalist. Currently hosting a talk show *Talking Booth* on a new Islamic television station, British Muslim TV on SKY channel 845. She converted to Islam in 2010. She is also a sister-in-law of the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair. She is a guest speaker at events organised by Helping Households under Great Stress (HHUGS). I will discuss further this new Muslim TV in chapter 8; explain how it could be a new challenge for the Islam Channel. The details on the talk show *Talking Booth* on BMTV may be found at: <http://www.laurenbooth.org/2014/03/23/terror-tea-and-hhugs/>. Accessed on 1 September, 2014.

get us evicted. They do the same thing to our neighbours. This incitement has encouraged racist pressure groups to hold demonstrations outside the house on a weekly basis, between four in the afternoon and eleven in the evening. These demonstrators would curse and scream at Islam and us. Our father was the only one jailed, however, a whole family was restricted, had to agree mutually to the practices of the British press and Home Office. It is as if we all are imprisoned. They also continue saying, idiotic demonstrators like English Defence League (EDL) types. These idiotic demonstrators and journalists do not realise we have asked the British government to allow us leave the UK for a third country somewhere other than the country that they are to deport to [...]

Though Shadi was eager to engage with the discussed topic, he was also warned by Aswad (who communicated through the presenter's earpiece) to wrap up the conversation. Aswad's instruction led to an abrupt change of topic, which resulted in a lack of closure to the conversation:

Shadi: I mean, it is very clear that they [HHUGS] are an important charity organisation and doing a crucial job. Once again, please give us a reminder again, when is the event?

Haneefa: 6th of April

Shadi: Ok, 6th of April. Moreover, we are supporting these families, who are the silent victims of...

Rima: [abruptly] If we want to find out more, how do we get back to you?

Haneefa: You can go to the website which is hhugs.org.uk

Shadi: Ok, we are out of time, thank you so much for joining us.

A sudden interjection from Shadi in the above conversation led to an abrupt change of topic: from Islamophobia ('these demonstrators would curse and scream at us and Islam') to a reminder for the viewers from Shadi ('please give us a reminder again, when is the event?'). Hence, the incoherence of the conversation impacted on the quality of the entire episode of *Living the Life*. Moreover, because the discussion about the victim of anti-terror legislation was kept on the surface, some interesting points were not discussed as a result of Rima's caution.

Presenting a Muslim charitable organisation such as HHUGS was a challenging task for the production of *Living the Life* as it involved a controversial religious ideology (e.g., extremism). As the producer, Aswad had reason to be cautious as the reputation of the Islam Channel lies in his hands. The presenters also risk losing their positions at the Islam

Channel if the media regulator took action against the channel or if the channel was accused (once again) of promoting extremism. Presenting an organisation like HHUGS, which the Islam Channel believed to have good intentions (aiming to help the families of convicts/detainees), however, was questioned by the production staff. This is a clear indicator of tensions within the production culture of the channel about its mission (to be the voice of British Muslims) the result of which was a poor quality magazine talk show.

On a similar note, the poor editorial decision and the incoherence illustrated above signify the failure of the production team to accomplish the third mission of the Islam Channel: 'to be the voice for the voiceless'. The culture of caution has resulted in the absence of the 'voice' that is supposed to assist 'the silent victims': the family members that the detainees/convicts have left behind. In sum, *Living the Life* not only failed to accomplish an aspect of the mission of the Islam Channel but also failed to be a good magazine talk show.

Constraints in Presenting Organisations Associated with Muslim Political Resistance

The political goal of the Islam Channel is to be the 'voice' for the 'voiceless', the victims of Islamophobia, and of 'the oppressed' (particularly) among Muslims living in conflict areas abroad. It is the sense of solidarity with the *Ummah* and brother/sisterhood in Islam that glues British Muslims to 'oppressed' Muslims abroad. Muslim organisations like Interpal (Palestinian Relief and Development Fund) and the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution, for instance, are known for their links to the Muslim Brotherhood, a political movement that branched out of Islamic fundamentalism. *Jihad* or resistance has become a stated principle of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The production quality of *Living the Life* was lessened. The Islam Channel religiopolitical goal experienced conflict at various levels, i.e., among the CEO, the manager of programming and the *Living the Life* production staff. While the CEO claimed to advocate moderate Islam, the programming department is dominated by *Salafi* fundamentalism. These are two different forms of Islam which, to a certain extent, have influenced the production culture of the Islam Channel. The clash between the two has affected the production quality of *Living the Life*.

Interpal is a humanitarian organisation established to assist Muslims in Palestine. Interpal's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood was the reason for Aswad, the

producer, to be cautious. Again (like the treatment of HHUGS), the on-air conversation was limited to the fundraising events arranged by these organisations. Despite the Islam Channel's commitment to the cause of freedom and solidarity with fellow Palestinians, the on-air conversations lacked depth regarding the crises facing Palestinians because Aswad had decided to remove political aspects from the script. For example, historian *Sheikh* Adnan Rasheed accompanied Khalid Gamel, the director of Interpal, on *Living the Life* to give an overview of the history of Palestine and to promote the upcoming exhibition in London at which Adnan Rasheed would be giving a speech.³⁸ Before the broadcast, Aswad warned the *Sheikh* that the conversation should confine to the historical aspects of Palestine. The producer concerned that the interview with Adnan Rasheed on *Living the Life* might escalate into a political discussion of the Hamas struggle for independence or the Arab-Israeli peace process. The following conversation illustrates the tensions between Aswad, *Sheikh* Adnan Rasheed and Khaled Gamel (Pre-production briefing for Episode 128, Fieldnote, 20 February 2013):

Aswad: Please remember, this is a lifestyle magazine show; it is not a platform for any political discussion. We are trying to stay away from the conflict, so we do not talk about it here.

Adnan Rasheed: So, purely academic discussion? Just about the Palestinian history and nothing else?

Khaled: We are not allowed to do 'that' [political debate] on this channel [...]

Because the genre conventions of *Living the Life* involve light treatment of issues, Aswad saw political discussion as inappropriate. Aswad narrowed the discussion to include only the upcoming exhibition 'Palestine: Journey through the Ages'. Since the conflict in Palestine is heavily political, the on-air conversation was skewed toward the history of Palestine and promoting the upcoming exhibition rather than Palestinian suffering. For example, the script drafted by Aswad for Adnan Rasheed reads like this:

Question for Shaykh Adnan Rasheed: 'Palestine: Journey through the Ages' is an event concerning the history of Islam in Palestine. Umar Ibn Khattab invaded Palestine in 638 and famously captured it from

³⁸ The guests from Interpal, Khalid Gamel and Sheikh Adnan Rasheed, were featured on *Living the Life* to promote A History of Palestine Exhibition. Sheikh Adnan Rasheed is a historian and well known within Muslim circles for being a controversial scholar (Fieldnotes, 20 February, 2013).

Byzantine rule without bloodshed. Are Muslims familiar with the history of Palestine? Why do an event on this topic?

The script, created by Aswad, demonstrates his attempt to avoid political discussion by pushing the conversation in a historical direction. The next two questions focused on the exhibition:

Question for Khaled (Interpal): It is a unique kind of event taking place. There are speakers and an exhibition and performances. What is the objective of the event?

Question for Khaled (Interpal): The exhibition is highlighting different objects and artwork made by Palestinians and activists. Exhibitors are coming on to talk about some of those pieces. What inspired you to produce this?

Since the history of Palestine has the potential to be political and might spur heated arguments on *Living the Life*, the on-air conversation was shallow. The discussion slanted toward as a promotion for the upcoming exhibition rather than allowing the *Sheikh* to become the 'voice' of the oppressed and demonstrate the channel's solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for independence. The *sheikh's* appearance on *Living the Life* was seen as a 'threat' to the genre, i.e., Aswad feared that the historical discussion might veer into politics. He refused to include any political elements in *Living the Life* because they did not fit into its genre conventions. The inability to balance the presentation of politics impacted the quality of this magazine talk show, which became, instead, a platform for the promotion of an upcoming event. Moreover, *Living the Life* also failed to achieve the channel's mission, 'to become the voice of the oppressed', due to a lack of depth in the topic under discussion.

Similar treatment was evident while featuring guests from the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution on *Living the Life* Episode 140 (13 March 2013). Again, Aswad insisted that the presenter keeps the conversation on the surface as he added the following warning in the script: 'Item will focus more on the humanitarian suffering, not the political aspects'. On-air conversation with the guests of this organisation was restricted to an upcoming event, the 'Etilaf March for Syria', calling the UK Syrian community and their friends to show their commitment to the cause of freedom and solidarity with their fellow Syrians wherever they may be. The event marked the second anniversary of the quest for freedom by the Syrian people.

Since the Islam Channel aims to convey a moderate form of Islam to its audience, presenting any political controversy could give viewers the impression that the Islam Channel advocates extremism and, at the same time, might risk the reputation of the channel. The top management (both the CEO and the operational level) expressed their solidarity with the Palestinians and the Syrians by inviting the representatives from Interpal and the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution to promote their events. Once again, as the producer, Aswad faced a dilemma in negotiating and balancing the presentation of certain forms of political ideology. The features (VT) selected for the episode on the 'Etilaf March for Syria' (Episode 140, 13 March 2013) were irrelevant to the topic. For example, in his attempt to 'balance' the amount of light and heavy items in this episode, Aswad selected three VTs that had no relation to the 'March for Syria' event. These VTs were: 1) 'Businesswoman in Qatar', 2) 'Paralysed Dog in Jordan' and 3) 'Handmade Shoes in India'. Aswad's attempt to balance religious elements with light entertainment seemed incoherent. Moreover, he also failed to accomplish the mission of the channel to be the televised 'voice' representing 'oppressed' Syrians due to his strategy of controlling the degree of presentation of religion on the magazine talk show. As the conversation was shallow, many important points relating to the suffering of the Syrians (which might have enlightened viewers) were omitted as a result of the culture of caution in the production of *Living the Life*.

To conclude, the production culture of the Islam Channel involved balancing and negotiating the presentation of religion on *Living the Life*. The ideological conflict was evident at certain organisational levels and proved to have impacted the produced text. The analysis of four situations above demonstrates that religion is central to *Living the Life*, yet needs to be balanced against light entertainment. The unbalanced religious presentation might change the tone of the magazine talk show that the channel sought to produce. The CEO's desire to represent moderate Islam (also stated in the channel's mission) clashes with that of the channel's programming department (*Salafi* fundamentalists) and with the producer's strategy of balancing the presentation of religion. To avoid any conflict with 'the top' and to produce a 'light' magazine talk show, the producer came up with the following strategies to balance religious presentation against light entertainment:

- 1) Avoid doctrinal discourse

- 2) Keep the conversation light or at the surface
- 3) Focus the discussion on the actual purpose of featuring the religious personality, group or Muslim organisation, such as fundraising, etc.
- 4) Quantify the items representing religion by balancing them against light-entertainment items
- 5) Select features (VT) that have non-religious elements and schedule them during an episode that emphasises religion (e.g., two religious personalities featured on the same episode).

I have elaborated the problems in negotiating and balancing religious representation on *Living the Life* about the mission of the Islam Channel. These problems are resulting from the ‘clash of ignorance’ (Said, 2001) between the West and Islamic cultures and the tensions in Muslim communities relating to ideology and intergenerational issues. The debates on the clash between the West and Muslim cultures shape the ways in which Islam and Muslims are represented, interpreted, perceived and politicised by the media, by those ignorant of Islamic cultures, and by the authorities and those in power (Kundnani, 2015; Gilliat-Ray, 2010). The ideological clash in Muslim communities has impacted the creative decisions on presenting religious diversity and multiple dimensions of Muslim everyday life and identity. Such an extreme caution rooted in fear of being classified as ‘a suspect community’. Thus, the ideological clash and ‘the culture of caution’ shaped the creative decision processes; this situation, consequently, impacted the production quality of *Living the Life*.

6.4.2 Constraints in Presenting Music Artists and Performance

As with the course of balancing and negotiating the degree of religious presentations, the production culture of the Islam Channel involved caution when presenting light entertainment on *Living the Life*. The reasons behind such careful behaviour included the producer’s concern over an entertainment genre endorsed by the channel and the nature of the entertainment suitable for the channel’s ‘conservative Muslim audience’ (Assistant manager of programming, 17 June 2013). According to the producer, the aim to educate Muslims through ‘fun and entertainment’ while ‘keeping an Islamic thread running through the programming’ proved difficult to achieve in *Living the Life* production (Interview, 20 June 2013). Such difficulties can be explained by two constraints relating to the religious mission of the channel. These limitations are:

- 1) The genre conventions of a magazine talk show, which caused the producer to struggle with balancing the degree of light entertainment while maintaining an Islamic element.
- 2) Problem in negotiating a form of music featured on the programme that adhered to the dominant ideology (*Salafi* fundamentalism) of the channel's programming department as well as the CEO's desire to promote moderate Islam and the views of its conservative Muslim audience.

The constraint regarding the genre conventions of a magazine talk show was evident in the producer's struggle to balance the degree of entertainment against the religious element required for *Living the Life*. The genre conventions of *Living the Life*, such as presenters, the guests presenting specific items, three separate features (the VT) and a particular segment that invites viewer participation (the Story of the Day) were chosen to be the sources of light entertainment for audiences. For example, the presenters' banter about 'the most unusual food they had ever eaten'. A studio activity such as 'the chocolate tasting', the VT featuring a New York couple living in a home made from shipping containers and the 'Story of the Day' segment about the barista who claimed he had blended a cup of coffee called 'The Death Wish', all suggest the channel's attempt to introduce light entertainment into the programme (Episode 144, *Living the Life*). These examples also demonstrate the kind of light show endorsed by the Islam Channel.

Despite the variety of approaches described above, it would be unreasonable to expect *Living the Life* to achieve anything like the standard of *The One Show*. The production quality was poor as the features and the studio activities presented were incoherent insofar as they have separated from the main topics discussed with the guests. Unlike *The One Show*, where religion is not central to its genre, *Living the Life* requires 'an Islamic thread running through' the light entertainment presented. This indicates that the producer of *Living the Life* 'locked' himself into the strictures of the magazine talk show in which he tried to fulfil the genre requirements while simultaneously maintaining a light religious element. Such a situation suggests that Jeremy Tunstall's (2001, p.194) claim that television producers are 'locked into a genre-specific world' is accurate. Being 'locked' in the genre conventions of a magazine talk show impacted the produced text. For example, the producer tended to select the VT and the topic for the 'Story of the Day' from newspaper articles or the Internet to fit into the genre conventions of *Living the Life*. Although it might have given viewers the impression of light entertainment, such a poor editorial decision turned the programme into a disjointed magazine talk show.

Aside from being 'locked in a genre-specific world', the producer also struggled when negotiating the forms of entertainment endorsed by the channel. The tension between *Salafi* fundamentalist and moderate Islam was the reason for such constraints, particularly when presenting guests from the music industry, such as *nasheed* artists (artists singing Islamic devotional songs). According to fundamentalists, or 'scholars of texts', daily life must be 'devoid of entertainment, without music or spiritual rest' (Ramadan, 2009, p. 196). *Salafi* fundamentalists tend to be intolerant while following a literal interpretation of Islamic sources (e.g., the Quran) and believe that Muslims should be governed by *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law). *Salafi* fundamentalists are also critical of un-Islamic innovations (*bid'ah*) in religious beliefs or practices that include music and entertainment, especially those associated with *Sufism*³⁹ (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, pp. 68-69).

In contrast, moderate Islamists or the 'scholars of context' view music and entertainment as an important dimension of life. Nonetheless, they perceive music as a means to give rest to mind and heart (Ramadan, 2009, p. 196). Conflicting ideas about music and entertainment within the channel have caused tensions in the production of *Living the Life*. Producer's tasks are not only to ensure that the music and artists fit within genre conventions, but also to make sure that the kind of entertainment the channel approved does not offend its conservative Muslim audience.

In general, *nasheed* is a form of entertainment that the channel allowed because its devotional lyrics and melodies offer rest (according to moderate Islam). It was, however, becoming problematic for the *Living the Life* production when most Muslim artists, including pop, hip-hop and rap artists, approached the channel and claimed that they were performing *nasheed* and that the lyrics of their devotional songs were suitable for young British Muslims. Such a blurred identity of *nasheed*/devotional songs has caused problems for *Living the Life*. In particular, the issue concerned the selection of and negotiation with the *nasheed* artists that the channel approved. Iqbal, the programming manager, often reminded the producers to be careful during the selection of *nasheed* artists on *Living the Life*. As he asserted:

³⁹ *Sufism* is a form of mystical Islam, using songs and music as one way to praise God and His Prophet. *Salafi* fundamentalism categorized *nasheed* associated with *Sufism* as un-Islamic and an innovation (*bid'ah*).

We must make sure that the people who come on the Islam Channel are responsible persons. He has not got something bad written on his Twitter, on his YouTube link, he hasn't got something bad written on his Facebook or doesn't do anything wrong. Though we are not trying to judge that person, if the artist posted something controversial on his Twitter, he is passing it to the world. It becomes public information. So we have a responsibility to verify and check everything [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013).

The purpose of checking the artists' backgrounds before inviting them on *Living the Life* demonstrates the channel's concerns with its image and reputation as a broadcaster that represents Islam. A filtering process was also necessary to ensure that the types of music and performances were in line with the programming department's *Salafi* fundamentalism and that the artists' performance did not offend the channel's conservative audience. On one occasion, Iqbal refused to feature Muhammad Yahya, a hip-hop *nasheed* artist, on *Living the Life* because of his previous appearance in a YouTube video clip featuring him singing and dancing to music alongside a female singer, a form of entertainment censured by the programming department.⁴⁰

Opinions differ among fundamentalist and moderate Muslims as to which types of music and instruments are allowed (Van Nieuwkerk, 2011). In the case of Muhammad Yahya, the Islam Channel disapproved the musical instrument, not the lyrics of the song. The song lyrics that he wrote complied with the channel's requirement. They expressed gratitude to God and His Prophet, favoured peace, freedom and respect for humankind and were thus approved by the channel. It was the type of musical instruments and his YouTube video performance that featured dance moves and gender mixing within a confined space (e.g., a nightclub) that could offend the conservative audience of the Islam Channel.⁴¹ It is the way in which the artist behaved for the public and the conditions under which the performance took place that is offensive to both *Salafi* fundamentalist and moderate Islam. It is clear that although moderate Islamists support the use of music and entertainment for relaxation and devotional purposes, they remain concerned about the impact of artists' behaviour on youth. This demonstrates that the production culture of

⁴⁰ Muhammad Yahya is a *nasheed* artist from a hip-hop group called 'Native Sun'.

⁴¹ The performance that the Islam Channel prevented and which led to Muhammad Yahya's exclusion from *Living the Life* can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3LMqnTulG8>

the Islam Channel encourages caution among employees that may create tension between ideologies.

The culture of caution expressed at the managerial and production levels concerns the perceived 'conservative audience' and reputation of the Islam Channel. The strain between the two ideological camps related specifically to presentations of music and *nasheed* artists and whether or not they complied with the programming department's *Salafi* fundamentalism. The culture of caution within the Islam Channel shaped the produced text.

What has affected the production quality of *Living the Life* was the conflicting opinions on the use of music and how *nasheed* artists ought to be presented in the programme. Continuing disagreement among Muslim scholars about the degree to which music is permitted (if at all) in Islam echoes along the channel's halls. Some regard the human voice accompanied by individual percussive instruments as acceptable and others do not (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 240). These opinions influence the music and entertainment presented on *Living the Life*, especially when the music genre is concerned, and whether or not artists' performances are allowed to include musical instruments or must be presented a capella.

On television talk shows, music plays an important role due to its ability to entertain. Music on a talk show has a 'melodramatic and optimistic' effect on guests and the audience (Blum-Kulka, 2008, p. 93). In the case of *Living the Life*, the dilemma involves deciding whether or not the presentation of *nasheed* artists complied with the channel's ideology. Although there was room for agreement between the two dominant ideologies, particularly concerning issues relating to ethics and the perceived decency of artists, the tensions heightened in *Living the Life* production by the programming department's *Salafi* fundamentalists banning of musical performances on the programme. Evidence of *Salafi* influence is seen in the opening montage of the programme, which included only a cappella singing. Additionally, *nasheed* artists were not given a chance to sing and play musical instruments at the same time during their performances on *Living the Life*. Most of these 'live' a capella were often incomplete as they were abruptly cut off during on-air broadcasts. For example, sudden cut off of a capella performances by such famous *nasheed* artists as Mesut Kurtis and Saif Adam on *Living the Life* may have frustrated *Living the Life* audience, especially if they were fans of these artists. Such disruption defeats

the purpose of *Living the Life* as a light-entertainment genre as well as affected its production quality.

Living the Life presents entertainment challenges because it requires religious messages to flow through the programme. The producer's experience of being 'locked into the genre-specific world' resulted in the failure of *Living the Life* to reach the standard of *The One Show*. Its output inconsistent with the features (VT). The studio activities were incoherently presented and detached from the main topics discussed with the guests. A deep-rooted culture of caution within the organisation at the management and production levels as well as the ideological tensions has shaped the editorial decisions of *Living the Life*. The programme lacks the musical performances typically presented in its genre, while its overall quality suffers as the underlying messages within the lyrics of devotional songs performed are often inappropriately interrupted. This leaves the performances of *nasheed* artists dull and meaningless. The Islam Channel failed to acknowledge the importance and attractiveness of music. David Hesmondhalgh (2013b, p. 76) argues that music has an ability to 'enhance feelings of shared experience, attachment, and solidarity towards human beings'. Hence, the exclusion of the musical experience and the unprofessional treatment of those singing devotional songs of love of God, peace and solidarity define one aspect of what *Living the Life* has been missing: the opportunity to convey the beauty of Islam and its teachings.

6.4.3 Constraints in Presenting Physical Appearance of Women

As with the music issues discussed in the previous section, female-related issues are also central to the analyses of problems relating to the religious mission of the Islam Channel. The constraints within the production culture of the channel are caused by tension between two dominant ideologies: the programming department's *Salafi* fundamentalism and the CEO-inspired moderate Islam. The constraints concerned the physical appearance of women presented on *Living the Life*. On most programmes produced by the Islam Channel, women are shown in a modest and respectable manner. While on air, female presenters wear headscarves (*hijab*) and maxi-dresses (*abaya*) or lengthy suit jackets. Such presentations are in line with the Islam Channel code of conduct stated in two policy documents: 1) the *Dress Code Policy* and 2) the *Islam Channel Manners and Etiquette*. Female workers and volunteers at the Islam Channel abide by these rules concerning dress code and behaviour. While the channel drafted the *Dress Code* policy for all employees and

volunteers during working hours at the channel, both staff and guests who appear on the programmes produced by the channel must observe the directives on *Manners and Etiquette*. The guests appear on *Living the Life* were not exceptions. According to *Islam Channel Manners and Etiquette*, female guests invited to the programme must wear modest clothing. The *hijab*, while not compulsory for non-Muslim women, is considered a 'best practice' for the Muslim female. A *Salafi* fundamentalist ruling on female-related issues within the Islam Channel is evident in the document on *Manners and Etiquette*. Half of the listed regulations in the document are meant for female employees, volunteers and guests of the Islam Channel:

- 1) The Islam Channel expects people to present a respectable, modest and conservative image at all times.
- 2) The Islam Channel encourages women to ensure their hair is covered when appearing on the channel.
- 3) The Islam Channel discourages physical contact between persons of the opposite sex, including handshakes.
- 4) The Islam Channel prohibits free mixing and unnecessary communication between men and women. Only work-related activities are to be discussed on the Islam Channel's premises or when representing the Islam Channel.
- 5) The Islam Channel encourages that, whenever possible, men and women are segregated in separate offices.

Some of these rules may not be seen as explicitly for women. However, this set of rules indicates the influence of *Salafi* fundamentalism on the channel's dress code and the instructions on how women should behave at the Islam Channel. Although given to all its employees and guests, the rules inherently function as a form of female protection against the 'male gaze',⁴² a set of restrictions central to Islamic fundamentalist legal thinking about women. Islamic fundamentalism believes that the media of Western cultural imperialism have tainted the image of women and, therefore, they need to be 'saved' before 'their deteriorated ethics' harm the entire Muslim society (Al-Najjar, 2012, p. 35).

The ways in which fundamentalists look at women (as potential agents of moral destruction) place them in a social class that is inferior to men. According to the

⁴² Feminist theorist Laura Mulvey (1975), argued that visual pleasure in classical Hollywood cinema was based around the way in which women were subjected to the 'male gaze'. She divided the gaze into three categories: (1) how men look at women, (2) how women look at themselves and (3) how women look at other women (not in sexual terms, but rather to compare body images). Mulvey, L. 1989. *Visual and other pleasures*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

fundamentalist literal interpretation of the Qur'anic text, women are expected to dress modestly and appear in a conservative manner when in the presence of men. Such conservatism includes modest garments or headscarves (*hijab*) and veiling (*niqab*) is encouraged. The fundamentalist rulings on how women should behave in public places include the prohibition of any form of physical or verbal contact with males and gender segregation. This dress code and etiquette, enforced by the Islam Channel, is also manifested in the *Salafi* fundamentalist Al-Majd television channel based in Saudi Arabia. At Al-Majd, fundamentalists view women as being objectified by Western media and culture. They argue that women should be confined to their homes as a result of the 'deterioration of their ethics' caused by Western media. Such decline could be harmful to wider Muslim society (Al-Najjar, 2012, p. 52).

The fundamentalists support a literal understanding of what Qur'anic texts say about women rather than what those texts have 'promoted, defended and prescribed concerning women's being and power' about the current cultural context in which Muslim women live (Ramadan, 2009, p. 213). As a result of this literal reduction, fundamentalism tends to evaluate the image of modest women by the way they dress, regardless of the cultural context in which they live. As Ramadan claims, 'Muslim institutions and scholars have been seen to offer modest dress as the ultimate expression of faith or as an act of resistance to Western cultural imperialism' (ibid., p. 219).

Although some characteristics of the Al-Majd TV rulings concerning women's dress code and behaviour resonate within the *Islam Channel Manners and Etiquette*, the Islam Channel is dissimilar to Al-Majd in that it allows women's voices on its programmes. Notwithstanding such visible forms of *Salafi* fundamentalist gender-based discrimination regarding women's image and behaviour, there are signs of recognition of the women's role in the production culture of the Islam Channel. These signs reflect the moderate Islam viewpoint to which the channel adheres as well as a hint of feminist activism within the channel. One might ask what kind of feminist activism exists in the channel and whether or not it is in line with the moderate Islam that the Islam Channel claims to espouse.

Theologian Amina Wadud (2002) suggests three different schools of thought within Muslim feminist activism: 1) Marxist-informed secular feminists and activists who, though Muslims themselves, see Islam as promoting oppressive cultural manifestations in the

Western post-colonial context, 2) Muslim fundamentalists among Muslim male authorities and their female representatives who identify an ideal Islam based on literal interpretations of Quranic texts (discussed above), 3) Islamic feminists, including those who are Muslim female scholars and who accept Islam as an intrinsic part of their identity and ‘emphatically critique patriarchal control over the male Islamic worldview’ (cited in Mirza, 2012, p. 133).

Among the three strands of Muslim feminist activism, Islamic feminism is the form of feminist activism found at the Islam Channel. The Islam Channel’s political aim (to become the ‘voice for the voiceless and of the oppressed’) resonates with Islamic feminist activism in the channel’s programming. Such form of activism is in line with moderate Islam, a kind of religion that the Islam Channel seeks to present to its non-Muslim audience. Moderate Islam does not confine itself to a literal reduction of the Qur’anic text like the fundamentalist prescriptions on how women should present themselves or behave in public. In the discourse about women, fundamentalists focus intensely on norms such as a female’s ritualistic aspects regarding religious practice (e.g., behaviour rules, dress, etc.) and formal ones concerning social affairs (e.g., the rights and duties of wives and maternal responsibilities) (Ramadan, 2009, p. 217).

Contrary to literal reduction by fundamentalist, moderate Islamists combine analyses of texts and context in developing social aspects of womanhood. Moderate Islam deals with the issues of women according to the corpus of ‘higher objectives’ (*Maqaasid*).⁴³ Based on the higher objectives approach, the discourse concerning women is not only limited to norms, rituals or social affairs aspects as emphasised by the fundamentalist approaches to women’s issues, but rather, as Ramadan suggests:

The discourse must rely on in-depth studies of all the dimensions of a woman’s being in the light of ‘higher objectives’ beyond norms, raising

⁴³ The ‘corpus of higher objectives’ (*Maqaasid*) is an approach within Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) that combines both textual and contextual interpretations in dealing with social issues (including women’s issues). Moderate Islamic scholars, such as Tariq Ramadan (2009) and Hassan (2013), believe that the corpus of higher objectives must be established before any circumstantial analysis of texts and environments. According to Ramadan, this approach is relevant ‘to avoid running the risk of being misled by the letter of some texts or the cultural shackles of past or contemporary societies’ Ramadan, T. 2009. *Radical reform : Islamic ethics and liberation*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 216.

such issues as the acquisition of knowledge (about texts and other bodies of knowledge) for women, the meaning of their dignity and welfare in all that has to do with their minds, hearts, and bodies, their inalienable autonomy and the essence of their freedom in the mindscape of social representations as well as in group structures, without overlooking the question of the essence of womanhood and related factors (Ramadan, 2009, p. 218).

I have identified a source of conflict within the Islam Channel: the *Salafi* fundamentalist influence within the religious programming department versus the channel's mission to represent moderate Islam. Such conflict has also shaped the production culture of the Islam Channel. The tension arose in presenting the image of women on *Living the Life*. The *Salafi* fundamentalist insistence on their notion of a modest presentation of women on the channel has created constraints within the production of *Living the Life*. Such restrictions consequently impacted the programme's production quality.

The ideological tension between the *Salafi* fundamentalist dress code and the producer's moderate Islam approach to the treatment of the female image was evident in Episode 136 of *Living the Life* (Fieldnotes, 6 March 2013). The episode featured a female guest, Ms Necera Gomes, who talked about nutritious organic argan oil. She came to the Islam Channel wearing a knee-length red dress. I remember welcoming her to the channel and assisting her with all the bottles of argan oil she had brought.

After introducing her to the producer, I offered her a seat in the waiting area. Subsequently, I heard Iqbal, the manager of programming speaking privately to Aswad, the producer. Aswad immediately approached me after having an intense conversation with Iqbal, saying that Ms Gomes could not appear on the show in 'that' kind of dress. Iqbal approached Aswad again, asking him to speak to Ms Gomes in private about how to conceal her legs from viewers while seated on the set's sofa. I observed her talking to Aswad through the glass window of the control room. She did not seem comfortable because her facial expression changed from one of enthusiasm to that of a discomfited woman when Aswad asked her to put the shawl on upon the manager's request. Obeying the manager's order, Aswad apologised to Ms Gomes and proceeded with the 'live' filming of the episode. When Ms Gomes took her seat, she covered her exposed legs with a red shawl that she happened to have brought with her. Such a 'wardrobe malfunction' and the absence of a *hijab* caused the camera operator and visual editor to worry; they

were anxious about how many ‘decent’ shots of the guest they could capture in a ‘live’ broadcast.



Figure 8: Ideological Constraints Related to Poor Camerawork

Source: Episode 136, 6 March 2013

Figure 8 describes the predicament in camera operation and visual direction, which resulted in a poor camera work. The sequence of images illustrates the difficulties faced by the camera operator and the visual editor. It demonstrates the limitations of capturing close-ups of Ms Gomes and sustaining the camera focus on her for an extended period. In this case, her appearance was unacceptable to Iqbal, the manager of programming. The notion of female modesty favoured by *Salafi* fundamentalists is widespread on the Islam Channel and has created constraints in the camera work. Ms Gomes had become a ‘controversial’ subject. This issue has shaped the overall production quality of *Living the Life*. Also addressing problems relating to gender, Caldwell found common problematic forms of ‘sexual politics and gender segregation’ on the behind-the-scene videos that he analysed (Caldwell, 2008, p. 53). However, Caldwell frames such issues as ‘acute cultural typing’ (ibid., p. 55). Caldwell categorises gendered TV workers who were subject to such ‘cultural typing’ include: ‘the female network executive is intimidating because of her sexuality, glamour, and toughness; the female casting director is a tough worker-bee who is true, plain, and devoted; the male producer is virile and scary, marking his turf for any would-be challengers’ (ibid.). This thesis, on the contrary, presents the challenge

faced by the producer in presenting the physical appearance of women who dressed in a particular garment that could offend the channel conservative fundamentalist audience. Such incident also signifies the ideological clash that shapes creative decisions. The fundamentalist strict adherence to the dress code left no room for a female guest to negotiate her position as a non-Muslim talk show guest on a Muslim TV, who should be treated with kindness and respect. As a gendered individual and a moderate Muslim, I believe that a moderate form of Islam teaches its adherents to not judging non-Muslims or enforcing on them certain rules on how and what to dress in public. Moreover, the way the channel treated the non-Muslim women is against the *Da'wah* principles which encourage Muslims to invite non-Muslims to Islam with wisdom and beautiful way of teaching.⁴⁴

6.5 Conflicting Notions of “Good” Television Programming

In addition to the lack of resources and problems related to the religious mission of the channel, this section analyses what the production community perceived to be a “good” television programme and how the conflicting opinions on the concept of “good” television shaped the production quality of a magazine talk show. Like many media organisations, conflicting opinions between the ‘top’ management and the production workers is also evident on the Islam Channel. The concept of “good” television varies across the perspectives of and within its production community. It is important to identify what kind of end product the production staff was oriented toward producing. Unless we get the sense of their understandings of good television programming, we may have only a limited knowledge of the causes of their failure to produce a good magazine talk show.

There are two aspects concerning television production that explain the conflicting opinions of what constitutes “good” television. These are 1) business expectations among managers and 2) the perceptions of the genre of talk show among the production community.

⁴⁴ To invite every human being to Islam with wisdom and discretion, meeting people on their ground and convincing them with illustrations from their own knowledge and experience, this may be very narrow or very broad. And to adopt a ‘beautiful way of preaching’, the preaching must not be dogmatic, self-regarding or offensive, but gentle, considerate and such as would attract their attention. Cited in Yusuf Ali, A. 2011. *The meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. 11 ed. Maryland, USA: Amana Publications.p. 22n.Yusuf Ali, 2011, p. 669.

6.5.1 Business Expectations

The Islam Channel relies heavily on its business enterprises to continue producing television programmes. The scheme such as the *Da'wah Card* subscriptions offered to individuals and organisations/businesses, the selling of airtime and the online advertising spaces and event organising, e.g., the annual Global Peace and Unity, are sources of income for the Islam Channel (see Chapter 5). Like many media organisations, advertising and sponsorship are the most lucrative sources of support that allow the channel to survive in the business. The channel relies on a broad range of programming to gain revenue. As Malik, the human resource manager, claimed:

The primary source of income would be the advertising. As our sales team, they will look for clients to advertise on-air and on the Internet. Some of these clients subscribe to the sponsorship packages to get their services or products to reach our viewers [...] (Interview, 18 June 2013).

The above claim indicates that the Islam Channel depends on advertising revenues to survive in the broadcasting business. With insufficient financial resources, it can be tough for the channel to accomplish its religious mission 'to convey Islam to non-Muslims, to educate Muslims, and to be representative for the voiceless and of the oppressed Muslims'. To send these religious messages, the channel has to produce more programmes. More programmes mean that the channel needs to look for more sponsors. Such attitude towards a 'formula' to survive in the business can put the production community at risk because it can compromise the quality of its programmes. Therefore, it is important to find out what the management perceived to be "good" television programming.

Iqbal, the manager of the programming department, has claimed that "good" television is 'a programme that has quality; it is liked by viewers and fits with the ethics and ideology of the channel' (Interview, 20 June 2013). The problem with his definition was that the channel has no concrete evidence, such as rating figures, which could define the perceived 'quality' of the programme because according to Iqbal, the channel cannot afford to hire a consultant like Nielsen to oversee audience ratings. The only source of discovering what the audience likes is from its online survey on the Islam Channel website. According to Sara, the assistant manager of programming:

Our audience fills up what they like, what kind of programme they want. So our decisions are based on what our audience wants. We also monitor

emails they sent us so then we know what they want and don't want [...]
(Interview, 17 June 2013).

It is complicated when the management equalised quality with popularity. The ways in which the managers, for instance, perceived 'quality' of the channel programming is by referring to its audience preferences. *Living the Life* is the second most 'popular' after the 'live' religious programme *IslamQA* according to the online polling result (between February and April 2013). Thus, the scheduling hour between 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm was seen as a good strategy to attract sponsorships.

The conflicting understandings of good television have triggered tensions at the production level when presenting Muslim charitable organisations on *Living the Life*. The CEO and the sales department perceived *Living the Life* to be "good" television for its existing and potential clients who might advertise their products or services. The case of HHUGS, for example, the producer was not keen on featuring the guests suggested by the management because this type of guest does not make 'good programmes' according to him. The guests whom the producer perceived to be "good" for the magazine talk show are those resulting from the research by the production staff in *Living the Life*. The poor production quality of the magazine talk show can be explained by the results of textual analysis that show a shallow conversation between presenters and Ms Haneefa, who represented HHUGS. This happened for two equally relevant reasons: first, the producer was cautious on the subject discussed by the guest (e.g., anti-terrorist legislation). Second, the producer was not interested in the guest suggested by the management as their invitations did not result from the research carried out by the *Living the Life*'s production team. The reluctance to feature a particular type of Muslim organisation on *Living the Life* was due to the kind of organisation that the guests represented. This suggests that editorial decisions, at some point, are influenced by the managerial pressure that in turn, is strongly determined by commercial imperatives.

Aside from producer's response to the channel business expectation, his poor management of clash between the 'uncertainty' and 'sociability' factors as characteristics of good television talk show (Bruun, 2001) has also resulted in poor quality of *Living the Life*. While, the 'uncertainty' factor that can be represented through stories about family members that HHUGS support, the 'sociability' element found in 'hospitality' and 'atmosphere togetherness' brought about by presenter-guest dramaturgy (Bruun, 2001, p.

250), could have enhanced the quality of *Living the Life*. Hence, this indicates that the channel expectation of its business client like HHUGS for making “good” television has shaped the production rituals, subsequently, the production quality of *Living the Life*.

6.5.2 Perceptions on the Genre

While the ‘top management’ viewed the concept of good television in light of advertising profits, production staff at *Living the Life* developed two sets of understanding of the concept. These understandings are that: a) religion is central to a good television programme and b) a good television programme has balanced elements of religion and light entertainment.

Religion is Central to Good Television

While the management perceived good television programming as a platform for their clients to promote businesses and services, workers in the production recognised good programming as having a strong religious message that helps one to fortify his/her religious identity. As an assistant manager of programming, Sara emphasised:

A good television programme is something that inspires people to do good by instilling Islamic principles in them. So they find their identity within the programme, something that tells who they are, and something that encourages them that their *deen* (religion) is good, obviously something that educates them as well. I think something that also makes the audience want to watch it and feel to reaffirm their faith. Feel so strongly of their faith [...] (Interview, 17 June 2013).

“Good” television, then, is characterised by explicit religious messages within the programming. According to Sara, a programme is good when it seeks to accomplish the religious mission of the Islam Channel ‘to educate Muslims’ through which the programme reinforced viewers beliefs and religious identity. Religion, according to Sara, is central to her envisioned ‘good programme’. Maryam, the assistant producer of *Living the Life* felt that a good programme does not portray Islamic elements as an ‘ad hoc’ or ‘an afterthought’. Sara suggested that ‘religion/Islam should be there as a central idea to the show’ (Assistant Producer 1, Interview, 14 June 2013). Like Sara, Maryam also suggested that good television emphasises religion as the gist of the conveyed message. Maryam argues:

I think we should start from Islam as a central theme then we insert different ideas into the programme. We can show Islam’s message

through history, through politics, through lifestyle because Islam has stuff to say about society, social and lifestyle [...], (Interview, 14 June 2013).

Moreover, a “good” television programme conveys the message of Islam to its viewers explicitly. As an example, the religious message should be in the form of verbal reminders by the presenters of *Living the Life*. Maryam found it difficult to project such a spiritual message via a magazine talk show like *Living the Life* because of its genre conventions. It requires unique skills and efforts from the producer to execute the genre conventions of a magazine talk show in order not to sideline the religious gist. She felt that *Living the Life* treated religion less seriously due to its light-entertainment nature:

We are labelled as Islam Channel. We do have a responsibility in what we put up on this channel. It has to be Islamic because we are saying it is ‘Islam’. Many people will look at Islam Channel as a reference point. However, sometimes I feel like *Living the Life* can be a little bit on the border with things like banter and mixing of gender. It sometimes has a very ‘relaxed’ atmosphere. For example, female guests are coming on the show chit-chatting and giggling. You see for yourself by looking in our office; we have segregation. There is a reason all women are sitting on one side and men on the other side. This is something that we learn from Islam [...]. (Interview, 14 June 2013).

A lighter treatment of religion on *Living the Life* has frustrated Maryam. The religious message seems to have been watered down once the ‘chitchatting’ or banter took over the conversation on the programme. The influence of fundamentalist ideology is evident in the above statement. A real advocate of such thinking tends to agree with gender segregation at the workplace. A concept such as ‘*halal* and fun’ (Herding, 2013) that the producer attempted to project on *Living the Life* had been disapproved by the fundamentalists. The ways in which television production employees view such situation may be different depending on their religious orientation and ideology. As for Maryam, she had been brought up in a conservative home when her father, a convert, became a practising Muslim (Interview, 14 June 2013). Thus, her religious orientation/ideology echoed through her attitude towards entertainment and her understanding of good television programming.

Maryam’s desire to set Islam at the ‘centre’ of the discussion and not just an attempt to ‘Islamise’ the programme echoed in Tariq Ramadan’s (2009) critique of entertainment artists. Even though Ramadan encourages creativity among youth, he also criticises cultural producers including Muslim music artists for only trying to ‘Islamise’ songs and

lyrics through the insertion of Qur'anic terms or Islamic concepts 'to give the impression that the work or product has been Islamised'. As he argues, 'Such an attitude reveals a deep lack of self-confidence in the forms of culture and art [including music] in general' (Ramadan, 2009, p. 205). As an *Ulama* ('scholar of context') and a moderate Muslim with his cultural experience as a European Muslim, he understands the Western environment in which Muslims live, i.e., that Muslims ought to live their lives in the West and integrate with their cultures without compromising their faith and Islamic values. Such act is useful for Muslim artists and musicians (ibid.). From the perspective of a moderate Muslim like Ramadan, religious entertainment fusion is allowed as long as it does not discourage Muslims from practising their faith. His criticism also suggests that he finds some aspects of entertainment problematic because it lacks 'confidence' in traditional Islamic forms.

Balanced between Religion and Light Entertainment

For workers at *Living the Life*, a good television programme contains a thread of a religious message running through light entertainment segments. Amar, another assistant producer of *Living the Life*, claimed that good television should include elements of entertainment because Muslims in this country enjoying very microscopic in the way of Islamic entertainment:

Muslims need to see some entertainment on TV especially with Islamic element in it because the other forms of entertainment in this country are all un-Islamic entertainment [...] (Interview, 19 June 2013).

In contrast to the previous understanding of good television in which religion becomes a marker for quality programming, Amar emphasised the importance of balancing religion with entertainment on religious television. His opinion is in line with the form of moderate Islam proposed by Tariq Ramadan (2009) on how Muslims ought to live their lives as Western or European Muslims without compromising their religious identities.

The need for 'Islamic' entertainment is crucial to Muslim society residing in the West (Ramadan, 2009).⁴⁵ Amar felt that the Islam Channel produced not only good programmes but also good 'Islamic' programming with light entertainment. Combined elements of entertainment and educational values will be meaningful and makes good television programmes. As Amar asserted:

Education and light entertainment is another trait of good television. These two (education and entertainment), whenever they are on any TV programme, such programme can be considered as successful [...], (Interview, 19 June 2013).

While Amar found that education and entertainment as a combined set defined good television programming, Jahd, the producer of current affairs programmes believes that *Living the Life* is a good programme because it interacts with its audience:

I think it is a good programme as to some extent it is interactive. This is relevant to the audience. It keeps them entertained [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013).

Jahd considered the interactive element in the 'Story of the Day' segment as a good way of engaging with the audience. He also asserted that good television programming also offers 'fun and the light-hearted with religious elements'. His understanding is in line with what Aswad, the producer aimed for: 'an entertainment magazine talk show that has an Islamic thread running through it' (Interview, 20 June 2013).

Shadi, one of the presenters on *Living the Life*, thought that the programme is a good magazine talk show because it is unique and different from other types of programmes shown on other Muslim television stations:

Living the Life is a good programme. It is something new on the channel. It is something fresh. It is different from other programmes. There is no other Muslim channel doing something like it [...] (Interview, 20 June 2013).

⁴⁵ Ramadan addresses the apparent lack of creativity amongst Muslims in the west in creating an Islamic form of entertainment. He condemns the imitation of western music and entertainment. He summons Muslims 'not to neglect the psychology that should underpin art and entertainment in the Islamic philosophy of life, not in order to isolate oneself or to forbid everything but, on the contrary, to commit oneself - to develop a critical mind, to make choices, to contribute, to renew, and always not to imitate the past or the present' Ramadan, T. 2009. *Radical reform : Islamic ethics and liberation*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 222-223.

'Islamic', 'balanced', 'entertaining', 'interactive', 'fun', 'unique and fresh' are on the list of characteristics of 'a good television programme' of its genre according to the production staff. Despite such features, the production quality of *Living the Life* remains weak. There is an essential element of a good television talk show that has been missing in my interviews with the production staff regarding *Living the Life*: emotion. As a television genre, the talk show is a site for emotional responses. Emotion is what makes talk shows "good" television. According to Grindstaff:

Producers encourage guests to exaggerate their emotions or prioritise the most sensational aspects of their stories. To do so in the name, not of deception but of producing 'good' television (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 247)

As with the *Living the Life* production, the producer often encouraged the presenters *not* to show emotional responses or try to bring out emotion from guests. For example, a guest (Ms Haneefa) representing HHUGS in Episode 144 of *Living the Life*, wanted to demonstrate greater emotion in her explanation concerning the families that suffered from anti-terrorist legislation. Unfortunately, due to 'the culture of caution' of the presenter Rima and the poor management of uncertainty and sociability factors of the producer, Ms Haneefa failed to express her emotion. In contrast, Grindstaff's study shows that good television is 'produced' by the guests who come on the show. She describes how the guests on a talk show could make good television by showing emotion:

From the guests' part; they know what to do to create emotions. Not because the producers asked them to, but because they know what constitutes good television within the parameter of the genre, and are eager to prove their 'performative competence' (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 247)

The failure to incorporate emotions into *Living the Life* made it less entertaining and meaningful. This problem may link to the poor execution of genre conventions of the producer and the lack of anchoring skills among presenters. A combination of producer's poor creative decisions, the presenters' lack of journalistic skills and a lack of sensitivity to television requirements have impacted the quality of the produced text. Emotional responses could make the *Living the Life* more interesting and meaningful to audiences; it matters when making a "good" talk show because, according to Grindstaff, 'all good talk show is built around moments of dramatic revelation' (ibid., p. 249).

Grindstaff's study shows that 'emotion' in daytime talk show is treated as a commodity that bears commercial imperatives for the network television. Although

emotion may add commercial value to daytime talk shows, it does not mean that it makes 'good' television for viewers. I contend that talk shows that have been 'built around moments of dramatic revelation' are merely "good" for the channels or networks that broadcast them because these talk shows that are packed with emotional display help increase viewer ratings. I agree with Dovey's argument (2000) that a "popular" talk show does not necessarily mean "good" for viewers. Instead, he suggests that "good" and "popular" are the terms given by television networks to sell talk shows to advertisers to gain profits from advertising revenue.

As for a magazine talk show, emotion might not be its key ingredient, but it can make good television not in a commercial sense, but regarding meaning that it gives to audiences. This notion reflected in one researcher's critique that *Living the Life* lacked meaning and that it is not a good magazine talk show (Interview, 14 June 2013). As a member of the production community and also as a viewer, I agree with such critique. I argue that poor execution of the genre conventions and management of 'uncertainty' and 'sociability' factors (Bruun, 2001) contributed to the failure to convey religious messages or meanings to its viewers, subsequently, impacted its production quality. Besides, several positive comments on *Living the Life* as a "good" television programme may be biased as people in professional roles made them at the channel.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

In Chapter 4 I mapped the research design that includes four phases of analysis to conceptualise the production culture of religious television. Up till now, I have discussed two of these stages, which include the sociocultural environment in which British Muslims live and work (Chapter 2), and the institutional mission (Chapter 5). This chapter presents the third and fourth phases, which include the analysis of the production quality of the magazine talk show, *Living the Life*, and how the staff involved perceives its quality. Furthermore, this chapter also discovers three fundamental problems that affected the production quality of *Living the Life*. These include: 1) a lack of resources, 2) a problem related to the mission of the channel, and 3) conflicting notions of what constitutes good television.

Despite its unique business strategy deployed under the banner of the Da'wah Project, the resources issue remains prominent. The channel could not afford to employ skilled and experienced creative personnel and presenters to produce a magazine talk

show or provide professional training for its existing television production staff. Next is the ideological clash within the Islam Channel between moderate Islam and *Salafi* fundamentalism. Whereas the channel and the CEO's mission aimed to convey moderate Islam, the programming department's *Salafi* fundamentalism tended to control the production of *Living the Life*, which resulted in the limited creative autonomy of the production staff involved. The ideological clash also impacted on representational issues, creating constraints in particular for the producer and his assistants as well as the researchers. These include constraints in presenting: 1) religious elements, 2) musicians and performances and 3) women on *Living the Life*.

This chapter also suggests that the environment of the Islam Channel practices/encourages a 'culture of caution'. Such caution is traceable throughout the institutional hierarchy of the Islam Channel. For example, the CEO, the staff in a managerial position, and those involved in the production of *Living the Life*, are subject to the 'culture of caution'. It can be concluded that the internal and external factors shape the production culture of the Islam Channel by which the genre conventions and production routines of television talk show are not fully met with negative implications for programme quality of the magazine talk show, *Living the Life*. While this chapter aims to conceptualise the production culture of the Islam Channel, the next chapter analyses the implications of the production culture on the working life of the television production community at *Living the Life*.

Chapter 7

Experiencing the Production Culture of the Islam Channel

This chapter analyses the experience of workers involved in the production of *Living the Life*. It emphasises key aspects relevant to work in television production in four sections: 7.1 exploitation, 7.2 self-exploitation, 7.3 creative autonomy, and 7.4 emotional well-being. While Section 7.1 demonstrates how resources constraints resulted in the channel's exploitation of religion as a motivational tool to encourage hard work among the *Living the Life* production community, Section 7.2 discusses how creative and technical staff acknowledged such strategic, religious motivation and demonstrated how self-exploitation affected the workers' physical wellbeing. Sections 7.3 and 7.4 address the implications of 'the culture of caution' and ideological constraints for the creative autonomy of television production staff, subsequently, affected their emotional well-being. The focus throughout is on the quality of working life of those involved in the production of *Living the Life*.

Before moving on to these empirical sections, this chapter begins with an overview on how the Islam Channel managed the employment of its television production workers through flexibility employment techniques. Such techniques are not only a cost-saving strategy but also used to encourage multi-skilling and multi-functionality in workers.

In the previous chapter, I indicated that the channel's primary source of income is advertising. It has come up with strategies to boost advertising revenue such as the *Da'wah Card Scheme*, which specifically aims at Muslim business owners, and the online/on-air sponsorship packages that aim to attract non-profit organisations and businesses owners who do not enrol with the *Da'wah Card scheme*. These sales tactics demonstrate the Islam Channel strategy to increase advertising revenue to survive financially in the broadcasting business.

Aside from securing advertising revenue, the channel has also adopted 'flexibility employment techniques' to stay profitable in the broadcasting business. It hires 'flexible workers' who are multi-skilled and who can perform many different functions. Flexibility matters to the Islam Channel because it reduces production costs by hiring young workforce entrants who are willing to cope with fast-paced production schedules such as

those of *Living the Life*. Flexible television workers have the capacity 'to contribute to productivity and hence to profitability' of the organisation (Ursell, 2006, p. 136).

'Flexibility' is a management technique introduced by John Atkinson (1984). This technique is used by modern employers to maximise business efficiency. In his model of a 'flexible firm', Atkinson suggested three types of employment techniques for securing greater flexibility from workers:

- 1) 'Numeral/temporal flexibility': the number of people employed and the number of hours work is varied according to the needs of employers.
- 2) 'Functional flexibility': the types and range of tasks undertaken by any one worker are numerous.
- 3) 'Pay flexibility': workers' earnings should be open to recurrent negotiation, often on an individual-by-individual and/or project-by-project basis (cited in Ursell, 2006, p. 136).

These types of flexibility techniques have become common in the UK film and broadcasting industries in recent decades (Ursell, 1998, p. 131). The principal form of flexibility among core television workers is multi-skilling (ibid.). In her study of employees in UK television industries, Gillian Ursell has revealed that the producer-broadcaster companies which adopted flexibility techniques tended to employ very small production teams (around five people), all of whom were multi-skilled and multi-functional (ibid., p. 143). Such flexibility also exists within the Islam Channel. Of Atkinson's (1984) three types of flexibility, the Islam Channel adopted 'functional flexibility' and 'pay flexibility' techniques for managing its short-term contract employees. Considering the short-term nature of TV contracts and the extent of freelancing overall, numeral flexibility seems to be at least as important in the context of the Islam Channel.

Flexible workers in the production of *Living the Life* are required to be multi-skilled and multi-functional. Workers with such capacities help the channel to operate within its limited resources. To ensure the 'live' broadcast of *Living the Life* runs smoothly four days a week (Monday to Thursday), the Islam Channel adopted flexibility techniques for managing the employment of workers in television production. There are two types of employment, characterised as paid and unpaid labour, in the television production of the Islam Channel. Under these two types of employment, there are two categories of workers: creative and technical employees. Both paid and unpaid workers are affected by

flexibility techniques. Creative work such as scriptwriting, researching and directing, is part of the tasks expected from a producer and an assistant producer. Technical tasks like lighting and camera operations, floor managing, visual editing and sound engineering are expected from a single worker whom the channel called 'a multi-skilled operator'. The following table illustrates the division of labour and distribution of tasks for workers at the Islam Channel:

Table 8: Division of Labour and Tasks in the Production of *Living the Life*

| Type of labour | Job categories | Job title | Responsibilities |
|----------------|----------------|------------------------------|---|
| Paid | Creative | producer, assistant producer | Scriptwriting, directing, researching guests |
| | Technical | multi-skilled operator | camera operation, lighting control, visual editing, sound control, floor-managing |
| Unpaid | Creative | researcher/intern | Scriptwriting, researching for guests |

As seen in Table 8, workers under the employment flexibility scheme in the production of *Living the Life* are expected to carry out multiple tasks. Paid television workers are bound by a work contract, which describes their job titles and responsibilities. The condition of unpaid labourers, however, is different. Although they sign a contractual agreement that defines their right to be on the business premises as a member of the production team, their titles and responsibilities remain unspecified. A title such as 'intern' or 'researcher' might appear to indicate less responsibility when compared to paid television workers. However, under flexibility guidelines, they are treated as a part of the workforce, exempted only from remuneration.

The management perceived flexibility to be positive, benefitting both employees and employers alike. The human resource manager described the channel's expected results from such technique as follows:

Because of the nature of our business, one person has to carry out quite a few jobs. This is good for them as the staff learns a lot quicker. Their skills in managing a few tasks are enhanced. After three months they have learned various skills which generally could take them over a year to learn elsewhere. So, it is really good as he or she can learn much stuff within a short period. Most people, when they first started working here, their

skills were limited. However, after a few months or a year, their skills are enhanced [...], (Human resource manager, Interview, 19 June 2013).

The human resource manager viewed flexibility as a way to equip workers with various skills. Allowing employees to carry out different tasks was seen as an excellent opportunity for them to learn and enhance their performance. This is what the Islam Channel expected from the flexibility technique. Indeed, this method benefits the channel as it may reduce costs associated with hiring skilled professionals and allows the channel to operate with a minimum number of permanent workers. The flexibility employment technique seems to be beneficial to the channel. However, what does it mean to employees in the production of *Living the Life*? How does flexibility impact the quality of their working lives?

Gillian Ursell's research into the commercial television industry in the UK indicates that the flexibility technique adopted by television production companies offers a variety of results depending on types of (a) programming, (b) production companies, (c) audiences, (d) production teams, and (e) technologies employed (Ursell, 1998, p. 144). She concludes that young, multi-skilled, multi-functional and digitally competent television workers will be increasingly employed because they are cheaper television labour than highly skilled and experienced employees in the business. Nevertheless, there is a risk in multi-skilling and multi-functionality because it can compromise the production quality. I have illustrated in the previous chapter some examples of the poor quality of *Living the Life* output. Such output is partly the result of flexibility techniques adopted by the Islam Channel (see Sections 6.2 and 6.3).

Concerning the Islam Channel, flexibility seems to have reduced the production costs that prevented the management from hiring more workers to do both creative and technical work. It may have given the management a positive outcome, but both paid and unpaid labourers endure various unpleasant working conditions. I divided the analyses of *Living the Life* production crew experience of working under the pressure of resource constraints into two categories: Section 7.1 experience of exploitation and Section 7.2 self-exploitation.

In the production of *Living the Life*, I found two implications of flexibility employment techniques for workers' working lives: first, workers experienced working longer hours than contractually stipulated and with a very small group. The second

implication for workers is self-exploitation, resulting from financial constraints of the channel and the multi-skilling and multi-functionality that employees felt obliged to accept for employment. Television workers tended to overwork and to some extent experienced burn-out in their pursuit to ensure the success of the 'live' broadcast of each episode of the programme. I will discuss these two implications in turn in the sections that follow.

7.1 Exploitation

The term 'exploitation' is often used about 'the relations between people or groups of people in which one group or individual is structurally in a position enabling them to take advantage of others' (Himmelweit, 2006, p. 227). Within the context of my research, television workers were in a position that allowed the channel to exploit them. This section explores the channel's exploitation of a group of employees involved in the production of *Living the Life*. It identifies the channel's strategy of using religion as a motivational tool. With this strategy, the management of the channel motivates its workers in television production to work hard and follow the production rituals. This section asks the following questions:

- 1) How the management of the channel imposed its religious strategy on the workforce?
- 2) How employees in the production of *Living the Life* perceived this strategy?
- 3) What are the implications of religious strategy on working life?

To stay in the broadcasting business despite limited financial resources, the Islam Channel adopts a flexible employment technique that allows it to hire a group of creative and technical personnel. While the producer and his assistants were paid employees in the production hierarchy, the researchers or interns were not given remuneration (although they assumed positions equivalent to assistant producer). Multi-skilled operators were included in a pool of technical labour within the production hierarchy of the Islam Channel. Various technical tasks in television production, from props and studio settings to sound engineering and visual editing, became the areas of 'expertise' of this group of multi-skilled operators.

Studies show that flexibility techniques may lead to exploitation: a common experience for workers in television (Ursell, 2000; Banks, 2007). Similarly, my study not

only addresses such concerns but also reveals how the management of the channel has strategically used the religious mission to motivate the workers in television production to work hard. With so many tasks to be completed daily and with the limited number of workers employed, the Islam Channel always reminded both paid and unpaid production workers to treat their jobs as a mission that God wants them to carry out individually and collectively. Iqbal, the programming manager made the following statement during an interview which also contains advice similar to that delivered in a speech he gave earlier in the departmental meeting on the 4th of March, 2013:

My philosophy and just kind of...as I was saying yesterday to the staff...of course, we make no bones about it. We are Muslims. We believe in Allah, in the Prophet Muhammad in Islam, so we are not going to hide [that] we wear our religion on our heart [sic]. So, that is why it is called the Islam Channel. The name Islam Channel holds a great responsibility for us who are working here to make sure that we are representing Islam fairly out there. So it is important. That is why when I talk to the staff...I said, 'Look, there are nearly 1.8 billion Muslims, and from those 1.8 billion Muslims, there are 3 million Muslims in this country. Moreover, from these 3 million Muslims, we are 30 to 50 people whom Allah has chosen to do this work. So, don't just take it as work, it is also a mission for these people'. I am trying to encourage them that this is good for their *akhirah* (hereafter)...they earn rewards for it [...] that is why I am trying to push them hard because I know...you know...Islam, to achieve goodness in Islam is not easy. Because if you want the highest level, and you want to go to a good place, going to heaven. You need to work hard to get there [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013).

Iqbal's statement above explicitly indicates the use of religious mission to encourage employees to work hard. The channel hoped that workers would convince that they were among 'the chosen ones' to do their jobs and carry out its religious mission. Religion, in this context, is used as a motivational tool to encourage workers to work hard and tolerate low salaries for the sake of 'deferred rewards' in the afterlife.

As programming manager, Iqbal often helped production workers to be responsible for their tasks because that was a part of their religious duties.

You are going to be sitting there inside your grave. Oh! That may sound a bit bad. You will be wondering where does that 'light' come from? Moreover, the angel will say to you: 'that light is of the good things that you did at Islam Channel. So many people have benefitted from it'. For me, that is how I always see our work at this channel [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013).

The 'light' mentioned by the programming manager was a reference to the good work that he expected from the production workers at the Islam Channel. A good job was then translated into good religious programming from which viewers could benefit. Hence, hard work and responsibility are perceived to be two forms of religious commitment which the channel expected from its television production employees.

Encouraging employees to work long hours can be a kind of exploitation. On one occasion, Iqbal gave an example of another group of employees who voluntarily worked long hours. He praised their willingness and commitment towards the channel:

People like X and Y stay up late nearly every day. Why? Because they care about this company, expect everyone to care about this company. We may forget about the contract, our responsibility, but we must care about Islam and the Muslims [...], (Manager's Briefing, 4 March 2013).

Not only the above quote is a form of encouragement from the channel, but also indicates the way in which the channel aims to promote the religious notion of 'work as a mission' to its employees, pointing out that serving the company is equalled with serving Islam. The management used a religious idea of work to exploit workers in television production for the benefit of the organisation. Non-economic factors, such as ideas and ideologies, are the key aspects of Max Weber's 'Protestant Ethic' thesis (Weber, 1930). While Weber agrees with Marx's capitalism thesis, which claims that 'capitalist firms seek out cheaper sources of labour', he also argues that non-economic factors, such as a religious notion of work, also shape the economic life of society (Giddens and Sutton, 2013, p. 92). In *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber discusses the religious outlook towards economic life in early forms of Protestantism in which he notes that believers saw success in business as a sign of 'divine favour', not regarding profits (ibid. p. 253). Whereas early Protestantism used the notion of 'divine favour' to encourage believers to work hard without thinking of the profits, Islam Channel exploited the concept of 'work as mission' to foster production staff to work hard by serving Islam and Muslims. By treating their work as such, they would gain rewards from God in the hereafter (see Manager's Briefing, 4 March 2013). The Islam Channel's idea of success as a 'divine favour' was expressed by the manager in his briefing on 4 March 2013. In my conversation with the manager in June 2013, he further highlighted the importance of striving and competing as way to serve Allah and Islam as well as for the success of the Islam Channel:

Allah and Islam tell you to strive and to compete. Moreover, that is what I believe we are doing. We want to be better than the next Muslim channel. We want to be better than the non-Muslim channels, quality-wise and everything-wise; we must continue to strive for success [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013).

The emphasis on God and serving the religion became a standard motivational pitch that echoed throughout the halls of the Islam Channel rather than driving the workers to excellence by giving them better remuneration or job positions. In other words, the channel management did not promise these workers job promotions or monetary rewards, but rather encouraged them to work hard, tolerated long working hours and low-wage to secure the channel's success and suggested that God would reward them for their hard work and sense of responsibility. These ethnographic accounts are clear indicators of exploitation. Exploitation here not only refers to no pay but also to the way in which the management expected workers to accept long hours of work and tolerate low salary for the sake of deferred reward in the afterlife, and how exploitation disguised religious mission. The next section explains how workers accept the religious mission argument and do not feel that low/no wage and long hours are exploitation as their reward is a religious one.

7.1.1 Perceptions on the Notion of 'Work as a Mission'

In the previous section, I have underscored the way in which the management of the Islam Channel motivates employees, exploiting the notion of 'work as a mission'. Ultimately, if workers accept such discourse, this encourages self-exploitation. The actual exploitation is that employees do not get paid or paid a low-wage. This section is about whether or not they perceived it (the lack of remuneration) as exploitation and how they understood the notion of 'work as a mission'.

Maryam the assistant producer of *Living the Life* took her job very seriously, to the extent she felt responsible for the work that she had done at the channel, hoping that God would reward her for doing good work and not punish her for doing bad work:

I really want what I am doing for the channel to come 'for me' on the Day of Judgement rather than 'get me'...so I am trying to be careful of that [...], (Interview, 14 June 2013).

Her expression corresponds with the programming manager's reminder about the analogy of 'light' for the good work done for the channel. Thus, she succumbed to the strong notion of 'work as a religious duty' imposed by the channel's management.

Another example is Sara, the assistant manager of programming. Sara felt encouraged by the channel's approach to promoting hard work among its employees in television production. She used to work for Channel 4 before joining the Islam Channel and had been with the channel for six years at the time of my fieldwork. She convinced that the channel offered her a chance to do good work. She firmly believed that such good work meant serving her religion by producing good programming for the Muslim *Ummah* (community):

I want to work for my *deen* (religion) and my *dunya* (world/livelihood). As for my religion, I work for Islam and helping people gain accurate perceptions of it, helping Muslims come back to their faith. That is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) wants all of us to continue the *da'wah* (proselytization). That is the obligation. So I think it is best to do so through the media. When the Islam Channel came around, it made sense that I joined here. I get to do what I love which is filming, scripting and producing. I studied in this worldly knowledge (referring to television production) and what I am doing is my religion. It is a unique situation that I do not find on Channel 4 or anywhere else [...], (Interview, 17 June 2013).

The Islam Channel encouraged the workers to feel as if it was a 'home' for employees to perform sacrificial labour, to work in the name of their religion, aiming for 'deferred rewards' (e.g., going to heaven). Employees in television production like Sara were persuaded by the religious notion of hard work stated in the above briefing by the programming manager. She accepted the difficulties of working in television production as she focused on serving her religion and the channel's mission to convey Islam to non-Muslims, to educate Muslims and to represent the voice of the voiceless and oppressed Muslims locally and globally. Sara also remained unfazed by long working hours as she committed her life to accomplishing the channel's mission. Sara told me that although Channel 4 had offered her good salary and experience, she felt that her work at the Islam Channel is very rewarding as she saw what she work as a form of religious duty: for Islam and the *Ummah*.

Huda, a producer who used to work with the *Living the Life* crew in 2012 (before I conducted my fieldwork), expressed similar views. She felt that Islam Channel provided

an environment that encouraged her to learn and practising Islam while making television programmes.

I feel blessed that I am a part of it (Islam Channel). I am getting paid and at the same time learn about my religion. You are encouraged to make Islamic programmes. That is like amazing for me! How would I be getting paid elsewhere to learn my religion or to make even a programme? (Interview, 22 June 2013).

Encouraged by the notion of work as a mission, Huda felt that the channel offers a working life that she thought she would never experience at other media organisation.

The low wage paid by the channel is an indicator of exploitation. However, the channel managed to obscure such an exploitative act and encouraged workers to accept low remuneration. Amar, another assistant producer of *Living the Life* also shared similar views to the extent that he claimed he ignored the low-salary. He dedicated his work to religion. Focusing on doing 'good work', he admitted the following:

Payment can be improved; at the moment, I am just considering doing my best for the channel and the audience without looking at the payment (Interview, 19 June 2013).

Amar tolerated low salary, determined that he will get the raise as long as he focuses on doing his best for the channel and audience. Money is not the prime motivation in this sense because he believed that God would reward him for doing good work at the channel. Maryam, another assistant producer, felt the same. Money is not everything that she was after in her life. Maryam tolerated low salary and perceived her work as a form of *da'wah* (proselytization) or 'the calling' of non-Muslims to accept Islam, and to further educate Muslims via the programmes she produced (Interview, 14 June 2013).

7.1.2 Implications of Religious Strategy for Working Life

Religion as a motivational tool to promote hard work and responsibility among employees in television production was evident at the Islam Channel. The workers in television production accepted the idea of 'work as a mission' imposed by the management of the channel. They felt that the channel provided them with a conducive environment that encourages them to work hard, feeling responsible for their work, tolerating long working hours and low salary for the sake of 'the deferred reward' (heaven). Surprisingly, there was no indication of workers disagreement with such notion. Although there were a few complaints (among multi-skilled operators) on matching the amount of salary with

the amount of work done as well as on the length of breaks they had throughout the day, majority employees involved in the production of *Living the Life* ultimately agreed with the notion of 'work as a mission'. They believed that their efforts would be rewarded in better form than monetary form.

Like these television production workers, I am also a Muslim, who agrees with the notion of 'work as a mission'. Muslims believe in that Allah will reward them heaven in the afterlife for their good deeds. The description of reward or heaven is based on the Quran *Surah Al Baqarah*, verse 25:

Give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow, every time they are fed with fruits therefrom, they say: 'Why, is this what we were fed with before,' for they are given things in similitude; and they have therein companions pure and holy; ⁴⁶ and they abide therein forever (Translated by Yusuf Ali, 2011, p.22).

Concerning another Qur'anic verse, Muslims believe that Allah rewards them (add even more) and provides for them in this world based on the best of their deeds. According to *Surah Al-Nur*, Verse 38:

That Allah may reward them according to the best of their deeds, and add even more for them out of His Grace; for Allah doth provides for those whom He will, without measure (ibid., p. 878).

In the context of this research, I disagree with the religious strategy of the channel, which frequently use such notions as 'work as a mission' and 'deferred reward' to encourage hard work among workers in television production. This strategy not only resulted in employees condoning their exploitative positions but also encouraging them to self-exploit.

While this section addresses how workers accepted the religious idea imposed by the management of the channel, the next sections offer experiences of employees involved in *Living the Life* production. It addresses both religious and non-religious motivations for self-exploitation among these workers.

⁴⁶ What can be more delightful than a Garden where you observe from a picturesque heights a beautiful landscape around you – river flowing with crystal water and fruit trees of which the choicest fruit is before you. The fruit of goodness, similar, but choicer in every degree of ascent. You think it is the same, but it is because of your past experiences and associations of memory. Cited in Yusuf Ali, A. 2011. *The meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. 11 ed. Maryland, USA: Amana Publications.p. 22.

7.2 Self-exploitation

It is a common experience in the television industry for workers to self-exploit. The motivations behind self-exploitation vary among individual workers. Mark Banks (2007, p. 60) addressed the issue of self-exploitation among cultural workers. His study revealed 'the charms and allure of cultural work, the desire to be artistic, autonomous, creative and self-directed' are among the motivations that keep workers self-exploiting. Gillian Ursell's research (2000) into the UK television industry notes that employees felt that television production is 'a source of potential rewards, both material and existential, and a source of definite exploitation' (p. 819). Similarly, the production culture of the Islam Channel involved self-exploitation resulting from the multi-skilling and multi-functionality that the channel expected from television production workers. This section aims to cover a wide-range of experience of self-exploitation among creative and technical, paid and unpaid workers in the *Living the Life* production. It analyses the ways in which these production staff perceived their tasks and the extent to which they self-exploited themselves.

My analysis concerning self-exploitation among workers of the *Living the Life* production is from the perspective of paid and unpaid television labour who engaged in creative and technical work. I have drawn the experience of self-exploitation from three key personnel within the television production hierarchy. These are (a) the producer and his assistants who represent the creative workers, (b) the multi-skilled operator who represents the technical employees and (c) the researcher/intern who represents unpaid television labour. I have chosen to analyse the people in these roles because they are essential workers in the *Living the Life* production. They are vulnerable to self-exploitation because the channel relies on their commitment and group performance to ensure the broadcast of the programme.

7.2.1 The Experience of the Producer and His Assistants

As the producer of *Living the Life*, Aswad's self-exploitation was driven equally by 'excitement' and 'the buzz' of making the 'live' magazine talk show. Aside from attempting to meet the channel's expectations and adapt to its constraints, Aswad expressed his excitement of executing the magazine talk show genre as follows:

Islam Channel is quite young, still growing. Seven years old may seem a lot, but it is not really. The channel is still young, still evolving. I think this is a natural process, but I am sure in a few years it will have floor

managers and senior producers. However, until that time comes, we have to adapt and learn how to play all these roles (e.g., floor-managing and directing, etc.). However, I think this is good for me personally because I learn more skills. For example, I research for the guest, speak with them on the phone, meet them in person and brief them before the show going on-air. You know that in an established broadcast company, there is someone else who's doing the research, meet and greet the guests when they arrive at the channel. In fact, there is a team that just does that. However, again, we do not have that here. So, I have to adapt. It is enjoyment. I like running around like a headless chicken sometimes because that is 'the buzz', the buzz of the show! (Interview, 20 June 2013).

Angela McRobbie's (1998; 2002) in-depth study of a group of young fashion designers in London revealed that these workers self-exploited for the love of their art. Aswad's case supports McRobbie's claims about the 'love' for one's work leading to self-exploitation. The satisfaction he experienced upon completion of the daily production routine bonded him to his work. The 'rush in getting the show done every evening' is the kind of satisfaction that encouraged him to self-exploit. Despite realising that he had overworked, carrying out multiple tasks from the morning clock-in until the end of the 'live' transmission of *Living the Life* at night, he was vulnerable to self-exploitation because of the excitement or 'the buzz' in executing the talk show genre conventions.

Aswad perceived the pressure caused by the lack of staff resources in television production (which eventually led to multi-skilling and multi-functionality) as a 'buzz' or excitement that are an expression of the 'love' towards his work and the genre conventions of the magazine talk showed that he assembled. His endurance of such pressure indicates self-exploitation.

The genre conventions of *Living the Life* were also another factor that drove Aswad to endure the challenges of the multi-skilling and multi-functionality introduced by the channel. Aswad expressed his fondness for the genre as follows:

I will not swap it for any other show. It is a different style. I enjoy producing it unless my senior said to me, 'OK, enough is enough'. For me, it is either I got sacked or I want to do something else [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013).

The above account indicates how Aswad, as the producer, tended to self-exploit because he enjoyed working under pressure against the daily deadline. Moreover, Aswad also acknowledged that the genre conventions of the magazine talk show (such as,

searching for guests, creating the 'Story of the Day' and producing the programme 'live') left him with a sense of thrill and excitement. Aswad's experience of executing the genre conventions of a magazine talk show echoes Whitefoot's (2014) account in which she was excited by the genre conventions of the magazine talk show. She described the excitement of 'testing the ground ahead of the show, discovering which questions will prompt a sit-up-and-listen response from the guests and which questions will trigger tumbleweed in the process of preparing interview questions for *The One Show* celebrity guests'.⁴⁷ Whitefoot's description of the excitement of engaging with the genre conventions is somewhat similar to that of Aswad's expression of the 'buzz' in putting together the genre conventions of *Living the Life*.

Whitefoot and Aswad may have shared the similar excitement in executing the genre conventions of magazine talk shows, but Aswad's experience highlights his vulnerability to self-exploitation. This evidence is drawn from his experience in performing multiple tasks and functions to ensure such routines as engaging with guest research, scriptwriting, floor managing and directing the 'live' broadcast of *Living the Life*. The nature of his self-exploitation was partly motivated by material reward (working for a salary), but, most of the time, it was driven by the thrill and excitement resulting from the pressure of preparing a 'live' magazine talk show with a very limited number of skilled professionals and within a limited time frame.

Sharing similar excitement for the genre is Zain, another assistant producer. Although Zain was responsible for the VTs, he also engaged in other tasks, e.g., sound mixing and camera operation during the live broadcast. Like Aswad (and Whitefoot in her account), it is the genre conventions of the programme that lured him, leading him to self-exploitation. As he asserted:

The good thing about *Living The Life* is I do not get bored with it even though it is four days a week show. I do not get bored with it because there are different people every day. Different people from different walks of life, different ideas, and different things to share are the best thing about making this show [...] (Interview, 20 June 2013).

⁴⁷ Whitefoot, R. 2014. A One Show researcher's first recollections. [Online]. 2014(8 June 2014). Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/2H8sv5WnBdX7TCh3HWcctR9/a-one-show-researchers-first-recollections>

Because he loved doing his job, I observed him missing lunch several times. Although responsible for producing the VTs, he voluntarily helped the researchers and played such roles as a sound engineer and camera operator. He also stayed back after office hours with the production team until the programme ended. The genre conventions kept him excited and motivated to produce the programme, leading him to follow in the producer's footsteps to self-exploit.

Unlike the self-exploitation demonstrated by producers like Aswad and Zain, his assistant, who were mainly driven by enthusiasm about the genre conventions, Amar, another assistant producer, exhibited a different form of motivation for self-exploitation. His commitment to the daily production routines and endurance of long working hours were for his religion. He saw his job as a mission that he wanted to accomplish to go to heaven in the afterlife:

For me, what motivates me is the reward from Allah. I want to achieve a reward from God. So, for me, even like working long hours or over the weekend, I know that overall, the outcome will be better, beneficial and bringing me to heaven *in sha Allah*, (by God's Will), [...] (Interview, 19 June 2013).

The above statement reflects the notion of work as a mission encouraged by the channel's management, which I addressed in Section 7.1. The 'deferred reward' used by the channel as a motivational tool inspired him to self-exploit, tolerating long working hours and agreeing to work at weekends.

Maryam, the assistant producer of *Living the Life*, took her job seriously. Aside from being motivated by the religious reward and fear of God's punishment, her motive for self-exploitation was to prove her responsibility and show her pride and professionalism in her work:

I am going to work this many hour to demonstrate that there are a pride and professionalism in my work. It is like whatever you do you want it to be good...your name is attached to it, that sort of thing [...] (Interview, 14 June 2013).

The sense of responsibility like Maryam and Amar, who worked for the promise of 'deferred rewards' which encouraged them to self-exploit. The notion of 'work as a mission' imposed by the channel's management on television production workers has encouraged these assistant producers to self-exploit. They were strongly motivated by the 'deferred reward' for doing good work and by the fear of God's punishment if they failed.

Unlike Maryam and Amar who were actively encouraged by the ‘deferred rewards’, the self-exploitation of the producer Aswad, and Zain, his assistant, on the other hand, was highly motivated by their love of the genre conventions; the excitement or ‘the buzz’ of making the magazine talk show. The thrill and excitement of creating and putting together the necessary genre conventions are the factors that allowed them to endure the hardships and survive the multi-skilling and multi-functionality expected by the channel. Although they acknowledged that Islam encourages hard work, the notion of ‘work as a mission’ was not the main reason for their self-exploitation. Rather their excitement of making the magazine talk show was their key motivation to self-exploit (Interview, 20 June 2013). Despite such differences in motivation and experience between the producer and his assistants, they were all vulnerable to self-exploitation.

7.2.2 The Experience of Multi-skilled Operators

A multi-skilled operator is a person responsible for the ‘live’ broadcast of *Living the Life*. The Islam Channel created the position as a measure to deal with the lack of resources. Multi-skilling and multi-functionality of workers are the goals of the flexibility employment technique that the channel adopted. The production of *Living the Life* relied solely upon this group of flexible technical workers who possessed core competencies in camera work, lighting and sound engineering. There were four multi-skilled operators perform multiple functions in each filming session of the programme. Once they completed their outdoor filming, which often started as early as 6:00 AM, multi-skilled operators would return to the Islam Channel studio to perform their tasks in the *Living the Life* production around 4:00 PM. After their late lunch, they started arranging the set of *Living the Life*, which was previously disassembled and used for another programme production. As soon as they arrived at the channel, they immediately set up the backdrops, arranged the props and organised the sofa sets for the show. Next, they adjusted the lighting in the studio, worked the cameras, set up the teleprompter, inspected the sound system and sealed the wiring on the floor. Once the guest arrived, they fixed the microphone within the limited time available before the programme went on air, ensuring that all the microphones were functioning. Once the programme went ‘live’, two multi-skilled operators were responsible for the camera work. The other two sat in the control room; a sound engineer and a visual editor. The producer, meanwhile, had two hats: film director and teleprompter operator. These are the tasks that the

channel demands from the multi-skilled operators who work on the *Living the Life* production.

Unlike the producer who enjoyed ‘the buzz’ of making a ‘live’ magazine talk show, the multi-skilled operators chose to self-exploit because this employment is their only source of income. This condition may be a common motivation with most technical workers in television production. The experience of a multi-skilled operator can be assessed from the perspectives of junior and senior multi-skilled operators. These two groups of technical workers in television production offer distinct forms of motivations for self-exploitation.

Salem, a junior multi-skilled operator who worked for the Islam Channel for less than two months, expressed his love of the daily production routine. He accepted the working conditions and agreed that frenetic activity was the nature of the work. Because this was his first permanent contract (he was previously a freelance camera operator for five years), he accepted the variety of tasks given to him and viewed them as opportunities to learn different camera techniques. He commented:

Living the Life is a fascinating show. I get a chance to sort of experiment with camera movement and kind of doing fancy shots where most of the programmes on this channel are static and very conventional, like a single-camera production [...] Inasmuch as we get really creative shots and do some cool stuff and nice focuses, camera movements and drop shots which are among camera work that I never did before, which is fantastic [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013).

The potential for self-exploitation among junior workers was quite high because of the responsibility that the channel placed on their shoulders (e.g., the lighting, sound system, camera operation and visual editing). Having their names appear in the credits of *Living the Life* added more pressure to the multiple tasks and functions that the channel expected from them as the ‘product’ of their hard work became visible to the audience. Omar, another junior worker, asserted:

Once you do the show and it goes out ‘live’, it was like, oh fantastic! Moreover, you got camera credit for it. Also fantastic! You know what I mean? So, like to get the camera credit...that sort of thing. It is great but it is double responsibility. If you did it badly, your name still goes up in the end [...], (Interview, 20 June 2013).

The desire for recognition in the form of name credit as well as the thrill of being involved in a ‘live’ programme, has motivated Omar to work hard, prove himself worthy

of carrying out multiple tasks and fulfil the channel's expectations. Omar was optimistic about his job, never felt under pressure because, according to him, he was flexible and knew his role, adapting to the organisational culture of the channel.

Ayden, the senior technical worker, self-exploited to the extent that his work-life balance was affected and his basic needs suppressed (such as lack of time for a lunch break), which could impact his health. A senior multi-skilled operator, Ayden complained about the limited time that he had for a proper lunch.

Ten minutes means a lot to me...I really need the ten minutes...I do not really have a chance to eat or drink [...], (Fieldnotes, 22 March 2013).

Kamal, another senior multi-skilled operator, felt that the flexibility employment technique adopted by the channel affected his life to the extent that he felt burn-out. As Kamal claimed:

I have been feeling a lot of burn-out especially when it is low staff. Because sometimes when it is low staff, quality mistakes happen. Then it becomes low quality and then we become demoralised [...], (Interview, 12 June, 2013).

Despite the burn-out and distress experienced by the senior technical workers because of working understaffed, they continued to self-exploit, ensuring that the production of the programme went as planned, on time and according to the schedule. A sense of responsibility drove these junior and senior multi-skilled operators to self-exploit, ignore the hardships and endure multiple tasks. Certainly, the primary motivation for both the junior and senior multi-skilled operators was to earn a living but they were also self-exploiting. The junior multi-skilled operators saw self-exploitation in a positive light. In contrast, the senior multi-skilled operators saw it as negative, impacting their work-life balance although they continued self-exploiting.

Despite these differences in the motive for self-exploitation, the job title 'multi-skilled operator' is self-explanatory; it suggests the multiple tasks and multi-functionality manifested in workers' employment contract as well as the reality of their working lives. I have pointed out in Chapter 6 in my textual analysis of *Living the Life* that the lack of skills in television production, e.g., camera work, has affected the production quality of its output. In this section, I have demonstrated that the flexibility employment techniques (which include multiskilling and multi-functionality) adopted by the channel have shaped the production quality. Self-exploitation among these workers may not necessarily lead to

the poor output of the magazine talk show. Rather, it is its consequences (e.g., burn-out) that do. Their experience of overwork and burnout has impacted the produced text. They failed to deliver a good magazine talk show. This finding agrees with Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) claim that a poor quality text was a result of poor working conditions.

7.2.3 The Experience of Researcher/Intern

In television production, researchers or interns occupy a lower rank within the Islam Channel labour hierarchy because they are unpaid workers. Researchers are mostly 'hired' by the channel through an internship programme that is made available for school-leavers or unemployed college graduates. Personally, I signed a contractual internship agreement before the channel allowed me to take part in any production work.

My position, stated in the letter of an offer received from the channel, was that of a 'researcher' and 'assistant producer' for the *Living the Life* production. There were two other researchers on the team: one was an intern who was unemployed and the other was a paid staff member from the Da'wah Project, who was helping the production team find guests two days a week. The producer assigned us tasks such as researching guests and conducting pre-interviews via telephone. Most communication was done via email or telephone calls. Once the guests agreed to be on the programme, the researcher would issue an e-letter invitation. This letter was just a formality, a gesture that indicated the channel had offered the guest 'a spot' on the sofa of the *Living the Life* set as one of the selected guests of the day for a 'live' magazine talk show.

Shortly after that, a full-time researcher would conduct a pre-interview to obtain the 'back story' and discover interesting information that the presenter could talk about during the on-air conversation with the guest. Once the guests arrived at the studio on the pre-booked date, the researcher's tasks included greeting the guests with chat and tea and biscuits.

Further, the researcher had to make sure that the guests were comfortably seated in the waiting area on the second floor (the sales and marketing office), keep them calm and looking forward to the show. If the guest came for a cooking demonstration or product promotion, the researcher had to ready the utensils, set up a table for food preparation, remove labels from bottles or containers to avoid inadvertent product placement, etc.

All of the above researcher tasks are ordinary television production routine. *The One Show*, for instance, features guests' musical performances, studio activities involving props and special arrangements inside and/or outside the studio. Most of these activities are meticulously prepared at least three days in advance by a group of up to twenty people whose tasks are delegated by the executive producer. In contrast, two researchers on the *Living the Life* production had to suffice to carry out multiple tasks that were only vaguely outlined in their volunteer agreements. Also, researchers on *The One Show* are paid creative workers whereas on *Living the Life* researchers worked for free.

The Islam Channel took advantage of the flexibility employment technique to include researchers within the production hierarchy to assign them to creative roles, making their positions on a par with the assistant producers. The only difference was that a researcher was not paid while the assistant producer was a salaried employee within the production hierarchy. This suggests a significant level of inequality especially when the unpaid staff like researcher more experience in television work than the paid employees. Not only were the researchers at the channel free labour, but they also tended to self-exploit.

Laura Grindstaff's ethnographic work (2002) offers an insight into the talk show production process. Following in Grindstaff's footsteps, I was also a researcher for a talk show. As a curious doctoral candidate who enrolled in an internship programme at the Islam Channel, I saw this opportunity as a way to observe and participate in the production of *Living the Life*. My prime motivation for self-exploitation was to gather 'inside' information, get to know the people involved and understand how the programme was produced. The information obtained at the channel has allowed me to complete this thesis and obtain the Ph.D., which is also a form of 'deferred reward'. I persuaded the Islam Channel to accept me, showing how the production team could benefit from my curiosity, my past television production experience and my interest in the television production process. I am indebted to the Islam Channel for allowing me access to observe and be part of the crew. Without access to the channel's inner workings, I could not have completed my thesis.

Researching the Islam Channel was a long-term goal. Watching its programming (e.g., a lifestyle magazine show *City Sisters*) from my home country Malaysia kept me wondering, asking such questions as why the channel produced the programme, how they

managed it, who were the people involved in the process and what shaped the production quality of the programmes. Hence, I was grateful to the channel for allowing me access. I would make every effort not to disappoint its production community and contribute to the production work.

To conclude, my analyses concerning self-exploitation among workers of the *Living the Life* production is from the perspectives of paid and unpaid television labour who engaged in creative and technical work. I have drawn the experience of self-exploitation from three key personnel within the television production hierarchy. These are (a) the producer and his assistants who represent the creative workers, (b) the multi-skilled operator who represents the technical employees and (c) the researcher/intern who represents unpaid television labour. I have observed self-exploitation the Islam Channel and various motivations for it. These motives linked to the religious nature of the channel and the particular work role.

Motivations were different between creative and technical workers. Creative workers like *Living the Life* producer Aswad and his assistant Zain; motivation resulted from the love of their work and enthusiasm for the programme genre. Other assistant producers like Amar and Maryam self-exploited for the 'deferred reward' in the afterlife, believing that God would reward them for their hard work and responsibility.

The distinct motivations for self-exploitation were also observed among junior and senior multi-skilled operators, which can be summarised as follows:

First, junior multi-skilled operators perceived themselves as new to the employment and needing to learn all the skills that the channel expected from them, focusing on the results of their performances. Multi-skilling and multi-functionality were seen as opportunities to learn. This reflected the channel's goal of hiring a group of 'flexible' workers and allowed the human resource manager to argue that flexibility employment encourages workers to learn many skills, a situation which is 'good for them (workers)' (human resource manager, interview, 19 June 2013). In contrast, the senior multi-skilled operators felt that multi-skilling and multi-functionality could compromise quality, especially when the channel did not provide them with proper professional training in camera operations and other technical skills.

Second, driven by their fondness for the genre, the junior multi-skilled operators gained satisfaction from what they perceived to be 'getting a pat on the back' and the

name credit/recognition when producing the programme kept the junior multi-skilled operators pushing themselves. The junior multi-skilled operators tended to self-exploit to prove to the employer their ability to execute various tasks. They hoped that their efforts would be valued. Because they acknowledged the financial constraints of the channel, they tended to ignore the material/monetary rewards. They preferred to focus on results, on doing a good job, driving themselves to the limit, ensuring each episode was successfully broadcast as scheduled and ignoring issues such as understaffing or doing multiple tasks on a daily basis. Senior multi-skilled operators, on the other hand, measured their employment against income, feeling that they should earn larger salaries for their self-exploitation (multi-skilled operator 1, interview, 19 June 2013). Neil Percival and David Hesmondhalgh's (2014) study suggest that junior television workers show more positive responses towards non-financial benefits in comparison to senior workers (p. 10). The junior multi-skilled operators at the Islam Channel have also shown positive responses and willingness to work hard for the sake of learning, gaining work experience and securing employment at the channel. Percival and Hesmondhalgh's study also indicates that it is common amongst new entrants of the television industry to be motivated by such opportunities as networking and employment prospects during internships (*ibid.*).

As a researcher and an 'unpaid' creative worker, the exploitative conditions of which I was in have also made me vulnerable to self-exploitation. The only difference between my self-exploitation and those of paid creative and technical workers was that I was driven by a desire to learn about the channel, the excitement in producing a magazine talk show and in collecting data for this thesis. The channel's research tasks, the enjoyment of getting the 'yes' from a guest, the thrill of being on the set alongside the producer to take part in a 'live' broadcast of the magazine talk show encouraged me to self-exploit. Certainly, monetary compensation was not my motivation because I was only eligible for up to ten pounds for lunch and travel claims without salary or overtime claims. I was in exceptional position for self-exploitation compared to the rest of the interns and creative television workers. Aside from the rare opportunity of working with television production abroad, self-exploitation was driven by the goal to get a Ph.D. Self-exploitation was sufficiently motivated not by my desire to avoid disappointing the individual who helped me gain access to the channel, but rather, ultimately, to gather data for my Ph.D. research project.

7.3 Creative Autonomy

For a human, to be autonomous means ‘to be one’s own person, to be directed by considerations, desires and conditions, and characteristics that are not simply imposed externally upon one, but are part of what can somehow be considered one’s authentic self’ (Chrisman 2009, cited in Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 40). Drawing on ethnographic data, I argue that the culture of caution to some degree impacted on the creative autonomy of the *Living the Life* producer and researchers. This section emphasises the difficulties faced by workers in these two categories in making creative decisions on a day-to-day basis.

Research into television production suggests that creative autonomy often clashes with commercial forces, e.g., advertising and programme ratings (Ursell, 1998; 2000; Lee, 2008; Zoellner, 2010). As broadcasters are up against their competitors, they are constantly looking for new programme ideas to secure high ratings to attract advertisers and sponsors. By contrast, the production culture of the Islam Channel indicated a different form of commercial imperatives for its programming. The channel’s management expressed their concern about the revenue secured from the sponsorships and *Da’wah* Card scheme just to maintain the channel’s operation and its ability to produce programmes. The producer, by contrast, aimed to create a high-quality magazine talk show free from commercial pressure. Section 6.5.1 demonstrates how the commercial interests of the CEO and the sales department resulted in a poor quality output of the programme. I showed how the channel’s business expectation to some degree constrained the producer’s creative autonomy. It is the implications of *ideological* constraint on creative autonomy and quality of working life that I intend to analyse here. Hence, this section examines the creative autonomy of the producer and researchers. It focuses on constraints in making *Living the Life* a ‘good magazine talk show’: an informative, educational and entertaining television programme.

My analysis of the producer and researchers/interns’ struggles and lack of creative autonomy in the production of *Living the Life* is drawn from two phases: ‘the development stage’ or pre-production and ‘the show day’. The development stage involved such routines as researching, selecting and pre-interviewing guests and the treatment of VT and the ‘Story of the Day’ segment. The second phase is ‘the show day’, a term which I borrow from Rebecca Whitefoot’s (2014) article about her experience as a researcher for

the magazine talk show, *The One Show* on BBC1. I use the term 'show day' as a reference to the day when *Living the Life* episode was due for its 'live' broadcast. Production routines on show day involved editorial meetings, script-writing and guest briefings. I will map the experience of the producer and researcher according to these phases to identify how 'the culture of caution' constrained their creative autonomy and, subsequently, affected the quality of their working lives.

I do not intend to dismiss the experience of other workers. However, rather, I chose the producer over the presenters because he is autonomous and among the top creative roles in the production hierarchy and because they will experience potentially greater interference with their work than the technical operators as they are dealing primarily with choices regarding the content of the show.

Unlike Livingstone and Lunt (1994) and Grindstaff's (2002) studies, which detail the presenters' involvement in the development of television talk shows, the presenters of *Living the Life* production did not take part in such process. Therefore, I aim to explore the experience of creative autonomy of the producer and researchers.

Although a researcher is less autonomous compared to the producer, in the process of developing a magazine talk show such as *Living the Life* a researcher plays a crucial role. Grindstaff's (2002) experience as a researcher/intern of talk shows indicates that the researcher is a key staffer in the production process. Whitefoot's (2014) experience as a *The One Show* researcher further confirms the importance of researcher roles in the production of a magazine talk show. Her job as a researcher involved searching for interesting story items/guests, developing ideas from current sociopolitical situations in the UK, verifying sources and checking against secondary sources to ensure the presenter statements are factually correct. For these reasons, I chose to analyse the experience of creative autonomy of the producer and researchers (including my involvement) in the production of *Living the Life*.

The concept of autonomy is relevant to my research because it helps identify the quality of working life of creative workers. I noted in Section 7.2 that the producer was vulnerable to self-exploitation because he was excited about the genre of the programme. He overworked and tolerated the multi-skilling and multi-functionality imposed by the channel management because he felt that despite this, he still had a significant degree of autonomy. My argument in this section is that his perceived autonomous experience was

limited. These limitations resulted from the culture of caution within the Islam Channel. Hence, the concept of autonomy is central to my thesis because it allows me to explore the experience of 'limited' creative autonomy under the light of 'the culture of caution'. So, what does limited creative autonomy mean for the producer and the researchers?

At the development stage, I observed that the producer is to some degree free to explore diverse areas to make a 'good' magazine talk show. Problems arose when guests were perceived to be 'controversial' by the programming manager. The filtering process was discussed by the programming manager as follows:

We do not leave anyone opportunity to discredit us. Because all eyes are on us, we must ask ourselves: 'who are the guests that we invite? Have we done our check-and-balance? [...]' (Fieldnotes, 4 March 2013).

The above statement signifies 'the culture of caution' that spread within the Islam Channel. I mentioned in Chapter 6 that Iqbal (the manager) was cautious about who the producer or the research team (including the assistant producers) invited to *Living the Life* since the guests are supposed to represent the Islam Channel's image or views. Such rules applied especially/not only to guests who were religious personalities. Moreover, the channel also aimed not to offend its conservative audience when presenting certain forms of musical performance, *nasheed* artists or females as guests. With 'the culture of caution', the pre-production stage has turned into a distressing experience for the creative team instead of an experience that could stimulate their creativity and allow them to make *Living the Life* more entertaining. This culture of great caution has reduced the creative autonomy of the producer and researchers. It not only resulted in a bad production quality but also affected their working satisfaction.

I argue that the producer and researchers' limited creative autonomy resulted from the conflict between their desire to make a good magazine talk show and the various interests within the channel (addressed in Section 6.5). For instance, clashes between CEO's moderate view and the programming's *Salafi* fundamentalists as well as the business expectations of the sales department were all determinants that shaped the producer and researchers' creative autonomy. As the producer of *Living the Life*, Aswad often struggled to create something that he thought might be suitable for a magazine talk show. For example, the producer perceived a *nasheed* artist singing and strumming his guitar would make *Living the Life* entertaining, a good magazine talk show segment. However, such understanding contradicted the *Salafis* in the programming department,

i.e., they felt that such a performance would not be by their doctrinal understanding and, subsequently, offensive to conservative viewers. For that reason, any form of performance involving guitar or stringed instruments had to be avoided on *Living the Life*.

Like Banks (2007), Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) also argue that a lack of/limited autonomy in creative work is a characteristic of poor working conditions. At *Living the Life*, since its production is largely based on researchers' skills in developing interesting ideas or stories for the programmes, the lack of creative autonomy is also a sign of limitation in their working lives. For instance, as a researcher, I looked for a unique and inspiring story for the programme. I managed to book a teenaged girl who was trained by the Fulham Football Club. I thought it would be interesting for *Living the Life* to feature a young talent like her. Unfortunately, my idea of having her on the show was rejected as a result of the culture of caution. As I proposed the story item to Aswad, his response was as follows:

It is woman football so we cannot bring her. As far as I know, women football players practising with men; they do not separate the practice session. So, there is no segregation between men and women. If we cover a male player, that is different; that's fine. We cannot cover a story about a female football player. The outfit is another thing, although a Muslim, she must be wearing shorts, so we cannot show that on TV [...]. (Fieldnotes, 11 April 2013).

Aswad feared that the video clips portraying a woman football player wearing a pair of shorts might be offensive to the conservative viewers of the Islam Channel. For that reason, Aswad asked me to call off her invitation. It was difficult for me to tell her that she was not a suitable guest for *Living the Life* after expressing my interest in her story less than an hour before. I planned how to deal with such an awkward situation. I was contemplating either telling her that I had overbooked the guests for that week or revealing the truth (about what I had discussed with the producer). If I were to give her a fake excuse, it would be against my principles. Finally, I decided to pick up the telephone and speak to her. I told her the truth and the reason for cancellation. Although I could sense a slight disappointment in her voice, she said that she respected the decision and thanked me for being honest.

The experience of limited autonomy in making a good magazine talk show had negatively affected my working life. Limited creative autonomy has not only affected the production quality of *Living the Life* outlined in Chapter 6 but also impacted my

experiences negatively as a creative worker both concerning autonomy (discussed here) and concerning my emotional well-being (mentioned in Section 7.4). Such effect may be explained by examining two situations: 1) the process of negotiating with the producer about the story item and 2) the process of dealing with the teenage girl's emotions, which caused me some anxiety, confrontation and disappointment. My experience not only demonstrates the implications of 'the culture of caution' and the ideological constraints for creative autonomy, but also the impact on my emotional well-being. I will discuss the emotional well-being of production staff on *Living the Life* in detail in Section 7.4.

The 'show day' also revealed similar challenges to the development stage of the *Living the Life* production. Tensions heightened on show day as the producer had to work against the deadlines, which included preparing the script for the presenters and formulating interview questions. The kind of questions created had to be 'light'. Any form of doctrinal discussion had to be avoided at all cost. The producer carried out the process of constructing the set of questions for each invited guest. The researcher mostly handled the pre-interviews with guests. Then, from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm, the producer sat with the researcher, discussing the 'tone' of the questions that the presenter would ask the guests. As a researcher, I was not free to create questions that might interest viewers. Although my experience approached *The One Show* researcher's experience, which involved 'trying to uncover funny/surprising/personal/moving/untold stories that they had not shared in an interview before' (Whitefoot, 2014), I was not given a chance to draft questions on my own. The process was always led by Aswad, the producer. After conducting pre-interviews via telephone with the guests, I would give Aswad the 'funny, surprising, personal, untold stories' gained from such pre-interviews. Aswad would write down the interview questions while I was asked to observe him. He told me that I first needed to observe him constructing interview questions before I could do the task myself. I was embarrassed and felt mistrusted by Aswad.

I recall once working under Zain, the assistant producer, who took over for Aswad when he went on holiday. I was just two weeks at the channel at that time. Zain asked me to write the interview questions and I was not required to observe Zain writing the questions; instead, he believed that I could work independently without his close supervision. When Aswad returned from vacation, he asked me to continue observing him create interview questions. I would understand if he required my 'observation' at the

beginning of the internship as that was a common practice of a creative manager to monitor subordinates, especially a new-comers. However, he never allowed me to write questions independently, which I thought very controlling and somewhat inefficient for a company with limited economic resources. I once asked him why this was so. Aswad told me that he wanted to ensure a balanced treatment of light entertainment and religious story items.

The experience with ‘the culture of caution’ and a producer like Aswad can be illustrated on one occasion. When a *Sufi* poet cum nasheed artist from the US, Ahmad James was known as ‘Baraka Blue’, was invited on *Living the Life* (Fieldnotes, 23 April 2013), Aswad joined me at my desk, asking me what information I had gathered from a telephone conversation with Ahmad James. During my observation of his ‘writing session’, he warned me to be careful; making sure that the interview questions did not cover Ahmad’s *Sufi* practices. Ahmad James is influenced by Rumi, whose *Sufism* thoughts and views of life are ‘somewhat complex’, according to Aswad.⁴⁸ I was told not to lead the singer into such discussion; Aswad emphasised, ‘to avoid confusion amongst viewers upon such topic’. I could sense the caution in his voice, which explained that either he had tried to avoid writing questions that might lead to an in-depth discussion about *Sufism* (with Ahmad James) or offending (‘confusing’) the Islam Channel conservative audience. He may also have been trying to avoid conflict with the *Salafi* fundamentalism of the programming department.

Whereas researchers are working on the *Living the Life* production experienced limited creative autonomy, *The One Show*’s researcher described her experience of ‘show day’ as intriguing as she gets to see her ‘craft product’ being broadcast as a result of her efforts in putting together interesting ideas for the previous few days. By contrast, in *Living the Life* production, the efforts to produce a good magazine talk show led to frustration and distress due to a lack of creative autonomy. As claimed by Akram, a researcher:

⁴⁸ *Sufism* is the way of purifying the heart from bad manners and characteristics. *Sufism* is a path of spirituality that exists in Islam in which the meaning is: a) seeking the pleasure of Allah, b) love and peace with one’s self, c) harmony with all creation (mankind, animals, nature) and d) to be dressed with the beautiful attributes of prophets and saints. It is known that *Salafi* fundamentalism does not blend well with *Sufism*. Available from: <http://www.islamicsupremecouncil.org/understanding-islam/legal-rulings/4-an-explanation-of-islam-and-sufism.html>

In the end, the tasks are often about trying to get a show made not trying to get a 'good' show made. So, if a good show happens, it happens. However, it is not really within our control...however, as much as we are as workers, it is not really in our hand. We can have some discretion about not inviting some guests on because we think they would not be interesting. At the end of the day, usually, I find the pressure to get the show done cancels out the much more interesting thing that can be happening such as interesting guests and in going deeper into the subject of discussion. Because personally, I think if the show is entertaining and also fulfilling, it would be hundred times better. If it is only entertaining, the viewers might end up losing time and opportunity to learn. I always put that in consideration. Perhaps that is something that is not being considered enough (by the channel) basically [...], (Interview, 13 June 2013).

Views like this and my experience as a researcher for *Living the Life* indicate that the lack of creative autonomy, to a certain degree, not only affected the production quality of *Living the Life*, but also the working lives of those involved in its production. This section shows how 'the culture of caution' and ideological constraints limit the creative autonomy of the producer and researchers both during the pre-production stage and on show day. The *Living, the Life creative team*, felt distressed and distrusted while doing guest research as a result of this limited creative autonomy. The manager's intervention amplified the degree of 'the culture of caution' to the extent that the producer felt that each guest needed to undergo some filtering process. The experience of production routines, such as writing interview questions, demonstrated the limited creative autonomy of the researchers. Whereas this section highlights the producer and researcher experience of limited creative autonomy resulting from 'the culture of caution' and ideological clash, the next section discusses the implications of such a limited creative autonomy on the emotional well-being of workers involved in the *Living the Life* production.

7.4 Emotional Well-being

Emotion is an 'imprecise term for any affective psychological state, including happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, surprise and fear' (Chandler and Munday, 2011, p.123). Earlier in this chapter, I argued that *Living the Life* production community became vulnerable to exploitation (Section 7.1) and self-exploitation (Section 7.2) because of resource constraints faced by the Islam Channel. I suggested that self-exploitation of creative and technical workers have, to some extent, affected their health and physical well-being, e.g. burn-out.

This thesis argues that the particular conditions and practices at the channel have poorly shaped the production quality of the magazine talk show and the quality of working life of those involved. In this section I make two arguments:

- 1) 'The culture of caution' and ideological clash affected negatively on the emotional well-being of the creative and technical staff involved in the *Living the Life* production.
- 2) The poor execution of the magazine talk show genre conventions affected the emotional well-being of the creative staff.

Based on these positions, the following discussion seeks to identify the kinds of emotional responses amongst production team while to produce *Living the Life* episodes and the extent to which such responses impacted their emotional well-being.

7.4.1 Emotional Implications of Ideological Constraints and the “Culture of Caution”

'The culture of caution' has shaped the emotional well-being of the production community. Ideological constraints linked to, for example, the clash between religious views (e.g., moderate versus *Salafi* fundamentalism) or issues concerning gender segregation and female subjects have all affected worker emotions. The following example describes how 'the culture of caution' that guided the producer changed my emotional well-being and that of the guest in question.

It was almost an hour before the guest was scheduled to arrive at the studio (usually by 6:00 pm). The producer approached me, discreetly asking me to call Rayhan, a 17-year old nasheed artist whom I had only spoken to when conducting a pre-interview via telephone, and to ask whether he belonged to *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (<http://www.hizb.org.uk/>), a religious extremist group based in the UK. The producer gave me a memo from the programming manager with Rayhan's phone number written on it. He said to me: "Nur, please call Rayhan and ask if he is affiliated with *the group*. Don't speak to him in this office. Please go elsewhere, ask him privately, ok?". I took the memo from him and told him that I had once visited the *Hizb ut-Tahrir* booth while volunteering for the Islam Channel the Da'wah Project event the previous year. He replied: "that was different; now the group is controversial...we (Islam Channel) don't want to be associated with such an extremist political group...". I told him that I would call Rayhan. I left the office and tried to figure out how to begin the conversation with Rayhan. On the one hand, I was worried that Rayhan might withdraw from the show if I asked him such a question. On the other, I

might get in trouble if I did not make that phone call and later found out that he was a member of the extremist group. When Rayhan answered my phone call, he told me that he was on his way to the studio, which made me more nervous. I decided to ask him directly without beating around the bush. A part of our brief conversation went on like this:

Nur: Rayhan, as a researcher, it is my job to check with our guests if they are members of any religious or political groups...I hope you do not mind if I ask you this...are you aware of the group called Hizb ut-Tahrir?

Rayhan: Yes, I have heard about it.

Nur: Are you currently a member of that group?

Rayhan: (quickly answered) No...No...I am not the member of that group... (Fieldnotes, 10 April 2013).

Despite such an awkward moment, I felt relief after knowing that he did not change his mind about being the guest on *Living the Life*. I tried to make him feel comfortable or perhaps forget about the question I had just asked. I thanked him for coming to the studio, reminded him of the time of the broadcast and the reason for his appearance on the show. 'The culture of caution' had triggered anxiety: afraid on the one hand the guest might change his mind. This situation indicates the awkward social interaction and the potential confrontation with my emotional experience on the one hand, and its effects on the talk show and my professional experience on the other.

Another example of the implications of 'the culture of caution' and ideological constraints on emotional well-being is related to female subjects and gender segregation:

There was an occasion when a guest, the *Salafi sheikh* refused to join Rima, a female presenter, and other guests on the sofa during the live broadcast. This happened because of his rigid interpretation concerning female subjects and gender segregation. As soon as the programme ended, Rima told me how embarrassed she was when the *sheikh* refused to join her on the sofa:

Nur, I am so ashamed...this is not the first time that a sheikh refused to sit on the sofa with other guests and me...This happened in the past...I feel so bad about it [...] (Fieldnotes, 4 June 2013).

Although Rima managed to suppress her emotions on-screen, she had to deal with her feelings off-screen after the show had finished. In the *Living, the Life* production, the

rigid interpretation of gender segregation demonstrated by the *Salafi* sheikh had, to some extent, affected the female presenter's emotions. It is even worse for her as she had to deal with a repeated 'incident' that had impacted her emotional well-being.

Another experience indicates the implication of 'the culture of caution' and ideological clash on emotion can be observed in the case of Ms Gomes. While Rima had to look pleasant on-screen and pretend that the *sheikh's* reaction had not affected her emotionally, another male presenter had to deal with the guest's (Ms Gomes) emotion. Ms Gomes has been told by the producer (after receiving a note from the programming manager) to cover her legs as she arrived at the studio wearing a short red dress. She seemed to be embarrassed but tried to keep herself calm. I addressed this issue in the previous chapter when the producer and multi-skilled operators (i.e., camera operator and visual editor) struggled to find good shots of Ms Gomes during the live broadcast of the programming (see Section 6.4.3 on my analysis of production quality). This experience affected the production quality of the programme. 'The culture of caution' relating to the female subject has negatively affected the quality of text and the emotions of television workers involved while trying to appear as normal before the audience.

7.4.2 Implications of Genre Conventions on Emotion

The talk show is a television genre that requires emotional displays. Grindstaff suggests that good television talk shows require emotional responses from presenters and guests (see Section 6.5.2). Emotional responses may create what Grindstaff calls 'a moment of dramatic revelation', a criterion of a good television talk show (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 249). There are two cases that demonstrate the culture of caution which highlighted the ways in which Rima, the female presenter, 'avoided' showing any form of emotional response toward the guests: first, an interview with the guest who represented HHUGS and second, an interview with Harry Fear, a pro-Palestinian independent journalist who reported on Gaza.

I discussed in Chapter 6 about the guest from HHUGS and how the female presenter tried to suppress emotional responses that the male co-presenter attempted to bring about during the interview. The female presenter sought to tone down the story mentioned by the guest. It was the story of the suffering of families whose breadwinners were detained under the anti-terrorism legislation. While the female presenter avoided showing her emotional response to protect the Islam Channel from accusations of

supporting terrorism, the male presenter tried to show his emotional response towards the families that suffered from such legislation. The tensions between the two were evident and affected the production quality of the magazine talk show.

The second situation reveals the lack of emotional responses demonstrated on a segment featuring Harry Fear (Fieldnotes, 21 April 2013). The photographs and video clips provided by Mr Fear portrayed the suffering of the Palestinians. Unfortunately, the presenters concealed their feelings of empathy with the Palestinian Muslims during their conversation with Mr Fear, who emphasised the plight of Palestinians. Rather, their conversation was merely about Mr Fear's experience in reporting the 'live' attack on Gaza, about his safety while filming and the camera technique used. They avoided displaying their emotion to create impartiality in the treatment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Quilliam Foundation Report 'Re-programming British Muslims' (Rajab, 2010) and the Ofcom report (Ofcom, 2011) once ruled against the Islam Channel concerning its impartiality in the treatment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These are among instances that indicate the implications of genre conventions on emotion.

Dealing with the 'dropouts' or last-minute cancellations is the most frustrating aspect of the job; it gets worse if it happens just before taping, according to Grindstaff (2002, p. 108). Like Grindstaff, I was also frustrated with guest cancellations and it was worse if the request to cancel came from the producer or the top management. All I could do in such a situation was to control my emotions, not feeling too upset about it and keep smiling to show others that I was able to cope with such circumstances. When talking with me about a similar experience, Maryam, the assistant producer, shared similar frustration:

Apparently I have gone through much work and tried hard. I have to go back to someone whom I booked a long time ago. Sometimes I have done it professionally; booked them for months or weeks and then I have to go back to them and tell them that we have to cancel...they cannot come on the show because of such and such reasons...I hate doing that!! (Interview, 14 June 2013).

Whereas Maryam shared her experience in cancelling the invitation of guests, I observed Aswad the producer in distress when the CEO asked him to 'include' another guest on the programme. Such an order from 'the top' often cannot be resisted. For Aswad, to add another guest to an over-booked 'show day' might affect the genre conventions negatively. This particular CEO request meant that the producer had to create a revised script and another set of questions for the guest's wife. When Aswad

explained to Mohammed Ali, the CEO, that the limited time slot precluded the addition of the woman and the *nasheed* artist to the show, he was reprimanded. Mohammed Ali requested that Aswad shortens the commercial break and invite the wife. Agreeing to the CEO's demand, Aswad had no other choice but to make the arrangement. I observed how Aswad was embarrassed and disappointed with the CEO's decision. After the live broadcast, Aswad told me that the 'crowded sofa' (because of an extra guest on *Living the Life*) had 'ruined' his show.

It is important to find out how the workers manage their emotions. Aswad asserted that the keys to success of *Living the Life* as a magazine talk show included teamwork:

The key is teamwork as it is not a work of just one person, not just two people...you need a team that won't just show the same vision. He or she must prepare to be in a mental state: preparing to work on the daily show. That is not easy as much pressure involved. There is no time to mess about [...] (Interview, 20 June 2013).

The above statement suggests that teamwork is vital to magazine talk show production. Like any other talk show discussed by Grindstaff (2002), the experience of *Living the Life* production also requires strong emotional endurance amongst creative staff to handle the pressures of executing such genre conventions as researching for guests and finding new stories on a daily basis. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011, p. 177) suggest that workers in television production experience high levels of stress and anxiety in their efforts to maintain good working relations. The same applies with the *Living the Life* production in which the producer is required to manage his emotions on a daily basis. The anxiety and stress in getting the job done were not only bad for him, but also for others in the production team, e.g., assistant producers, researchers and multi-skilled operators. His and other production staff's stress and anxiety can be mapped in such processes as the 'guest hunting', dealing with dropouts, managing guests on show day and producing the live broadcasts of *Living the Life*.

In sum, poor execution of the magazine talk show genre conventions has affected the emotional well-being of the *Living the Life* production community. Although a few of the production staff expressed their excitement or 'the buzz' of making a magazine talk show (e.g., producer and his assistant), they also experienced mixed feelings. Anxiety, frustration, stress and disappointment were some emotional responses expressed by and observed amongst creative and technical staff. This confirms Grindstaff's observation of

her experience and that of others in daytime talk show production as ‘variously exciting, tedious, stressful, frustrating, depressing, and rewarding’(Grindstaff, 2002, p. 37). Hesmondhalgh and Baker also observed that workers in a talent show production experienced ‘the anxieties of star-making’ by which they had to maintain certain degrees of emotional distance from the talent show participants (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 137). A similar state of anxiety may be observed among creative workers involved in the *Living the Life* production.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter argues that the working life of television production staff at the Islam Channel included exploitation, self-exploitation and limited creative autonomy, which affected their emotional well-being. The management exploitation of religious strategy such as the notions of ‘work as a mission’ to encourage efforts to obtain the ‘deferred rewards’ was approved by majority members of production community. The results of ethnographic data show distinct motivations for self-exploitation among creative and technical workers, paid and unpaid, and among junior and senior multi-skilled operators concerning their experiences of the genre conventions and production routines of *Living the Life*. Nonetheless, their motivations varied depending on job responsibilities and positions in the television production hierarchy. Results also show that creative autonomy of the producer and researcher was limited, constrained by the ideological clash and ‘the culture of caution’ within the channel. The ideological constraints, ‘the culture of caution’ and poor execution of genre conventions are factors that affect negatively emotional well-being of members of production community of the Islam Channel. Table 9 summarises these working conditions.

Table 9: Summary of the Working Life in the Islam Channel

| Type of labour | Job categories | Job Title | | Experiences | | | |
|----------------|----------------|------------------------|--------|---|--|-------------------|--|
| | | | | Exploitation | Motivation for Self-exploitation | Creative autonomy | Factors affecting Emotional well-being |
| Paid | Creative | Producer | | accepted the notion of 'work as a mission' for 'deferred reward' (heaven) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love of the genre • Produce good TV | Limited | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideological clash • 'The culture of caution' • Poor execution of genre conventions |
| | | Assistant producer | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love of the genre • Religious motivation | Not applicable | |
| | | Presenter | | | Not applicable | | |
| | Technical | Multi-skilled operator | Junior | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love of the genre • Recognition as a reward • Profile building | Not applicable | |
| | | | Senior | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love of the genre • Produce good TV | | |
| Unpaid | Creative | Researcher/Intern | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love of the genre • Produce good TV • Get a PhD | Limited | | |

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This research project set out to conceptualise the production culture of religious television by using the Islam Channel as a research site. The study of production culture of Islam-based television is important as it may enhance our understanding of how religious television programming, and in particular Islamic television programming comes to take the form it does. Furthermore, it also supports our interpretation of the conditions under which television production employees produce television programmes. In this concluding chapter, I sum up the central findings by mapping the power dynamics that shape the production culture of religious television (Section 8.1). I also point out the contribution of this thesis to the television production studies (Section 8.2) and the recommendations for further work (Section 8.3).

8.1 Summarising the Findings: Mapping the Power Dynamics

This thesis affirms the concept of production culture, which emphasises ‘collective, daily cultural performance involving symbolic codes, [and] conventionalized power hierarchies’ within a television organisation (Caldwell, 2008, p. 342). The results conclude that the power dynamics that are external and internal to television institution shaped the production culture of religious television. The power dynamics in the production culture of religious television verify by the research design (see Figure 1), which involved four layers of analysis. These include analyses of 1) the sociocultural environment in which the Islam Channel exists, 2) the institutional context, 3) the working life of members of television production community, and 4) the production quality of the magazine talk show, *Living the Life*. The following sub-sections deliberate these four layers of analysis.

8.1.1 Discourse of the “Clash”

At the first level of analysis, the thesis examined the sociocultural environment, by referring to problematic discourses of the ‘clash’ between the West and the Islamic culture. There are two separate views on the notion of such ‘clash’: the culturalist and the reformist. Culturalists upholding the Huntington (1993/1996) thesis implicitly regard Muslims as a threat to Western civilisation, and Islamic culture as incompatible with

Western culture (Kundnani, 2015, p. 65). Consequently, those upholding his argument suggest that Muslims should shed their religious identities to blend into Western society (ibid., p. 65). As the result of such clash, Islam and Muslims are misrepresented, misinterpreted, negatively perceived and politicised by the media, by those ignorant of Islamic cultures, and by the authorities and those in power. The Huntington thesis/culturalists' interpretation of this 'clash' has resulted in representations of Islam and Muslims in the media and therefore a conception of Muslims as 'a suspect community' (ibid.). These dynamics can be observed in the media representations of the events of September 11 and the 7/7 bombing of the London transportation system, after which Islam and Muslims received negative publicity in the press. These negative representations include the use of such terms such as 'Islamic fundamentalism' or 'Islamic extremism' (when referring to the religion). Other adverse words include 'fundamentalist', 'radical Muslim', 'extremist' or 'terrorist' when referring to individuals or groups of Muslims (see Said, 1997; Poole, 2009; Knott et al., 2013). Over the years, the negative media representation of Islam has surged. A study by Kim Knott, Elizabeth Poole and Teemu Taira (Knott et al., 2013, p. 80) discovered that references to Islam in selected British media grew significantly from 66 (in 1982) to 306 (in 2008), an increase of 400% within a 16-year period. The same study also reported an increase in references to Islam as 'extremism' (to 41), as well as 141 references to 'militant action' in 2009 (ibid., p. 81). Likewise, the study indicated a growing number of negative representations of Islam and Muslims in the media. The second effect of the Huntington thesis concerning the clash regards Muslims being cast as 'a suspect community'. Arun Kundnani (2015, p. 63) argues that the 'anti-extremism' discourse in the media has particular implications for British Muslims; specifically, they have become 'a suspect community'. State policing reflects the anxieties that the West bears toward the 'other-ed' Muslim communities and contributes to the surrounding suspicions.

Another view on the clash between the West and Islamic culture derives from the reformists. Using Edward Said's (2001) term 'clash of ignorance', Karim H. Karim and Mahmoud Eid (2014, p. 213) describe the apparent conflict between Muslims and the West. They portray those who view Islam as incompatible with western culture and as a threat to the modern civilisation as lacking knowledge and understanding of Islam. As a result, Islam and Muslims are misrepresented and become the victims of Islamophobia. Second, the 'clash of ignorance' concept also signifies Muslim communities who rely

heavily on literal scriptural interpretation (adherents to the scholars of texts) and refuse to integrate with western culture and society. Thus, the clash of ignorance concept also draws attention problems in Muslim communities.

The media misrepresentation and the state suspicion of Islam and Muslims have also affected the Islam Channel. In response to these challenges, the channel declared its support for moderate Islam (Zarnosh, 2008). The first missionary goal of the channel 'to convey a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims' highlights the channel's response to external challenges. It reflects on how the channel has deployed this missionary goal strategically to defend its reputation. Moreover, with such assertion, the channel also excluded itself from being 'a suspect community', a term that describes Muslims as victims of Islamophobia (Kundnani, 2015). The Islam Channel's response to such clash between the West and the Islamic culture shaped the production rituals and the quality of programmes that it produced.

The discourses on Islam and Muslims define the power dynamics that are external to the Islam Channel. From the production culture perspective, Caldwell does not focus on the clash between two different cultures. However, he examines power dynamics from the technological-industrial culture perspectives. He focuses on 'how sexual identity and political economy animate the world of contemporary film/television production [and] how such factors inform and regulate the production community and its technical culture [...]' (Caldwell, 2006, p. 124). In contrast, this thesis analysed how the sociocultural environment shaped the power dynamics in a religious television station.

8.1.2 The Internal Tensions

The second layer of analysis explores how the institutional mission of the channel contributes to tensions among its production community. The mission includes such goals as a) conveying a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims, b) educating Muslims and c) representing the voiceless and oppressed Muslims in the UK and abroad (see Chapter 5). Mapping problems in how the channel attempts to accomplish its mission helps to reveal power dynamics and tensions internal to the production culture. My analysis showed three forms of tensions within the channel: ideological, business and religiopolitical.

Ideologically, there were tensions between moderate Islam and *Salafi* fundamentalist influences (see my account of the mission in Section 5.2). Ideological constraints at the management level took the form of a clash between the CEO's

moderate form of Islam (stated in the first mission goal) and the programming department's *Salafi* fundamentalism. On the one hand, *Living the Life*'s producer aims to promote social cohesion and such concepts as 'halal and fun' (Herding, 2013), and, on the other, the *Salafi*-dominated programming department aims to instill a 'conservative' religious identity amongst its young audience. These internal challenges faced by the Islam Channel have affected the production quality of the magazine talk show *Living the Life*.

A second form of tension was found in the integrated da'wah/missionary agenda-business model of the channel, the Da'wah Project. Through the Da'wah Project, the channel aims to spread a moderate form of Islam to non-Muslims while generating revenue through its business model (see Figure 4) that include the *Da'wah Card* scheme (see Table 4). The channel's aspirations to spread Islam alongside supporting Muslim enterprises have affected the production quality of the magazine talk show, *Living the Life*. The channel did not exclusively serve its young and female audience (according to the mission to 'educate Muslims') because the attention swayed to its conservative fundamentalist viewers who happened to be amongst its business clients e.g., sponsors and advertisers. The missionary goal also shifted, as the channel increasingly worked not to offend these better-off conservatives. To do this, the management practised a control of production rituals of *Living the Life* to make sure that the guests and featured story items (VTs) were in compliance with the *Salafi* ideology of the programming department. Such control limited the creative autonomy of the producer, and subsequently affected the production quality of the programme.

The third form of tension was found in the channel's religiopolitical goals, to be the voice for the voiceless, and of the oppressed *Ummah* (global Muslims) and British Muslims. This solidarity agenda threatened the channel's reputation. First, in declaring its solidarity with the *Ummah*, the channel risked appearing resistant towards the UK government's foreign policy, particularly regarding the war in Iraq and the crises in the Middle East. Second, expressions of solidarity by the channel with particular Muslim individuals or groups might draw the attention of media regulators to the channel, e.g., 'potential due impartiality issues' in the reporting of these crises (see Ofcom, 2011 for details, pp. 5-25). The channel risked an accusation of bias towards those guests and contributors associated with individuals or groups identified as upholding a particular religious ideology including Muslim charitable organisations or politically affiliated Muslim organisations

featured on *Living the Life*. Thus, the agenda of solidarity with oppressed Muslims served as a threat to the channel's reputation, as it might attract attention from media regulators.

The channel's mission to represent the 'voiceless and the oppressed' amongst British Muslim communities includes supporting victims of Islamophobia (see the case of HHUGS on Episode 144, discussed in Chapter 6). Standing in solidarity with another Muslims is common especially given that television production workers engage in 'cultural expressions involving all symbolic processes and collective practices that other cultures use to gain and reinforce identity' (Caldwell, 2008, p. 2). Thus, the sense of belonging to a cultural and/or religious group was high, but the Muslim television workers I worked alongside were bound both by the institution that employed them and by their religion (Islam), which encourages cooperation (e.g., the concept of *al-Ta'awun* in the Qur'an). In this light, the solidarity agenda put the channel at risk of seeming to be allied with Muslim political organisations unsanctioned by the government (Rajab, 2010).

This thesis builds on Noonan's (2008) research on BBC's Department of Religion and Ethics. Noonan indicated that producers worked for a broadcast institution such as the BBC see religious television as 'a different sort of genre' and believe that the resulting media products 'cannot be considered neutral entities' (2008, p. 10). Her study draws attention to how religion is a very sensitive subject in broadcast media and that this sometimes led to a sense of caution among production staff. One question that may be asked, based on my research is: Were the *Living the Life* production crew exercising the wrong kind of caution? Or too much caution?

Noonan's research indicates that despite being cautious, producers in the BBC's Religion and Ethics Department, to some extent, are free to explore various religious and spiritual themes. By contrast, this thesis suggests that the form of caution exercised at the Islam Channel was more problematic, and that 'the culture of caution' within the Islam Channel, resulting from ideological constraints and managerial control, ultimately affected the production quality of *Living the Life*.

8.1.3 Implications for Working Life

The third layer of research design includes the analysis of the working life of television production community at the Islam Channel based on the four sociological approaches to studying creative labour. While the previous two sub-sections mapped the power dynamics inherent to the production culture of the channel by drawing on sociocultural

and institutional analyses, this section identifies the power dynamics according to these four aspects of television production labour. These approaches include investigation of such issues as 'exploitation' and 'self-exploitation' (Ursell, 2000; 2006; Banks; 2007), 'creative autonomy' (Ursell, 1998; Lee, 2008; Zoellner, 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) and 'emotional well-being' (Grindstaff, 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) in television production.

This thesis shows that television workers were in a position that allowed the channel to exploit them. The forms of exploitation within the Islam Channel can be explained in terms of 1) the use of 'flexible' employment techniques; 2) the religious strategies that portrayed 'work as a mission'.

The 'flexible' employment technique adopted by the channel affected the quality of working life of those involved in the production. Working with limited resources, the producer, the assistant producers and the researchers, for example, had to perform tasks outside their job scope to ensure that *Living the Life* went on air daily at stipulated broadcast hours. The channel expectation that production workers would carry out multiple tasks affected their working lives.

The channel's religious strategy (the notion of 'work as a mission') was used as a motivational tool to encourage employees to work hard, tolerate low salaries and long working hours for a 'deferred reward' (in heaven) in the afterlife. The majority of employees especially amongst assistant producers accepted such a religious notion. The low wage paid by the channel is an indicator of exploitation. However, the channel managed to obscure such an exploitative act by using religion as a motivational tool to promote hard work and responsibility among television production staff. Like these Muslim television workers, I agree with the religious notion of 'work as a mission' and with the concept of 'deferred reward'. However, this strategy not only resulted in workers accepting their positions, it also encouraged them to self-exploit.

Production workers were vulnerable to self-exploitation in a number of ways. Paid creative television employees, such as the producer and his assistants, were susceptible to self-exploitation in their desire to meet expectations to produce a good magazine talk show. For example, the producer tended to self-exploit because of his love for the genre. He referred to the 'buzz' or excitement of producing the magazine talk show. Additionally, technical employees such as multi-skilled operators were prone to self-

exploiting despite their positions as paid labourers. This occurred for various reasons. Some felt obliged to execute their tasks to match their work roles (multi-skilled operators). Others sought to meet the channel's expectations of their ability to perform multiple functions (e.g., camera operator, sound engineer, and visual editor). Others aimed for credit or recognition, such as getting their names on screen at the end of the programme or working hard for the 'deferred reward' from God in the afterlife (e.g., assistant producers). Unsurprisingly, perhaps, unpaid labourers, such as the researcher, were also vulnerable to exploitation and self-exploitation. My motive for self-exploitation however, included acquiring data for this research project and to get a Ph.D. The extent to which these workers self-exploited depended on the motivation of each staff member and how they perceived their responsibilities (see Table 9).

Furthermore, this thesis found that the producer and researcher had limited creative autonomy. The programming manager control over choice of guests and story items on *Living the Life* described limited creative freedom for the producer. At times, the producer was obliged to feature the channel's potential clients and special guests, which indicated that top management undermined his creative decisions. The lack of creative autonomy, to some extent, affected the working lives of those involved in its production. 'The culture of caution' and ideological constraints limited the creative autonomy of the producer and researchers. The *Living the Life* creative team felt distressed and distrusted while doing guest research as a result of this limited creative autonomy. The manager's intervention signifies the degree to which 'the culture of caution' affected the creative autonomy of the producer as he felt that each guest needed to undergo some filtering process. The researchers' experience of producer control over such production rituals as writing interview questions, demonstrated the limited creative autonomy of the researchers. This thesis confirms Banks (2007) and Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) argument that lack of/limited autonomy in creative work is a characteristic of poor working life. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011, p. 81) address the creative autonomy of creative labour and the ways in which struggles over autonomy 'generate tensions and contradictions in cultural production'.

Finally, concerning the emotional well-being of production workers, this thesis provides evidence for two claims. First, 'the culture of caution' and ideological clash negatively affected the emotional well-being of the creative and technical staff. These

effects can be mapped on several occasions: at the development phase, on 'show day' and during and after the live filming of *Living the Life*. For example, during the development phase, assistant producers and researchers had to deal with guest cancellations, which were often described by staff as frustrating and depressing. The 'culture of caution' relating to female subjects impacted the emotions of television workers while trying to appear as normal before the audience. A female presenter had to deal with her feelings off-screen after the show had finished because of the ideological clash. In the *Living the Life* production, the rigid interpretation of gender segregation demonstrated by the *Salafi sheikh* had, to some extent, affected the female presenter's emotion. Even worse, she had to deal with a repeated 'incident' that affected her emotional well-being (see Section 7.4.1).

This thesis therefore confirms Grindstaff's (2002) research which suggests that as a television genre, talk show requires strong emotional endurance amongst creative staff to handle the pressures of executing such genre conventions as researching for guests and finding new stories on a daily basis. Likewise, this thesis also affirms Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011, p. 177) research, which suggests that workers in television production experience high levels of stress and anxiety. *Living the Life* production producer is required to manage his emotions on a daily basis. The anxiety and stress in getting the job done were not only bad for him, but also for others on the production team, e.g., assistant producers, researchers and multi-skilled operators. This staff stress and anxiety can be mapped in such processes as 'guest hunting', dealing with cancellations, managing guests on 'show day' and producing the live broadcasts of *Living the Life*.

8.1.4 Implications for the Production Quality

The fourth layer of the research design analyses the genre conventions of the magazine talk show, *Living the Life*. The purpose of the analysis is to consider the aesthetic quality of the magazine talk show production. This section summarises the tensions (resulting power dynamics) within the channel that shaped the production quality of the magazine talk show. These tensions included such interrelated factors as resource issues, problems with the mission of the channel and conflicting notions of 'good' television.

I found that the lack of resources to adequately pay skilled professionals on both the creative and technical sides (as well as unpaid television labour, e.g., researchers and interns) impacted the production quality of this particular genre of talk show. This lack of

resources not only caused the channel to exploit its limited personnel resources but also affected the production quality of *Living the Life*. The channel's reliance on interns and employees, who lack journalistic skills and television production experiences, compromised the quality of its programme.

The channel's response to the discourse of 'clash' between the West and Islamic culture resulted in a strong sense of caution among its production community, which consequently affected the quality of *Living the Life*. The output of Episode 144 of *Living the Life* featuring HHUGS, was an example of how the 'culture of caution' affected the production quality. As a Muslim organisation that provides support for families whose breadwinners detained under anti-terrorism legislation, the producer could have made the episode more appealing to viewers by featuring elements of surprise (the 'uncertainty' factor identified by Bruun (2001) as part of talk shows' appeal) and producing emotion. However, there was an absence of emotion in this episode of *Living the Life* (as well as others, e.g., featuring Harry Fears on Gaza, 21 April 2013). The female presenter avoided showing her emotional response as she was cautious, and wanted to preserve the Islam Channel's reputation (i.e., from accusations of supporting terrorism). By contrast, the male presenter tried to show his emotional response towards the families that suffered from such legislation. He failed in his attempt to bring the 'sociability' elements identified by Bruun (2001) as a feature of talk shows into the conversation. The tensions between two presenters were evident in a way that fell short of accepted professional standards. Such contradiction, as Bruun (2001) argues, requires a proper management of the uncertainty and sociability factors by the producer to maintain and enhance the production quality of the talk show (ibid., p. 251).

The ideological clash between the programming department's *Salafi* fundamentalism and the producer also caused the poor production quality of *Living the Life*. The case of Ms Gomes, who appeared as a guest on Episode 136 of *Living the Life* (Fieldnotes, 6 March 2013), is an example of an ideological clash regarding the physical appearance of women. Ms Gomes, who talked about nutritious organic argan oil, came to the Islam Channel wearing a knee-length red dress. Her style of dress resulted in an ideological clash between the *Salafi* fundamentalist programming manager and the moderate Islamist producer of *Living the Life*. The set of rules stated in the channel's Manners and Etiquette guide indicates the influence of *Salafi* fundamentalism on the dress

code and the instructions on how women should behave and appear on the Islam Channel. Islamic fundamentalism believes that the media of western cultural imperialism have tainted the image of women and, therefore, they need to be 'saved' before 'their deteriorated ethics' harm the entire Muslim society (Al-Najjar, 2012, p. 35). The ways in which fundamentalists look at women (as potential agents of moral destruction) place them in a social class that is inferior to men. According to the fundamentalist literal interpretation of the Qur'anic text, women are expected to dress modestly and appear in a conservative manner when in the presence of men. Such conservatism includes modest garments while headscarves (*hijab*) and veiling (*niqab*) are encouraged. The fundamentalist rulings on how women should behave in public places include gender segregation and prohibition of any form of physical or verbal contact with males. This dress code and etiquette enforced by the Islam Channel are also manifested in the *Salafi* fundamentalist Al-Majd television channel based in Saudi Arabia (ibid., p. 52). Such an ideological clash has affected the production quality of *Living the Life*.

Aside from the ideological clash, the production culture of the Islam Channel also involved intergenerational conflict. Such tensions can particularly be observed in the presentation of musical performances. This sort of clash is also rooted in ideology (moderate vs. fundamentalist). The moderate Islamist/reformist support for such notions as 'halal and fun' (Herding, 2013) in Muslim everyday life, is exemplified by the producer's desire to produce 'good television' that includes a thread of religious messages running through light entertainment segments. His view on *halal* entertainment clashed with the mission of the channel to instill a conservative, fundamentalist religious identity in young Muslim viewers. His opinion also conflicted with the programming manager's caution in not presenting hip-hop artists or those playing musical instruments so as not to offend the Islam Channel's conservative audience. Conflicting ideas about music and entertainment within the channel caused tensions in the production of *Living the Life*. The producer's tasks are not only to see to it that the music and artists fit within genre conventions, but also to ensure that the kind of entertainment the channel approves does not offend its conservative Muslim audience.

The four-layer analysis discussed in this section concludes that the production culture of the Islam Channel is shaped by internal and external power dynamics. It also affirms Caldwell's claim that television production culture involves 'conventionalized

power hierarchies' (Caldwell, 2008, p. 342). Caldwell's approach to power dynamics offers insights into how Hollywood television production workers respond to technological changes. These transformations include media convergence, labour outsourcing, unstable labour and business relations, new production technologies, corporate conglomeration, and the proliferation of user-generated content (ibid., pp. 316-43). This thesis also examines the prevailing tensions external to television organisation, not in terms of technological changes, but rather, by focusing on sociocultural factors. It recognises tensions between cultures and between religious ideologies that shape television production. These findings also support my argument regarding a link between poor employee quality of working life and poor production quality.

8.2 Contributions to Television Production Studies

Cultural studies scholars once paid little attention to television production analysis. John T. Caldwell (2006; 2008) is among prominent recent scholars who study television production from the lens of cultural studies and media sociology (e.g., Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, Laura Grindstaff, David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker). Caldwell borrowed the concept of 'production culture', which helps develop a research design that maps the power dynamics in the television and film industries. By deploying media ethnography research design, Caldwell examines the technological transformations and how they change the below-the-line television production workers. This thesis contributes to two approaches to television production studies, from cultural studies and media sociology. In the following sub-sections, I discuss the potential contribution of this research to cultural studies of television production, focusing on the idea of 'cultures of production', and then in Section 8.2.2 sociological approaches to television production labour.

8.2.1 Contribution to the Studies of Cultures in Television Production

Researchers like John Caldwell (2008), Laura Grindstaff (2002) and Georgina Born (2004) in particular have used ethnographic research designs. Although they may have applied an ethnographic research design to study television production, their studies involve geographical, sociocultural, industrial and genre contexts. While Caldwell and Grindstaff's studies were carried out in the US from the Hollywood industrial perspectives, Born's research was conducted in the UK from an institutional standpoint.

Whereas Caldwell adopted a cultural-industrial approach to study television and film industries, Grindstaff applied a sociocultural-institutional approach to the study television talk shows production. Moreover, whereas Caldwell and Grindstaff combined media sociology and cultural studies traditions, Born, by contrast, used an anthropological lens to examine cultures of television production. Although these studies are varied, they applied a similar approach: an ethnographic research design to observe television professionals in their natural setting and engage in their production rituals. This indicates that thesis not only contributes to the cultural studies and media sociology but also to media anthropology.

The ethnographic research design for this thesis proves applicable for television production analysis. The research design, which was built on two approaches to television studies: the cultural studies and media sociology, allowed me to examine four aspects pertinent to television production discussed in the previous section. The four-layer analytical framework includes: 1) sociocultural environment, 2) the institutional context, 3) the production community, and 4) the genre. This analytical framework helped me to conceptualise the production culture of religious television. Although Caldwell's production culture concept allowed me to explore working lives in religious television, his study was a cultural-industrial focus. By contrast, my research was a cultural-institutional focus. The following arguments address the gaps that my study has filled.

What distinguishes Caldwell ethnographic research design from my research was his 'critical industrial practice' approach. Such approach involved interpretive schemes of trade/business methods and conventions, which he deployed within specific institutional contexts and relationships, the television and film production ecology concerning labour 'practice' that manifest during the technical production tasks or professional interactions (ibid., pp. 5-6). In his research design, Caldwell combined the analysis of 'macroscopic economic processes' with 'microsocial level'. He argued that the macroscopic economic processes influence television industries and 'very much function on a microsocial level as local cultures and social communities in their own right' (Caldwell, 2008, p. 2).

I used sociological approach to study television production workers within an institutional context. Similar to Caldwell, I studied television production workers using the sociological lens. However, Caldwell examined economic and technological influences on television/film workers' practices, which is certainly not the emphasis of this thesis.

Instead, I provide an ethnographic analysis of television production within a particular institutional context. Thus, the ethnographic research design of my thesis can be characterised as a small-scale, cultural-institutional design that examines a ‘microsocial level’ of religious television based upon a four-layer analytical framework.

Unlike Caldwell, whose study covers an extensive television and film ‘industrial environment’ (the Hollywood industry), my research was mapped against the sociocultural environment, which represents the environment in which British Muslim society, including the production community I was part of, lives and works. I treat the sociocultural environment as an external factor that shapes television production. My approach to such external factor is sociological, and it allows me to consider a religious ideology/Islam as a source of power that shapes television production.

8.2.2 Contribution to the Sociology of Work in Television Production

Aside from contribution to the development of research design for television study, this thesis also contributes to the sociology of work in television production. This thesis expands understanding of exploitation in television labour by examining religious ideology as a source of power that is exploited by the television organisation. Media sociologists have also approached the study of exploitation, which is often an interest of the Marxist political economists. However, the application of the concept of exploitation to this thesis differs from the Marxist concept of exploitation that focuses on the exercise of power by an employer/organisation over their employees to secure economic and material gain. In my research, I adopted the concept of exploitation to examine religious ideology power structure, explaining how the channel exploits a social, religiopolitical mission to motivate their television production employees to work hard and to tolerate low salaries.

Sociological approaches to the issue of exploitation in television production have paid little attention to religion. This thesis has contributed to knowledge by offering three levels of analysis of religion in television production. The first level recognises religion as a source of power. It argues that religious ideology shapes the production culture of the Islam Channel, contributes to tensions therein, and results in the adoption of a ‘culture of caution’ within the channel. The thesis shows that religion has consequences for both the quality of production and the working lives of members of the television production community. As a form of religious ideology, Islam is used by those at an elevated position within the production hierarchies. The manager exploits the religious notion of ‘work as a

mission' to encourage television production workers to work hard for a 'deferred reward' in the afterlife. Subsequently, production employees are placed in a position that renders them vulnerable to self-exploitation, for the channel relies on their commitment and group performance to ensure the broadcast of the programme. This indicates that religious ideology/Islam is a form of power that can be manipulated by those at the higher position of production hierarchies, subsequently affecting the working lives of television production employees.

The second level of analysis of power dynamics regards 'tensions' in religious television production. This section addresses the implications that ideological clashes bear upon the production quality of the magazine talk show *Living the Life*, as well as upon the working lives of members of the Islam Channel's production community. These tensions include clashes between *Salafi* fundamentalism and moderate Muslim identities, such as their different approaches to the work environment and the work norms; between political and non-political representations; talk show format and religious discussion; as well as economic, political, gendered and religious dynamics of the channel.

The third level of analysis of power dynamics involves 'caution'. This thesis suggests that ideological constraints foster a 'culture of caution' among workers, which affects their creative autonomy and emotional well-being. These three levels of analysis affirm the concept of production culture, emphasises the power dynamics within a media organisation, and confirm my argument connecting the poor quality of working life with poor production quality.

The analysis of religious ideology and its relation to the issues of exploitation in television production contributes to the field of television production studies in general, and to the cultural studies and media sociology in particular.

8.3 Recommendations for Future Research

In this section, I address the implications of this research for future work and some theoretical and methodological issues that require further attention. This thesis discusses and assesses how potential research projects on the production culture of religious television may be explored from a narrow to a wider institutional context, with local to regional and global perspectives or, perhaps, using comparative studies of various faith-based media institutions across media platforms. Further research is also required to

identify production cultures in the context of Islam-based television organisations in the UK through analysis of the sources, dynamics, and hierarchies of power within such organisations. There is also an urgent need for research into new Islam-based television channels, such as the British Muslim Television (BMTV), which is new competition for the Islam Channel. BMTV aims to be different from the other Islam-based channels in the UK by being inclusive of all different views and open to all varieties of Muslims. The channel is not only about issues of faith, but also about Muslim living in Britain (Pathan, 2014). Moreover, BMTV promotes itself as a channel that offers ‘*halal* programming’, aiming to attract the ‘entire British Muslim community’ and is ‘non-sectarian and one which represents the different communities that make up British Muslim society’ (*British Muslim TV Media Pack*, 2014, pp. 1-4).

In contrast, the Islam Channel aims to spread moderate Islamic views to Muslims and non-Muslims and to be a televisual ‘voice’ of British Muslims and the *Ummah* (global Muslims). The management of the channel expressed the channel’s wish ‘to be better than the next Muslim channel...’ (Interview, 20 June 2013). To achieve that, the Islam Channel needs to maintain its influence with the entire *Ummah*, or Muslims around the world in general, and among the UK Muslim community in particular. Such a goal can be achieved by continuing to stay in the faith-based television industry and produce quality programmes that are more engaging to a diverse audience in the UK.

To compete with British Muslim TV, the Islam Channel needs to keep up with the challenge of relevance. One way to achieve this is to create programming that attracts a diverse audience and caters to the entire spectrum of British Muslim communities and not focuses on particular sects (e.g., Sunni), schools of thought (*mazhab*) or merely the conservative religious audience. It should also offer quality programmes that will engage young Muslims since this age group makes up the biggest segment of the Islam-based television audience (Pathan, 2014). Such improvement is helpful not only to compete for audience share and advertising revenues but also to remain relevant to Muslims in Britain and abroad. This thesis identifies the power struggle within the Islam Channel even as it faces the challenge of business competition. Hence, probing this new rival of the Islam Channel should be an appropriate goal for future research. Increased knowledge of the interplay between power and the factors shaping the production of television programmes

will help researchers identify the production culture of particular Islam-based television channels.

Since this Ph.D. research project is sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia, this thesis marks a starting point for future research in the Malaysian context into creative media management and television labour in general and the study of working life in religious television/departments in broadcast media organisations in particular. Since Muslims in Malaysia share several religious and cultural values with Muslims in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines, it would be interesting to explore the production culture of religious television on a larger scale, perhaps among Muslim media institutions of these South-east Asian countries. The recent threat of violent extremism, such as IS (Islamic State) and Muslim fundamentalism (e.g., the Wahhabi Movement) and several other extremist movements, can also present a huge challenge to Muslim media organisations. Hence, research into television production culture allows us to identify the challenges, the power dynamics and hierarchies within media organisations. Subsequently, develop mechanisms to curb fundamentalism and extremism or other potential ideological influences that may be threatening to the reputation and position of media organisations in their societies.

Further research is also required to conceptualise the production culture of religious television by employing different approaches, methods and research designs. It is essentially interesting to test the existing analytical framework to collect and assess data from various sites before formulating new concepts that can describe the production culture of religious television. Aside from looking at the production, research projects that incorporate audience and market research would bring added value to methodological and theoretical gaps that this thesis may have noted.

8.4 Concluding Remarks

This thesis has addressed such questions as the following. How does a religious television programme come to take the form it does, and how and under what conditions do television production employees produce a religious television programme? Knowledge of production culture may enhance our understanding of power dynamics that are internal and external to media organisations. Also, knowledge about the production culture of religious television, such as that of the Islam Channel, allows us to understand how power moves from external sources to sway the channel's operations by positioning the Islam

Channel in the sociocultural contexts in which it exists. The analysis of the sociocultural environment, the institutional mission, the production rituals, and the production quality of the television programme, equipped us to analyse power dynamics in television production.

Ethnographic approaches to the lived experience of television production workers have offered insights into their everyday working lives. Studies of working conditions and the lived experience of creative and technical workers in television industry provide a better understanding of occupational challenges that might affect the quality of their working lives. Further research into the production culture of religious television is required to understand factors shaping production quality and the quality of working lives. This thesis examines a single television organisation. It would be of further academic interest to explore other religious media and faith-based television stations to discover what influences their production cultures. Whether or not results similar to this analysis may be achieved from future studies of the production culture of other faith-based media organisations or religions other than Islam would, I suggest, depend on the television genre, the factors shaping the production rituals, and the conditions under which television production community works. Thus, the findings of this research project offer an ethnographic research design and a set of sociological approaches that can be applied to conceptualise cultures in television production.

The End

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