RUNNYMEDE

The New Muslims

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Runnymede: Intelligence for a Multi-ethnic Britain

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Foreword

Closed views typically picture Islam as undifferentiated, static and monolithic, and as intolerant of internal pluralism and deliberation ... in short, debates and differences which are taken for granted amongst non-Muslims are neither seen nor heard when they take place within Islam.[1]

In Runnymede's path-breaking report of 1997, *Islamophobia – a Challenge for Us All,*[2] we set out to capture the extent and forms of anti-Muslim prejudice in Britain. The Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia could not at the time have predicted the prominence within race and ethnic relations that the issues they sought to address would take. Notably, Claire Alexander observes in this volume that 'as the "colour line" was for the early 20th century, "The Muslim Question" has become the defining issue of our times'. Since 1997 we have seen a shift in domestic and international policy from a focus on equality and justice to issues of security and cohesion, and from race and ethnicity to religion. These policy shifts have been marked by a tendency to essentialize Muslim people and their communities as a means of compartmentalizing them, as governments have sought to exercise control and respond to moral panics. Seen through the prism of risk, incompatible difference and self-segregation, Muslims in Britain have become the talisman of the 'post-colonial melancholia'[3] that typifies the UK's race relations debate. The actions of those extremists who resort to violence in the name of Islam have given succour to those who would argue that Britishness and 'Muslim-ness' are incompatible, regardless of the protestations of the overwhelming majority of British Muslims, who in their attitudes and actions show that British identities are both capacious enough to include Muslim identities, and are enhanced by the ethnic and religious diversity which Muslims continue to bring to our society.

In this collection we have sought to challenge dominant representations of Muslims in Britain by gathering the views and insights of researchers who have been seeking to understand the contemporary identities of those racialized as Muslim in the UK and the politics which surrounds their presence. We hope in some small way to counter the dominant understandings of British Muslim identities where these are based on falsehoods and generalizations, and to highlight the complexities, nuances and diversity of identities among Muslims in Britain. We do this as part of our ongoing project to ensure that our public policy debates and civil society discussions are based on robust, evidence-based analysis rather than sensationalist, knee-jerk responses. In the coming weeks and months, our government will be revisiting its approach to integration and security in the light of the monstrous terrorist attack in Woolwich, South London. We hope that the perspectives presented in this collection occasion some pause for thought so that any policy developments in this area contribute to, rather than detract from, the task of building a successful multi-ethnic society.

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Director, Runnymede
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1   Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (1997) *Islamophobia – A Challenge for Us All.* London: The Runnymede Trust, p.5.
2   Op cit.
3   Paul Gilroy (2005) *Post-colonial Melancholia.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Introduction: The New Muslims
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In their pathbreaking report published in 1997, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, Runnymede examined the growth, features and consequences of anti-Muslim racism in Britain. The report warned then about the dangers of 'closed' views of Islam and Muslims, and pressured for a more 'open' perspective and dialogue, not only as a way of countering anti-Muslim racism but as a necessity 'for the well-being of society as a whole'. Sixteen years on, it seems that the challenge remains as vital today as it did then – perhaps even more so.

The past two decades have seen an explosion of interest in Muslim communities in Britain and Europe. Migration and demographic change have contributed to a growing Muslim presence in Europe, while the context of the global War on Terror and the resurgence of mainstream right-wing and Far Right political parties across Europe has fed heated discussions around the so-called 'clash of civilizations', the borders and identity of 'Fortress Europe' and the possibilities and limits of citizenship.

In the wake of the 2001 'riots' and the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 and 7 July 2005, Britain has experienced an intense political, media and policy scrutiny of British Muslims. These three events have triggered a two-fold approach to 'managing' Muslims – with a focus on securitization and migration control at the borders, and, internally, on issues of integration, cohesion and citizenship. Such policies have impacted on all dimensions of Muslim life, from travel 'back home' to the intimacies of marriage and family formation, from schools to prisons, from political protest to religious practice, from internet usage to stop and search, from friendships to mode of dress.

On the one hand, the focus on religion, culture and community has marked Muslims out as distinct from the larger political, social and cultural landscape of 21st-century Britain, and any broader struggle for racial equality and justice. On the other hand, Muslims have found themselves homogenized and 'flattened' into a single category or 'community' defined solely through faith, which is itself a shorthand for a range of pathologies. Such understandings not only ignore the internal diversity of 'Muslims' – whether around ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, age, religiosity, region and so on – but also erase the complex ways in which Muslim identities are lived.

The 'facts' about Muslims in Britain themselves challenge us to think anew. The 2011 Census, for example, reveals a growing number of Muslims, but also a changing trajectory in the ethnic make-up and patterns of Muslim settlement in the UK. An increase in Muslims living in areas outside cities gives rise to new contexts and textures for Muslim life. How Muslims connect with new environments, as well as with fellow Muslims and non-Muslims across spaces of old and new settlement, minority and majority communities, prompts us to rethink assumptions about 'parallel lives' and community cohesion. Similarly, the engagement of a new generation of British Muslims with forms of political and social action around issues of faith – as well as other struggles for social justice – suggests an urgent need to rethink outmoded and simplistic ideas of religion, culture, ethnicity and difference.

Our aim in this collection is to challenge the ways in which 'Muslims' as a social category are imagined in popular, policy and even some academic circles. The title 'New Muslims' indexes both this conceptual shift and the changing contours of 'the Muslim community' in 21st-century Britain. It argues for renewed assessments of Muslims in Britain today – beyond

the discourses of securitization, segregation or sharia law – to recognize the multidimensionality of Muslim lives and their place within a broader struggle for equality, citizenship and social justice.

The Muslim Question and The New Muslims

This collection originates from a recent workshop on *The New Muslims* and a panel debate on *The Muslim Question*, both held in March 2013 at the University of Manchester. In *Section I: The Muslim Question*, four scholars working on Muslim identities, from a range of perspectives, explore and challenge dominant discourses around Muslim identities in the UK.[1] In *Section II: The New Muslims,* we bring together established and emerging scholars to present research that unsettles the conventional understanding of Muslim identities in Britain and its diaspora – research that provides unexpected and challenging insights into how we think (about) Muslims. The work presented here points to the

multiple levels at which Muslim identities must be understood, from transnational connections, to national representations (and the precarity of British Muslim citizenships) and the local formations of Muslim life.

The emphasis here is very much on placing Muslim lives and identities *in context* through exploring the everyday places in which British Muslims live – cities, schools, youth clubs – and some more surprising points of access – the army, radio stations, cars – all offering alternative starting-points for the unravelling of Muslim identities. While we can only gesture here towards some of the richness of this and other academic work in the field, we hope that this collection will challenge, provoke and inspire others to think differently about the question of Muslims in Britain.

Notes

1 A film on 'The Muslim Question' can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jFI1jFZk_c.

SECTION I: THE MUSLIM QUESTION

1. The Muslim Question(s): Reflections from a Race and Ethnic Studies Perspective
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Introduction

It is an interesting – and perhaps revealing – paradox that the discussion around Muslims in Britain stands in inverse proportion to the debates around race equality; that, over the past 25 years, since *The Satanic Verses* affair brought Muslims crashing into the public consciousness, issues of religion have been at the forefront of media, policy and popular concern, while issues of racism, social justice and equality have largely fallen off the map. This is not to argue that Muslims have unfairly benefited from this (mostly negative) attention – quite the reverse – but it is to suggest that issues of religion and identity have been foregrounded in ways that have provided a distraction from issues of equality, and have tended to reify notions of difference between minority communities, and between minority and majority communities, rather than promote solidarity, recognition and common struggle.

My view is, of course, a partial one, and one which comes from 20 years of research in race and ethnicity, rather than religion (unlike my co-authors). My interest in Muslims is largely accidental. It stems from my earlier research on Asian youth identities (Alexander, 2000), which began in the mid-1990s when the moral panic *du jour* was 'Asian gangs', but which with the turn of the Millennium became transmuted into 'Muslim gangs', and then 'Muslims' in general. Revisiting this research, and its original participants, a decade and a half later,[1] it is clear the shift is a defining one, not only in terms of the broader social and political context, but in terms of the 'hearts and minds' of individuals, families and communities, if in multiple complex and sometimes contradictory ways.

It may be possible to argue, indeed, that as 'the color line' was for the early 20th century, 'The Muslim Question' has become the defining issue of our times. It provides a lens that covers everything from the global 'clash of civilizations', to the national borders of migration, citizenship and belonging, to the issue of community cohesion and the encounters between neighbours. Nevertheless, a focus on 'The Muslim Question' – or its implicit synonym 'The Muslim Problem' – raises a number of issues for research and policy around race equality. Here I want to focus on three of them.

1. What is at Stake in The Muslim Question?

Research on Muslims has exploded in the past two decades, and particularly in the period after 2001, when issues of racial discrimination became transformed into claims of self-segregation, equality became a matter of cohesion, and ethnic or religious difference became matters of security. Increasingly and explicitly, research has become linked to government and policy agendas, both at home and abroad. This has filtered academic research and knowledge production through the lens of policy and 'impact', which not only defines 'what counts' as worthy of research but also the terms in which it is understood – usually as a problem. It is interesting to reflect that when I was looking for a publisher for *The Asian Gang* in the late 1990s a senior editor at a major publishing house told me that no-one was interested in Asian youth because they were 'too dull'. This changed dramatically after 2001, at least as long as the 'Asians' are 'Muslims'. These days it seems one only has to add the word 'Muslim' to a project to get

funding, find a publisher or claim a spot on a Radio 4 talkshow. But is Thinking Allowed?

What does it mean to do research at a time of such heightened surveillance? What does it mean to do work on Muslims when any form of knowledge production is so freighted with significance and potential harm and when the parameters of a debate are always already so overdetermined from without? What constitutes a critical intervention? Does the seemingly unending focus on rituals, hijabs and arranged marriages really meet this challenge? Our desperate rehearsal of the mantra of the multiplicity and fluidity of identities may be a necessary script, but is it really a sufficient one? Does it 'Bend the Twig', to quote Stuart Hall (2009), in a context where David Cameron can talk about multiple identities as a remedy for extremism and use it as a stick to beat the Muslim community with still further?

2. Who Counts as Muslim?

My second question is around who counts as Muslim in The Muslim Question? And here my concern is about the tensions between invisibility and hypervisibility. Leaving aside the very interesting question of what the 2011 census reveals about who and where the Muslims are, my focus here is on who we THINK they are, and the ways in which this makes only particular groups and aspects visible. Usually we associate 'Muslims' with South Asians – logically, perhaps, given the demography – but this raises interesting overlaps with residual categories around race and ethnicity. There is increasing work on Somalis, who handily combine racial and religious marginality in one neat package for those who like their 'problems' multiplied. However, we know much less about Muslims from the Middle East, and particularly the super-rich who are more likely to be seen in the shops of Kensington and Chelsea than the streets of Bradford or Birmingham.

This indicates that the term 'Muslim' is too often a codeword for a series of pathologies. If we think of dominant representations, they appear in three main categories: gender (the hijab/forced marriage/honour killings triad), gangs and grooming, and

terrorists/extremists. None of these are good … and all provide grist to the mill of the born-again racism-without-race popular with both the EDL and the so-called liberal left because, apparently, it's not racist to be anti-Muslim.

This hypervisibility renders other, more mundane aspects of Muslim life invisible. What about the everyday spaces of Muslim life – the shopping malls, the schools, the workplace, the street? Do these more everyday spaces count as Muslim? Or in these everyday spaces do people stop being Muslim and just become people? Which is convenient, because then we don't have to change the categories in which we think. On the downside, it doesn't change the categories in which we think – and there are consequences to that.

3. What are the Implications for Race Equality?

My third question is to think about the relationship between race equality and religion in the construction of The Muslim Question. Of course, Runnymede was one of the first organizations to take seriously the issue and definition of Islamophobia in their 1997 report. They argued then that Islamophobia was 'a challenge for us all'. But is it still? Since this period the race equality and religious equality agendas have become increasingly separate, and academic research in these areas has also become distinct. We could make the same argument about migration studies, and the danger is the same – that it is now seemingly possible to talk about religion without race and race without reference to religion. In the first instance we risk separating out Muslims from a broader struggle for equality, and in the second we run the risk of subsuming or erasing the differences between experiences, priorities, groups and subjectivities for a one-size-fits-all definition of racism.

The singular focus on religion, like the focus on ethnicity or culture, tends to overlook cross-cutting issues and alliances – around class for example, or gender – and it therefore erases commonality. We can think about figures that

show high levels of unemployment, educational underachievement, stop and search, poor housing, low levels of household wealth, the 'ethnic penalty' for professionals, and ask whether this is a 'Muslim question' and whether a focus on religion alone accounts for this, any more than a focus on race, culture or ethnicity? And does a focus on religion provide a solution? By the same token we could ask whether the response to social and ethnic inequality and discrimination is really the acquisition of multiple identities for Muslims as David Cameron would have us believe?

Seeing these experiences as distinct closes the possibility of dialogue and exchange, of alliance and recognition of overlapping categories, or of shared experiences of discrimination and exclusion, and it weakens the struggle against racism, inequality and exclusion. For me, this closure and silence is at the heart of the Muslim Question.

Notes

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2. Doing the "Muslim Question" in Different Voices
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Introduction

Why frame our discussion under the title of the 'Muslim Question'? Does it make for a different kind of conversation? Is it good to think with?

References to 'Europe's Muslim Question' have increasingly been cropping up, post 9/11 and 7/7. Why now, and to what ends? Broadly speaking, I think we can divide them into two kinds. There are, on the one hand, those for whom the "Muslim Question" is merely a euphemism for the Muslim problem; and, on the other, those for whom, on the contrary, it names the problematization of Muslims. More fundamentally, there are those who think of the Muslim Question as a question or questions that demand answers and solutions, whether by refining policies or gaining a better knowledge of the facts on the ground; and there are those for whom the "Muslim Question" is a rhetorical device. For the first, the focus – of the problems and for the answers – is on Muslims; for the latter, it is instead on what the discursive construction of the Muslims as the problem discloses about Europe and European-ness (Sayyid, 2009).

Still, what the reference to the Muslim Question does for them all is work as shorthand. But shorthand for what? Arguably for the "Question" side of the term. We all know more or less what is meant by the Muslim Question (but only more or less) because we fill in for Muslims by historical analogy with the other "Questions" of ages past.

Actually, as both term and concept, "the Muslim Question" has its own long and loaded histories and contemporary resonances, to which Russia, India and the Balkans, and the French and British empires attest. Different contexts, different agents, different configurations: Imperial incorporation or the break-up of empires, partition and nation-building, the movements of populations or the redrawing of state boundaries; intellectuals, politicians, missionaries or provocateurs; the nationality question, the minority question, ethnic or religious; marginal or dominant.

Yet, for all their critical relevance to such contemporary articulations of the "Muslim Question" as the governance of Muslims, these other, historical, "Muslim Questions" cannot be said to be the Questions evoked in current debates. "Our" contemporary "Muslim Question" is very much a (Western) European question, and a question of Liberalism (Parekh, 2008; Norton, 2013). Its historical imaginary is that of the European post-Enlightenment political tradition and the struggles for emancipation, citizenship and equality which set its grammar: the Jewish, Catholic, Social, Women's and Colour Questions which dominated 19th-century politics.

But which one? The different "Questions" each have their own historical, contextual and discursive histories; their specific conditions of possibility and contemporary currencies as usable pasts. However much part of the same constellation, the different "Questions" of the 19th century politicized and managed the different differences of race and gender, class and nation, metropolis and colony, differently (Brown, 2006). If the point of the analogy were the shorthand, then it matters which Question the Muslim Question is read through.

Where the analogy is rendered explicit by some authors, it is mostly towards the "Jewish Question". But it is worth noting two things. First, the coining and currency of the "Jewish Question" in the 1840s is owing to its having 'caught on' as a 'political catchphrase', and specifically as an "anti-Jewish battle-cry" (Toury, 1966). By contrast, what currency the "Muslim Question" as a neologism has attained today is, I'd argue, owed overwhelmingly more to the critics than to the peddlers of Islamophobia. Second, while for some authors the interest in drawing the analogy between the Muslim Question and the Jewish

Question is to read Jewish for Muslim, and the lessons of the historical experience of Jews for Muslims, arguably the critical work of the analogy is in the Question. It is metaphorical.

It would be a mistake to think that reference to the Muslim Question is an historical short-cut for thinking the Muslim problem through other problems, the contemporary Muslim experience through the historical experiences of others evoked by their Questions. The Jewish Question, like the Woman Question, and the other Questions, do not refer to specific, determinate questions and stable referents. The Muslim question is not shorthand for the Jewish question, the "Muslim Question" is shorthand for "the Muslim" as the "Jewish Question" is shorthand for "the Jew" (cf. Klug, 2012). What the "Muslim Question" makes present, what it enacts and dramatizes, then, is the scare quoting, the foregrounding of the fantasy of the "Muslim" in the "Muslim Question". This is why Muslim Question talk is catching on. This is what the name brings to the discussion of our panel. The point of making the Question appear real is to legitimate solutions and interventions. The work of estranging it is critique.

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3. Engaged Muslim Citizenship in Europe
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Introduction: The 'Muslim Question' in Europe

Recent years have seen a series of political debates about the place of Muslims in Europe, something that has variously centred on topics of integration, security, discrimination and identity (Meer, 2012). These debates frequently present Muslims as newcomers to the European landmass (Caldwell, 2009; Steyn, 2006), ignoring how the majority are European through citizenship and have over generations made profound contributions to the social and cultural fabric of different nation-states. As such, and when we include historically established Muslims, of the Balkans, Mediterranean and indeed of the former Eastern bloc (e.g. Tartar communities in Poland), it has been said that Muslims are more numerous than Catholics in the traditionally Protestant north of Europe, and more numerous than Protestants in the traditionally Catholic south (Klausen, 2005).

Importantly, cross-national research is beginning to support more local (national) studies in finding that across Europe Muslims are more likely to be consistently socio-economically disadvantaged than other groups (with the exception of Roma and traveller communities), evidenced in higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of income (and are more likely to be employed in unskilled work) (Open Society Institute, 2010: 96). Unfortunately, disadvantage is not normally what occupies those posing the 'Muslim Question' – a reference to the 'Jewish Question', which has previously haunted Europe and centred on what today we would describe as issues of integration for (and rejection of) Jewish minorities. While there are analogies between the racism encountered by Jewish and Muslim communities (Meer, 2013), it is important to stress that just as their Jewish counterparts before them, who have moved inwards from the margins of social and political life, Muslims have become active participants in democratic life, and so are not merely objects of discrimination.

The Pursuit of Citizenship: Integration, Accommodation, Organization

When we look across the European landmass we find Muslims are often innovating with Islam in Europe, as expressed in the idea of *Euro-Islam*, perhaps pioneered by the Swiss-born philosopher Tariq Ramadan (2004), who describes it as a process already underway, and in which 'more and more young people and intellectuals are actively looking for a way to live in harmony with their faith, participating in the societies that are their societies'. Ramadan (2004) sees this as being 'faithful to the principles of Islam, dressed in European and American cultures, and definitively rooted in Western societies'. This is not an uncommon approach, one that is *both* classicist and revisionist because it stakes out a resource (in Islamic scriptures) to propose a qualitatively novel solution – being a 'native' Muslim European in traditionally non-Muslim majority environments.

Where Muslims are not radically innovating they are pursuing well-established policy traditions within European states. For example, and contrary to popular claims, Muslims have not set up political parties seeking to establish the right to practise polygamy, FGM or forced marriages. Instead Muslim constituencies are often crafting a participatory space in the form of such things as provisions for Muslim schooling, discrimination legislation, the tools for social mobility and non-derogatory representation in mainstream public and media discourses. We might call this the pursuit of citizenship. Europe boasts a rich public sphere and a series of dynamic civil societies that

have historically included and incorporated other religious minorities. The real question it needs to address is how to accommodate Muslims in a manner that will allow them to reconcile their faith and citizenship commitments.

It is important to remember that Muslims are not one homogeneous group. On the contrary, Muslim group identities in Europe – like Jewish and Catholic group identities – contain many *social layers* that are not a simple reflection of religious texts. This means that the appellation of 'Muslim' can be used without any agreement on Islamic matters. This point is under-studied and, as a consequence, when we talk about 'Muslim leaders' it would be useful to differentiate between: (1) how Muslims organize themselves or do not organize themselves; (2) what this tells us about self-definitions of 'Muslim' in Europe; and (3) whether there is a European mould for the incorporation of Muslim organizations. Beginning with the first and second questions, there are, according to Neilsen (2004: 121), three main forms of Muslim organization which have developed among Muslim minorities in Western Europe: (a) groups which arose from local communities in terms of service provision and anti-discrimination; (b) groups set up as extensions of organizations or movements from their country of origin; and (c) groups set up by governments or government-related agencies to engage with them and national civil society.

During the 1990s the second (b) of Neilsen's forms began to merge with the first (a), before giving way to the third (c). These were often modelled on corporatist organizations created by other, especially Jewish, faith groups; e.g. the *Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)* and the *Zentralrat de Muslime in Deutschland (ZMD)* both draw upon the precedents of Jewish bodies and organizations. Meanwhile the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* draws upon the Consitoire for Jews. The crucial point is that each Muslim organization has been framed within European agendas of democratic participation, and stakeholder representation and consultation, rather than as clerical or religious bodies per se.

Conclusion: Engaging Muslims?

While as yet embryonic, Muslims–state engagement points to a re-formulation of church–state relations: indeed in 2003 the European Union discussed how to build bridges between faith communities, and especially how to integrate faith-based representative bodies in wider frameworks of governance. Developments in Muslims–state engagement are therefore qualitatively novel and potentially profound, for they engage with all the questions of legitimacy – who speaks for Muslims and do they need to be 'Islamic' to be 'Muslim' leaders? How is this *shaped by* as well as *shaping* citizenship relations in the public domain? What are the similarities and differences both within and between different national approaches? These are just some of the pressing questions that Muslims are asking themselves. The crucial point is that they are not questions about a clash of civilizations or *jihad* – they are political questions about democratic participation and representation, and so point to an engaged Muslim citizenry across Europe.

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4. Gendering the Muslim Question
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Introduction

Speaking as a self-identified British Muslim woman, working with and researching British Muslim women, my response to the 'Muslim Question' is a personal and gendered one. For me, the 'Muslim Question' is a matter of multiple, context-specific questions, around who is defined as 'Muslim', but also including questions such as 'who is asking?' and 'why?' In particular I am interested in how Muslim women appear in and disappear from these discourses. My focus here is on the ways media and social policy have systematically failed Muslim women, through either repeating tired and unhelpful stereotypes, or failing to listen and respond to the social welfare needs identified by Muslim women's grassroots organizations.

Representing Muslim Women

Within dominant media representations and political agendas around Muslim identities in the period following 9/11, Muslim women have come in for particular scrutiny. Whether in their role in transmitting Islam across the generations, or embodying difference in the issue of dress, 'Muslim women' and their bodies have become a site for renewed media and political surveillance and contestation.

High-profile controversies before 7/7, such as the case of Shabina Begum and her 2-year high court battle against her school to allow her to wear the jilbab (2004–2006), comments made in October 2006 by the then Leader of the House of Commons, Jack Straw, questioning the 'integration' of young Muslim women wearing the niqab, and the subsequent banning of the niqab on some university campuses after they were deemed a 'security risk' following 7/7 have encouraged the expression and normalization of gendered Islamophobic sentiments in broadsheet

newspapers and the tabloid press, and among MPs. They further highlight how Muslim women's simultaneous apparent 'victimhood' and, ironically, their perceived threat to 'British values', continue to influence media reporting and government-led agendas. This 'victim-focused' and pathologized discourse is one that silences and obscures alternative forms of agency and difference, repeats simplistic 'modern/Western' versus 'traditional/Muslim' dichotomous frameworks, and contributes to furthering distinctions of 'us' and 'them' (Ahmad, 2010).

Regardless of the educational and professional achievements of large numbers of British Muslim women, only two types of Muslim woman are still readily accepted as 'authentic' within the public sphere. One is the oppressed victim; the other is the 'rebel', such as self-professed former Muslim Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Both voices appear to be legitimized as 'authentic' and 'brave' because they are seen as dissenting from the Muslim (patriarchal) mainstream. Despite interventions by articulate and devout Muslim women across a range of contexts, attempting to make their voices heard, they are met with hostility, disbelief, disrespect and criticism of Islam and Muslims. It seems a Muslim woman is only a Muslim woman out of fear or is deluded by a form of 'false consciousness'. Even within representations on television and film, Muslim women cannot simply 'be' without recourse to some reliance on pathology and stereotype. Such (mis)representations influence the development of social policies affecting Muslim women.

Muslim Women and Social Policy

Social policy vis-à-vis British Muslims in the post-9/11, post-7/7 era has continued to insist that 'multiculturalism has failed', without fully

appreciating the huge disconnects between various definitions of 'multiculturalism' as a theoretical discourse, multiculturalism on the 'ground' as a complex and differentiated 'lived experience', and most problematically, multiculturalism as operationalized through various social policies and practice. Supporters of 'multiculturalism as a failed project' have used specifically gendered crisis points such as 'forced marriages', female genital mutilation, 'honour killings', veiling (running the gamut of hijabs, jilbabs, burqas and niqabs), and concerns about the presence of Shari'ah law courts and alleged increases in polygamy, to sharpen their attack on Muslim communities and Islam as incompatible with human rights.

However, in assuming victimhood among Muslim women, some social welfare and family law policies and professionals are not only failing to help Muslim women access culturally appropriate needs-based services, but are also denying them access to the full positive potential of their Islamic rights, vilifying the Islamic frames of reference that many Muslim women rely on, and by means of which they are empowered.

Muslim women's organizations have not hidden from confronting the difficult issues listed above, while also contending with a largely unsupportive Muslim male leadership that has monopolized access to policymakers and funders. Yet despite this, when opportunities have arisen to engage with Government and policymakers, there have been significant reasons for cynicism among many Muslim women's organizations. The establishment of the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG) in 2008 was initially publicized as supporting the empowerment of Muslim women in Britain, even though it was funded through PREVENT. It attracted widespread criticism from the outset with accusations that Muslim women were being used to 'spy' on their families and communities, and that the group was not representative and therefore unable to deliver meaningful change at the grassroots level. Two-and-a-half years later, the group collapsed, after the public resignation of its Chair, Shaista Gohir, who accused NMWAG of being little more than a 'tick box exercise' and 'not serious about the role of women in

influencing public policy…' (Gohir, 2010).

The prioritizing of PREVENT has caused a deflection of funding and resources away from areas that grassroots organizations, especially Muslim women's groups, identify as significant – social welfare, health and educational projects, family relationships and marriage and divorce support. These organizations work within religious and cultural frames of reference supporting the most marginalized and inaccessible groups, and do so with scarce resources, being dependent largely on voluntary contributions. However, their Muslim identity has rested uneasily within social welfare-based definitions of multiculturalism, while austerity-led funding cuts are marginalizing an already marginalized Muslim voluntary sector.

To take a particular example – marital breakdown among British Muslims is on the increase, yet there is little formal support available, and even less interest on the part of Government, unless issues around polygamy or suspect 'visa marriages' are raised. Several studies highlight how Muslim women make up the majority of applicants to Shari'ah councils across Britain (Ahmad and Sheriff, 2001). They demonstrate the difficulties Muslim women face from secularized institutions such as social services, solicitors and the judiciary, who are often unable to offer faith-sensitive services or acknowledge the centrality of faith for their Muslim clients (Ahmad and Sheriff, 2001). Successive governments have failed to recognize the significance of this, influenced instead by media-led scare stories around the evils of Shari'ah law. The Muslim voluntary sector and Muslim women's organizations, already poorly resourced, provide vital services supporting women through access to 'female-friendly' Shari'ah councils in order to obtain an Islamic divorce, or by providing faith-based counselling. The first Muslim women's shelter, opened in October 2012, is funded through donations to the National Zakat Foundation, and is a direct response to the inadequacy of secular women's shelters, indicating the significance of faith-based service provision for many Muslim women (Bano, 2012).

Conclusion: Ways Forward

There is a need for an urgent review around funding for voluntary and ethnic minority and faith groups, with less red tape and fewer complicated forms to comply with; more support for existing projects that are responding to localized needs; greater provision of free English classes, and greater support for grassroots projects on marriage, relationship and divorce support. In addition, research recently published shows that anti-Muslim sentiment is on the rise. 'Tell MAMA' – a helpline that reports Islamophobic incidents – has revealed that 58% of physical attacks reported within 12 months were on visibly Muslim women. They call for more police training and recording of Islamophobic attacks, but also a need for the Home Office to take greater responsibility in tackling far-right and 'broadband extremism' (Tell MAMA, 2013).

The current lack of needs-based funding for Muslim women's organizations not only indicates a lack of sincerity on the part of successive governments in their claims to support Muslim women, but forces Muslim women's organizations to work within restrictive frameworks that may not be best suited to the communities they serve. Ultimately, this 'agenda-led' form of funding will only feed further scepticism.

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SECTION II: THE NEW MUSLIMS

5. Muslims in England and Wales: Evidence from the 2011 Census
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Introduction

This short paper presents 2001 and 2011 census data for the Muslim population in England and Wales to show:

- how it has grown;
- how it is distributed geographically;
- how its geography is changing;
- and that its residential separation is decreasing.

Census Religion Question

The census in England and Wales has asked a question on religion since 2001. The question, which is the only voluntary question on the census form, asks 'What is your religion?' and aims to determine affiliation rather than the degree of religiosity or practice (ONS, 2012a). There are seven pre-coded categories (no religion, Christian,

Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh) to choose from as well as a write-in 'other' category. The categories are fully comparable between 2001 and 2011 (ONS, 2012b). In 2011, however, the tick box for 'no religion' had changed from 'none' in 2001, which may have affected the number of people identifying with the category.

Growth in the Muslim Population, 2001–2011

In 2011, almost 5% of the population in England and Wales ticked Muslim as a religion, making it the second most popular after Christianity. The number of people identifying with a Muslim religion increased by almost 1.2m (or 75%), which is the biggest increase for any religious group since 2001 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Religious affiliation, England and Wales, 2001–2011

Religious affiliation	2001		2011	
	N	%	*N*	%
Christian	37,338,486	71.7	33,243,175	59.3
No religion	7,709,267	14.8	14,097,229	25.1
Religion not stated	4,010,658	7.7	4,038,032	7.2
Muslim	**1,546,626**	**3.0**	**2,706,066**	**4.8**
Hindu	552,420	1.1	816,633	1.5
Sikh	329,360	0.6	423,158	0.8
Jewish	259,928	0.5	263,346	0.5
Buddhist	144,453	0.3	247,743	0.4
Other religion	150,720	0.3	240,530	0.4

Source: 2011 Census (Crown Copyright) Table KS209EW.

Geographical Concentration of the Muslim Population in 2011

The Muslim population in England and Wales is clustered in selected Local Authorities (LA). In 2011 almost 35% of the population of Tower Hamlets, East London were Muslim. Moreover, more than one-fifth of the population identify themselves as Muslim in Newham, Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Luton, Redbridge, Slough, Waltham Forest and Birmingham (see Figure 1). These places tend to be settlement areas for migrants from Southern Asia. There are also higher proportions of Muslims compared with the national average (4.8%) in many LAs that border these clustered areas (e.g. Barking and Dagenham, Pendle and Bolton).

Change in Geography of the Muslim Population, 2001–2011

The 2011 census reported that the proportion of the population with a Muslim religion had grown in all LAs in England and Wales, except for six where the Muslim population was assessed as lower than 1000. The Muslim population grew at a faster rate in LAs outside of Inner London (83%) than in the LAs of Inner London (44%) during the 2000s.

Table 2 shows that in 2011 the rate of growth had been greatest in LAs with more than 1000 Muslims, i.e. Barking and Dagenham (257%) and Solihull (221%). This is likely to reflect a process of residential dispersal away from clustered areas. The large absolute growth in the most clustered areas (e.g. Birmingham) will, in part, have been a consequence of the youthful population of the Muslim population growing through natural increase (more births than deaths) as well as new immigration (Peach, 2006).

Figure 1. Geographical distribution of the Muslim population, England and Wales, 2011

Source: 2011 Census (Crown Copyright) Table KS209EW.

Percentage of population with Muslim religious affiliation
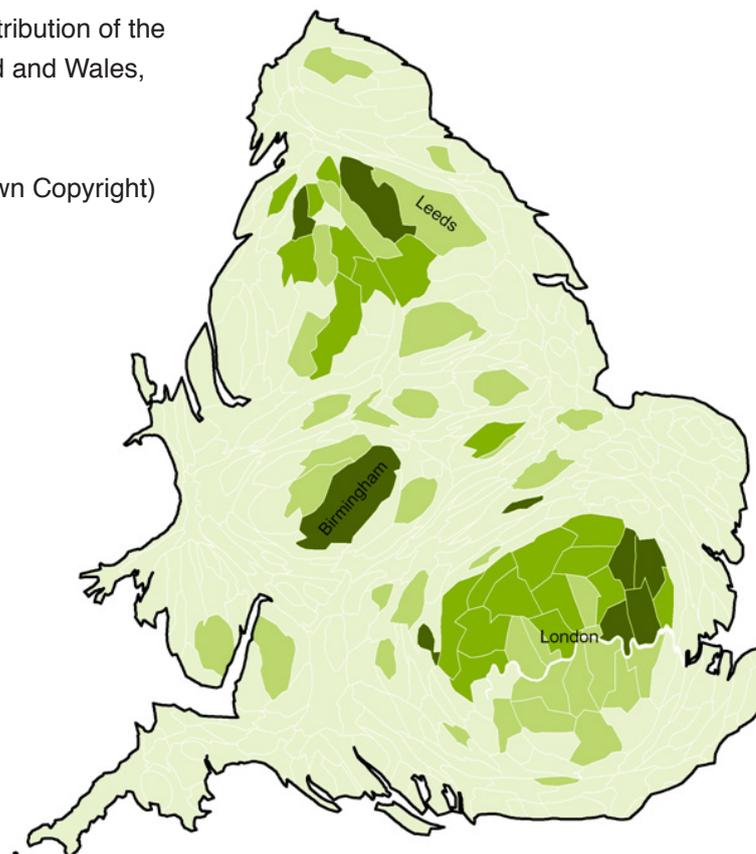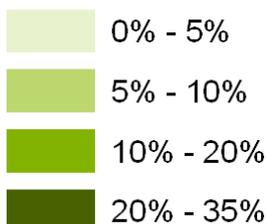
Table 2. Change in the Muslim Population, 2001–2011: Districts with biggest absolute and relative growth

District	Change	% Change
Districts with biggest absolute increase in Muslims:		
Birmingham	94,378	67
Bradford	53,853	72
Manchester	43,690	122
Newham	39,163	66
Redbridge	36,512	128
Districts with biggest relative increase in Muslims (>1000 in 2011):		
Gwynedd	1,041	309
Barking and Dagenham	18,372	257
Solihull	3,610	221
Norwich	1,725	194
Bristol	14,352	187

Source: 2011 Census (Crown Copyright) Table KS209EW.

Decrease in Muslim Segregation

The measurement of residential clustering is difficult. Though a growing number of an ethnic group in one place is a bigger 'cluster', it does not mean any greater separation from others. For example, in Inner London the Muslim population has grown in size, leading to larger clusters of Muslims in central parts of the capital. At the same time there has been a spreading out from the biggest Muslim concentrations (e.g. Tower Hamlets) towards neighbouring areas (e.g. Barking and Dagenham). The amount of residential separation can be measured using the Index of Dissimilarity, which compares the percentage of a group's total population in England and Wales that lives in an LA with the percentage of the rest of the population living in that same LA. The absolute differences in percentage are added up across the 348 LAs of England and Wales, and then halved so that the Index is between 0 and 100 (Simpson, 2007).

The Muslim population is relatively evenly spread through England and Wales (Index of Dissimilarity of 54%), which means the separation factor has decreased since 2001 by 2 percentage points (see Figure 2). The only religious group to have increased its separation during the last decade is the relatively small Jewish population, which was the most separated (63%) of all religions in the 2011 Census.

Figure 2. Religion's Spread across England and Wales, 2011

Separation in **2001**

Separation in **2011**

The Index of Dissimilarity across 376 local authorities of England and Wales. 100% means complete separation. 0% means completely evenly spread.
The change from 2001 to 2011 is shown in brackets after the 2011 value.

100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

Jewish 63% (+1%)
Sikh 61% (-2%)
Muslim 54% (-2%)
Hindu 52% (-5%)

Buddhist 26% (-4%)

Christian 15% (-2%)
No religion 12% (+0%)
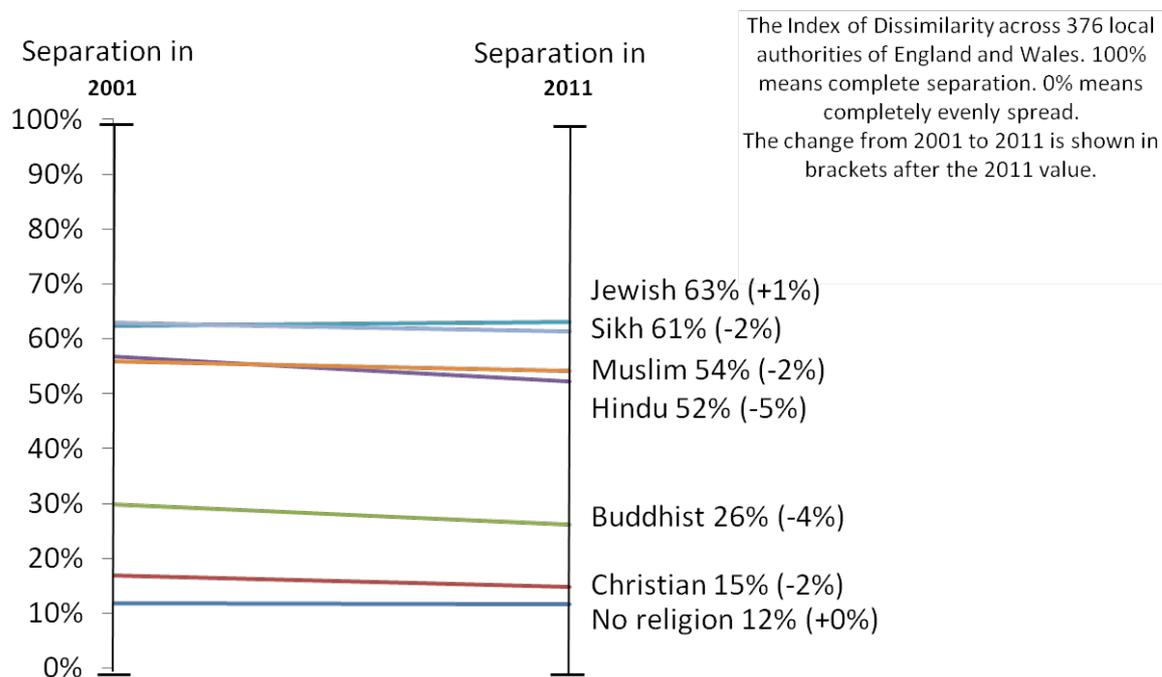
Source: 2011 Census (Crown Copyright) Table KS209EW.

Summary

Between 2001 and 2011 the Muslim population:

- grew by almost 1.2m to 2.7m, increasing its share of the population from 3% to 4.8%;

- is clustered in selected areas with a history of immigration from Southern Asia – Tower Hamlets, for example, where Muslims account for 35% of the population;

- is growing in areas where it is already most clustered, but at a faster rate in neighbouring areas (e.g. Barking and Dagenham and Solihull);

- was fairly evenly spread across England and Wales in 2001, and has become more so by 2011.

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6. Muslims and Military Service
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Introduction

For hundreds of years Muslim soldiers, sailors and more recently airmen have valiantly served, fought and died as part of the British Armed Forces. Hundreds of thousands volunteered to fight in both World Wars and today hundreds continue to serve in the British Armed Forces. (AFMA website)

In 2006 Jabron Hashmi, 24, became the first British Muslim soldier to die in Afghanistan. His older brother, Zeeshan, who had also worked in the British Army, said at the time: 'Jabron was a committed soldier and a committed Muslim. He was fiercely proud of his Islamic background and he was equally proud of being British and was very proud to live in Britain.'

The death in service of this avowedly Muslim patriot was acknowledged as a significant event at the highest levels. The following year members of Hashmi's family, who lived in Birmingham and were originally from Pakistan, were asked to lay the foundation stone for the new National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. However, although Jabron's death was commemorated as a form of sacrifice for the nation, it was perceived by many other Muslims as an act of betrayal.

In a BBC report entitled 'UK's Muslim Soldiers "fighting extremists not Muslims"', Zeeshan Hashmi subsequently revealed that, following Jabron's death, the family had received many letters from 'well-wishers of all faith and backgrounds', which had been a great source of comfort. But they had also experienced hostility on the grounds that Jabron was considered a traitor.

These divergent responses help to illustrate why the figure of the Muslim performing military service is so significant. At one extreme, as a British soldier, Jabron Hashmi was hailed as a hero who gave his life for his country. For others, as a Muslim, he

was accused of betraying his faith by fighting in a war that demonized Islam as the enemy of western civilization. Yet it is not often that we hear about the experience of minorities, particularly those who are Muslims, who decide to work in the armed forces.

Britain's military institutions are regarded as separate from the rest of the public sector, to which they nominally belong. At the same time, they play a crucial role in mediating ideas about national identity, and about the relationship between the past and the present. The act of volunteering to be a soldier is thought to reach into the heart of what it means to 'serve' the nation. As a result, when greater attention is paid to the conditions of military service and the personal costs borne by the 'ordinary' women and men involved, the presence (or absence) of ethnic, cultural, sexual and religious minorities presents itself as an index of inclusion within (or exclusion from) the wider society.

The most recent statistics published by the Ministry of Defence (MoD, 2012a) indicate that there are 650 Muslims serving in the UK armed services. Of these, 550 are in the British Army, constituting 0.5% of the total. In common with other faith groups, Muslim servicemen and women maintain a network of mutual support known as the Armed Forces Muslim Association (AFMA). So what does this organization tell us about the conditions of diversity in the army?

A Modern Multicultural Military?

Within the past decade the MoD has been able to claim that, in terms of numbers, the proportion of black and minority ethnic personnel in all three services has risen from just over 1% to more than 7%. In the British Army, the figure currently hovers around 10%.

This rise can partly be explained by the fact that residency regulations for Commonwealth citizens were dropped in 1998, partly in response to documented levels of racism and the virtual absence of diversity in the workforce. Today, two-thirds of BME personnel are classified as 'foreign and Commonwealth', and this figure does not include Gurkhas who are recruited from Nepal (MoD, 2012b). The employment of soldiers from outside the UK has had a significant impact on the institution's progress towards becoming a multicultural (and multi-faith) employer. But this process of modernization has also been mandated by law.

In 2003 the religion and belief elements of the European Employment Framework Directive were incorporated into the UK Employment Equality Regulations. Two years later the appointment of Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu chaplains replaced a system whereby religious leaders were engaged simply as advisers. For Muslims, as for other faith groups, this reform meant the possibility of a support network for individuals scattered across the institution.

Diversity as a Martial Asset

When Imam Asim Hafiz took up the post of first Muslim chaplain in 2005, it was unclear how many Muslims were serving, since comprehensive statistics were only collected from 2007. By 2009, there were 500 Muslims in the regular armed forces. Over 400 of these were in the army, and a significant proportion were citizens of countries such as The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Pakistan. It was at this point that AFMA was set up with the licence to explore the wider issue of Muslims serving in the military.

In AFMA's first newsletter, Imam Hafiz explained how the group hoped to persuade civilians of the significance of their work:

> Unfortunately there is a huge … ignorance in some parts of the Muslim community and I hope that AFMA will be able to bridge the gap between the Armed Forces and the

> Muslim community and be a reminder that HM Forces are as integral to British society as are other British institutions such as the Police Force, the fire service and the NHS that are here to serve this nation as whole including the Muslim community. (Hafiz, 2010: 7)

The Imam was supported by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in his expressed aims to educate the Muslim community about the opportunities provided by military service. The MCB issued a report entitled *Remembering the Brave: The Muslim Contribution to Britain's Armed Forces*, in which they confront the issue not just of ignorance about what it might mean to serve in the military, but also the depth of hostility towards the government's foreign policy. The report asserts that 'Loyalty does not mean the suspension of our critical faculties and failure to question our contested national engagements' (MCB, n.d.).

In an oblique reference to documented war crimes, such as the murder in 2003 of civilian Baha Mousa by British soldiers in Iraq, the report ventures into more controversial territory: 'We should ensure that the actions of a few do not diminish the overall expectations of our armed forces to abide by international laws of war and uphold fundamental human rights.'

While these arguments are addressed to UK citizens at home, the organization of Muslims inside the armed forces has been acknowledged by sections of the military leadership too. In 2009 the then Chief of the General Staff, General Sir David Richards, the first patron of the AFMA, commented publicly that Britain 'had a commitment to … all those Muslims with whom we have a natural identity, given our own core values reflect very strongly those of Muslim faith'.[1]

The raised profile of Muslim personnel – including the Imam – has also been utilized as a strategic asset in Afghanistan. This could be seen in news reports emphasizing the participation of Muslims, whether joining forces with Afghan security personnel to celebrate Eid or acting as intermediaries with Afghan civilians.[2] Seen in this

light, the pragmatic tools of counter-insurgency warfare intersect with the symbolic aspects of soldiering on the domestic front.

The Conditions of Military Work

Because of Britain's history as an aggressive imperial power, its military institutions play a critical role in making and reproducing official versions of Britishness. As the quote at the start of this piece indicates, the contribution of Muslim soldiers in Britain's contemporary wars can be placed within a much longer record of service to the British Crown that stretches back over two centuries.

As we saw earlier, the increased presence of Muslims in the UK armed forces is a direct consequence of widening military recruitment to include citizens of Britain's former colonies as well as the children of postcolonial migrants and settlers. Seen in this historical perspective, the significance of Muslim soldiers today – regardless of the actual numbers involved – indicates the symbolic importance of military work in the ongoing struggle for full citizenship and the right to belong in a diverse, multi-faith society.

Notes

1. In the same interview Richards also said: 'It is very important for the Muslim community to be exposed to an alternative view as it is for the rest of the nation. The Taliban kill many more Muslims than we do.'

2. For example: On 16 November 2010 the Muslim chaplain gave a sermon to a multi-national congregation in the festival of Eid ul Adha in conjunction with the Imam of the local 205 Corps of the Afghan National Army (ANA). A lengthy report on the MoD's *Defence News* site revealed that there were 600 Muslims present, including representatives from across ISAF military forces, defence contractors and civilian workers as well as 'local Afghans'. The occasion was hailed as a reflection of 'the united relationship' between ISAF and the Afghan National Army (MoD, *Defence News*, 2012).

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7. Muslim Group Solidarity and Schooling
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Introduction

In the wake of the 2001 riots, a range of policy reports have focused attention on the public 'concerns' over segregated communities in general, and of Muslim schools in particular. The political discourse surrounding segregation reached its peak following the publication of a number of studies on ethnic segregation in Britain's state schools which were widely reported within the media. Subsequent public discourse established an unchallenged wisdom that associated ethnic clustering and group solidarity with 'self-segregation', social and economic marginalization and civil unrest. In light of this, community cohesion, integration and, for some, assimilation became the key paradigm in dealing with the Muslim question, with a particular focus on Muslim young men as constituting a 'problem', most often read through the lens of educational underachievement, alienation and 'the gang' (Alexander, 2000).

This paper, drawing upon ethnographic data and focus group interviews with over 30 school pupils in the north of England, aims to demonstrate an alternative way of framing ethnic group identity. First, it questions the idea of Muslim group identity as essentially problematic, and aims to provide a positive way of framing group identity. Second, it demonstrates how, following the War on Terror, Muslim group solidarity or *'asabiyya',* as understood through the works of Ibn Khaldun (d.1406), becomes a key mechanism for resisting anti-Muslim racism within schools. Finally, it aims to provide a critique to the dominant paradigm of ethnically mixed schools and provides possible ways forward.

Group Identity as Problematic?

Within Britain's dominant rhetoric of individualism, meritocracy and social mobility, group solidarity amongst young men is often treated with great suspicion, associated with hyper-masculinity and gang culture. The events of the 2001 riots, 9/11 and 7/7 have come to frame Muslim group solidarity, in particular, through the same problematic lens. Government policies in the past decade have thus attempted to break up segregated schools in a number of the northern mill-towns of Britain. The logic behind such policies has been the assumption that segregation leads to social unrest or violent extremism, and that group solidarity and friendships amongst ethnic minority youth necessarily promote crime and violence (Miah, 2012).

In contrast to official concerns with group solidarity, discourses among Muslims tend to view group solidarity as a positive feature of any active society, maintaining that human beings are essentially social beings who live together and that their future is determined by the wider social bonds they create and nurture with their fellow humans. For ethnic minority young people in Britain, moreover, the importance of relying upon peer groups is often a fundamental element of protection, security and resistance, especially when there are perceived or real experiences of prejudice and abuse.

In the wake of the War on Terror and the growth of widespread anti-Muslim racism, these issues have been highlighted for young Muslims in the context of schooling in three ways. First, we have seen the discourse of integration and counter-terrorism shaping school policies and the pathologized framing of Muslim pupils through the implementation of certain strands of the *Prevent* policies in schools (Miah, 2012). Second, despite occasional success stories of ethnic minority achievement, racial inequality is so profoundly embedded in the educational system that some researchers are talking about '*locked-in inequality*', i.e. a situation where the levels of inequality are so deep-seated that the removal of existing barriers

will not create a level playing-field (Gillborn, 2008). Finally, we have witnessed an increase in racist incidents within schools in the UK: in response to a Freedom of Information request, it was disclosed that 88,000 incidents of racist bullying were recorded in British schools between 2007 and 2011. Some areas, such as Oldham, Luton, Croydon and Middlesbrough, saw an increase of 40% or more over the period 2007/08 to 2009/10 (Talwar, 2012). In such a climate, issues of solidarity assume greater significance and demand recognition of the complex motivations underpinning group formation.

Group Solidarity and School Spaces

Clustering of members of the same ethnic group is an everyday and unremarkable feature of many schools in Britain. Indeed, one of the paradoxes of the ethnically mixed schools which were brought about through local authority intervention is the perpetuation of such clustering in the new setting – thus the cycle continues to repeat itself with segregation *between* schools giving way to segregation *within* schools, and with an ongoing focus on ethnic minority young men as constituting the primary 'problem' or barrier to cohesion. Nevertheless, Muslim group solidarity or *'asabiyya'* in mixed schools demonstrates how resistance to anti-Muslim racism is one of its key functions, rather than the desire to maintain segregation per se. *'Asabiyya'* becomes a way of resisting anti-Muslim prejudice in the broader context of the War on Terror. This is clearly articulated by the following interviewee:

> We go to a mainly white school, but all the Muslims and also the Asians hang together. You know it's not because we don't like white people or because we want to stick with our own. There is a more simple explanation – we have to be together to get through the day. There is pure racism after what's happened with the war and what have you. So we hang together to [en]sure unity and strength. The teachers don't watch our back we have to do it ourselves.

Muslim pupil group solidarity within the context of schooling can act as a potentially positive social force – it nurtures social bonding, with emphasis on fellowship, partnership and association. The function of group solidarity is thus to form unity consensus and provide direction. Within Muslim discourses – with for example the notion of *asabiyya* – 'sticking together' plays a pivotal role in constructing the idea of *'Muslim Ummah'*, which is then used as a source of strength.

Group solidarity can then be seen as playing an important role in achieving group protection, generating support and nurturing feelings of stability in a climate of hostility. It helps young Muslims to navigate their schooling experience, by providing a way of symbolizing strength through numbers, and signalling that racism and/or anti-Muslim prejudice will not be tolerated. Group solidarity thus becomes a *performance* enacted by Muslim pupils as a way of resisting and challenging hostility and violence – real or symbolic.

Conclusion

For Muslim pupils, in the aftermath of 9/11 and 7/7, racist experiences are increasingly seen as a fact of everyday life or even a rite of passage that Muslim pupils inevitably have to undergo. Any debate on integration and segregation of schooling must first factor in experiences of anti-Muslim racism; second, recognize the importance of group solidarity as a mundane and potentially positive feature of school life; and finally, recognize and respond to the ways in which international and national events shape local Muslim spaces and experiences within schools.

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8. Radio Muslims: Disparate Voices on the Same Wavelength
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Introduction: Knowing Muslims

We are used to 'knowing about' Muslims through the prism of spectacular events. Visual representations combine with media discourses in which social and cultural categories – ethnicity, gender, class, nation – are conflated with religion to produce the figure of the Muslim or the 'Muslim community'. Muslim lives are filtered through media technologies in other ways too. The 'Arab Spring', for example, recently celebrated the youthful, liberal and tech-savvy trajectory for Muslims in the Middle East (and beyond), turning them into poster-children for the liberatory power of social media and technology.

On the one hand, media technologies play a key role in shaping dominant narratives about Muslims, while on the other they enable Muslims to exercise freedoms and forms of self-expression. However, this also reflects a polarized view of what or who Muslims are, either as passive subjects of tradition, 'community' and religion (often epitomized by Sharia law) or as rebellious youth utilizing 'western' technologies (Facebook, Twitter etc) toward freer, yet uncertain, ends.

The social impact of media technologies goes beyond issues of representation and its individualized psychosocial effects. The different forms of use, content and institutions that are part of any media technology also play a role in its processes and the unfolding of its effects. This challenges the conventional link between Muslims, media and representation which most usually results in knowledge framed through broad social categories such as 'community'. A closer look at the role of media technologies in everyday Muslim lives – here through the example of Unity FM, a self-proclaimed Muslim 'community radio station' in inner-city Birmingham – is insightful for the myriad ways that overarching categories such as

'community', religion and authority are *negotiated* rather than determined. In this paper I discuss how a particular media technology – radio – operates as a site of simultaneous efforts to institutionalize 'the Muslim community' (largely by the management) *and* to challenge this (by certain presenters and listeners) resulting in the airwaves being a space of creative tension, where different people and viewpoints come together to *make* community and authority. By taking this approach, I illuminate a more complex relationship between Muslims, media technologies and popular representations.

Research on the Airwaves

As part of recent ethnographic research in Sparkbrook, Birmingham I participated in the life of a number of cultural spaces where Muslims (and sometimes non-Muslims) come together for different ends. One of these, Unity FM, occupies part of the first floor of an imposing listed Victorian building, which was previously the Centre for Multicultural Education. Around 2004 the building was acquired by some local Yemenis and has since operated as a commercial venture providing local businesses and charities with cheap office space as well as regular 'community' events. The space offers itself as a local hub for a wide range of Muslim ventures across different age groups, genders and ethnicities.

Unity FM is probably the longest-standing and busiest tenant in the building. The radio station's claim to not only serve the Birmingham Muslim community, but also to embody it, is a key source of its perceived legitimacy and success. The station claims to represent the demographic fact of Muslims in Birmingham through its programming, recruitment of volunteers and signal reception. One of the station's key aims is to serve the community through a carefully designed programme of shows that impart information to Muslims. There

is an element of reflexivity built into this through talk shows and call-ins, and an expectation that listeners and hosts respect Unity FMs uniqueness, impact and ethos by keeping it on air. This generally means that nothing is said or done that will jeopardize Unity FM's licence to broadcast.

During my time as a volunteer at Unity FM I observed how 'community' was regularly nurtured through careful management of programme content, presenters and listeners' call-ins. What also became apparent to me was how the station's authority and ability to do this was also regularly challenged and negotiated by a number of presenters and volunteers as part of their attempts to cultivate a broader sense of community.

One such case was Habib, a success at Unity FM, as was evident from his 5-year tenure at the station. But he was also controversial. Habib's time at Unity FM was characterized by regular tussles with listeners and management over the types of music that were considered acceptable to the 'Muslim community'. There were different gendered and racial connotations carried in certain musics that exposed tensions between cultural perceptions and religious convictions among Unity FM's listenership. To challenge what he saw as reductive ideas about music that were constricting the space of community, Habib carefully utilized religiously inflected sources of information, including texts, listeners and artists, to challenge what he saw as gendered and ethnic bias among listeners and management. He gradually broadened the station's position on music. He urged reflection on the message inherent in the music he played rather than on the vocal performer (male/female) or genres (hip-hop, reggae, etc.) which had previously led people to draw boundaries around the types of music that could be put out through Unity FM's airwaves.

Habib was credited with helping to create space for more alternative voices to take to the airwaves at Unity FM. This included women's voices, women like Alima who is a current favourite with a Thursday night show entitled *Inner Conflicts*. Alima's self-professed style is akin to that of an American self-help management guru. A key feature of her show is her innovative use of content from self-help manuals, cross-referenced with Islamic references and broadcast with the use of emotive language to cultivate positive predispositions in listeners. She uses the radio waves to present herself as 'authoritative' and 'respectable' – her shows are replete with Quranic references and folklore iterated through a crisp, adopted Arabic dialect. Alima is celebrated by the management and listeners alike for provoking thinking and affect in the 'community' of listeners, and thereby broadening the 'Muslim community' through the appeal of her new globalized content and style, as well as providing a platform for new gendered identities.

Conclusion: On the Same Wavelength

The case of Unity FM, an almost invisible space in the otherwise conspicuous 'Muslim community' of inner-city Birmingham, reveals the complex ways in which designs for 'community' are created, countered and (re)constructed. Through this wavelength, diverse peoples, voices and messages come into close contact and in doing so destabilize limited notions of community. Each presenter brings with them not only new content to add to the tapestry of 'the community', but also new styles, messages and modes of engagement. The wavelength at Unity FM thus extends the possibilities for belonging to a larger project of 'Muslim community': one not necessarily bound by the rules and authority of the station, nor seeking to subvert or replace it. Instead, disparate voices come together, on the same wavelength, in a coordinated yet unscripted way to create an expanded sense of being Muslim.

9. 'You Don't Come to Maple or You Get Bullets in Your Head': Somali Youth, Risk Talk and the Realities of Risk Avoidance

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Introduction: The 'Problem' of Muslim Youth

In the current context of austerity and growing social unrest, discourses around 'failed multiculturalism' and 'the problem of working-class youths' have gained amplified significance through the image of 'the gang' (Alexander, 2008). David Cameron's 2011 pledge to turn around the lives of 120,000 'troubled families' marked the beginning of a Home Office commitment which aimed to identify and manage the areas most 'at risk' of gang and youth violence, to tackle the 'scourge of gang culture' (Home Office, 2011). Practically speaking, the response has been increasingly based around funding intervention strategies that target those supposedly 'at risk' of becoming involved in 'antisocial behaviour', promoting increased levels of surveillance and policing.

The racialized nature of the political discourse surrounding this response has situated young, working-class Black and South Asian men within a longstanding nexus of 'risk'. In the past two decades, this has been clearly articulated with contemporary media representations of young Muslim men as potential terrorists, groomers or gang members, an image perpetuated in the ongoing criminalization of Asian men. For example, in 2009–10 'Asian people were Stopped and Searched 2.2 times more than White people' (Ministry of Justice, 2010). This paper critically engages with the contemporary discourse that portrays Muslim youths as somehow posing risks. It does so by reflecting upon the ways in which a small sample of Somali males (11–19 years of age) experienced and negotiated risk in their everyday lives. Specifically, inconsistencies between the ways in which this group were labeled as posing risk and the more mundane realties of their strategies of avoiding risk are illustrated.

The findings presented in this paper are taken from the results of a 3-year ethnographic research project. This research took place within three youth clubs and a homework club in two disadvantaged areas of a postindustrial northern city. Against the backdrop of these youth services, the research documents the ways in which youth workers and Somali young people negotiated the issue of risk labeling in their daily lives. This sample is of particular interest because, despite the established nature of the UK's Somali population, Somalis remain a part of the British Muslim community about which very little is known. Significantly, for the young Somalis involved in this research, their 'risk status' integrally informed the way they identified with each other and expected others to identify with them.

Somali 'Gangs' and Preventative Intervention

The areas where this research took place were locally stigmatized for the presence of Somali 'gangs'. They were also politically designated as 'high risk', and subjected to Home Office visits that aimed to develop discourses between youth workers, local residents and policymakers, with the aim of tackling this perceived problem. Whilst this governmental attention provided some opportunity for youth service funding, that funding contributed to the stigmatization of the areas in which they lived, because in order to get hold of such funding service organizers had to adopt language that played into the association of their areas with 'risk' (Alexander, 2008). To successfully obtain funding therefore logically contributed to the political recognition of these areas as needing 'risk intervention' due to the 'problem' of Somali youths. This was a situation the young people involved in this research were both aware of and occasionally utilized, through claiming reputations based on these self-same associations with risk.

Expressive Masculinity and 'Risk Talk'

Expressions of masculinity played an integral role in the way that the male respondents in this research identified with each other. Amongst their peers, the negotiation of inclusion and respect was often managed through the presentation of a particularly stylized 'hard' masculinity. More often than not, this was displayed through the articulation of 'risk talk', which played with stereotypes of racialized masculinity and violence (as suggested by the title of this piece, taken from an interview with one of the young men). The following extract, taken from one of the focus groups, presents a characteristic example of this kind of talk:

> *Halimo*: You get me? [*Halimo adopts a comedic voice*] We run the area. We no joking about. If bang bang comes, Killa, what do we do with the gun?
>
> *Killa*: Bang bang bang bang bang!

In the absence of legitimate leisure opportunities, the young people's expressions of this particular masculinity constituted an accessible medium through which they could acquire social status. It was also this absence of opportunity that framed the young people's propensity to create excitement out of engaging, or at least talking about engaging, in behaviours like fighting or drug dealing. Unfortunately, however, it was often the case that the product of these expressions only confirmed the young people's 'risk status' in the eyes of the local authorities, a status that was intrinsically linked to their religious, racial, geographic and class positioning.

Avoiding Risk

Tellingly, it was often from within the safety of the youth services that the young people developed their social standing through performing masculinity and 'risk'. Indeed, it was specifically the safety provided by these controlled environments that made them so popular amongst service users:

> *Will*: Why do you come to the youth club?
>
> *Halimo*: We just come to stay out of trouble.
>
> *Will*: So if the youth club wasn't on do you think you'd be getting in more trouble then?

> *Shirwaz*: Yep.

What these comments illustrate is a conscious desire on behalf of the young men to avoid or minimize risk. This contradiction, between the respondents' performance and the avoidance of risk, was clearly illustrated through the popularity of the local homework club. This club ran twice a week, was voluntarily attended and was consistently oversubscribed. Many of the boisterous young Somali men who attended the youth clubs could also be found at the homework club. In fact, the almost exclusively Somali user group within this homework club reflected a solid emphasis on academic attainment that wholly contradicted the aforementioned discourses positioning working-class Muslim youths within a nexus of 'crisis' and 'risk'. What this suggests is that the young people involved in this research adopted a 'rational' calculation of risk that was highly contextual. Put simply, although the expression and performance of 'risk' played an important part in the ways these young people presented themselves, the youth services provided a well-utilized opportunity to manage risk, 'stay out of trouble' and do homework.

Conclusion

Overall the findings of this research critically engage with the contemporary discourse that paints a homogeneous picture of working-class, Muslim youths as threat (Alexander, 2000), and points to broader continuities around race, class and gender. Significantly, it is the fact that these issues are not specific to Muslim boys that unsettles the dominant discourses portraying young Muslims as distinctively 'separate' from the wider British non-Muslim population.

Of additional significance is the consistency of these research findings with existing studies that point towards the damaging nature of contemporary 'risk prevention' agendas. Clearly, for the young people in this research the youth provision was significant in providing a space to avoid risk. Yet, the contemporary political framing of these services contributed to the young people's recognition of stigma along the lines of 'risk', race, religion and class. This suggests that the youth services

served a clear purpose, but that the functionality of that purpose was challenged by funding agendas. In order for these spaces to continue to effectively provide a safe and secure environment for marginalized young people, a move away from negatively loaded 'risk prevention' agendas will be necessary. This will require an increased recognition, at policy level, of the stigmatizing impact of risk prevention agendas and the effect they can have on the everyday lives and identities of disadvantaged minority youths.

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10. 'Hello, Jav, Got a New Motor?': Cars, (De)Racialization and Muslim Identity

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Introduction

Diary Entry, 21 June 2012

I'm picking someone up from their work and waiting in my car. I see a white Subaru Legacy estate crawl past me. It's a late nineties model but it's in very good nick. More than that, it looks like someone's spent a lot of money on customizing/modifying it: Arctic/Polar/Brilliant white paint job with colour-coded bumpers, wing mirrors, front and rear spoiler and black tinted-out windows. Deep dish, black gloss-finished alloy wheels and thin, low-profile tyres. Small number plate on the back suggests it's an import… probably has a 2.0 or 2.5 engine with a huge turbo adding more horses than seem possible; same sort of performance as the Ferrari beating Imprezzas… I should get out and introduce myself to the driver and tell him about my interest and research in cars and car culture… I imagine he's some young kid, maybe early twenties, all tracky bottoms and Rockport boots, tramlines in his hair and a bit of bling on his hands. Not a thug, but probably sees himself as a bit bad-arse, him having such a bad-arse ride. I get out of my car and start to walk over, rehearsing an introduction, apologising for intruding on his time, but then stop and stare. The driver's door of the Subaru opens and out steps a figure in black. For a second I can't believe what I'm seeing. It's a woman in a burqa and she opens the boot and pulls out a pram. This doesn't seem right. A woman? Never mind a woman, a Sister? She does not fit the profile and I tell myself it's not her car, but her brother's or her husband's. There is no other explanation.

Automatic Transmission: Ethnicity, Stereotypes and Cars in a Northern City

The car is a symbolic presence at the heart of the everyday experience of multi-ethnic coexistence. Exploring the potential significance of car ownership among members of the Pakistani/Muslim population in Bradford has an inherent interest and virtue, but more acutely, it can shed light on social relations where class, gender, religion and ethnicity intersect. The '*young* Asian/White/Muslim/Black *male* driver' has acquired a certain meaning and reputation which has largely negative associations across Britain. However, once stereotypes such as the ones at play in the diary entry above are unpicked and engaged with, meaning becomes more nuanced and complicated, but no less vital. Indeed, the research upon which this paper is based suggests that car culture offers insights: first, into how some aspects of broader 'British Muslim' identity are framed; and second, that often negative, exoticized and racialized aspects of identity can be detuned and thus made less potent markers of racialized thinking.

Alongside its passengers, the car carries a range of other connotations tied with class, gender, generation and, powerfully and complexly, with ethnicity. The car has a myriad of layered meaning above and beyond the scope of transport and mobility. Indeed, over the decades, it has become even more acutely tied into the realm of popular culture and consumption and is therefore, certainly today, a powerful symbol which can both flatten and homogenize identity, on the one hand, while allowing identity to become interwoven with very sophisticated levels of nuance and individuation on the other. For example, while 'Mondeo Man' became shorthand for *Mister Average*, the world of car customization, tuning and enhancement can

inscribe the same vehicle with distinctive, personal aesthetics and contemporary forms of working-class artisanship and creativity.

Within my previous ethnographically grounded research with young Bradfordian Pakistani Muslim men (Alam, 2006; Alam and Husband, 2006), a regular feature was the significance of and meanings associated with cars/car ownership. For some of the participants, a 'nice' car was important not only as a symbol of personal economic success, but as a means of expressing identity: car manufacturer, model and the presence of after-market modifications resulted in either a high- or low-value commodity as defined by an 'imagined' community of drivers with its attendant, but fluid, tastes and preferences. In more recent research (Husband et al., forthcoming), several of those who prided themselves on modifying their vehicles, and in some cases owning unadulterated prestige or sports vehicles, were aware that the nature/look/sound of their car attracts particular attention from members of the local community or the police. Often, such car owners are conscious of the risks: of being labeled as or perceived to be corrupt or criminal. As one respondent, S.J. (a 30-something businessman), stated:

> In Bradford, it (the Range Rover model) does have that gangster image so a few people have said to me 'Why you driving a gangster car for? You should have a respectable car.' I mean, what is a respectable car? The gangsters have them all! Everything what you drive in Bradford, above a certain price tag, it's a gangster car.

Meanings and connotations weaving both class and ethnicity can be seen within the 'motoscape' of a multicultural city such as Bradford. At a very fundamental level, this can be interpreted to be a repetition of the oft-cited claim that cars can both carry and project high or low status. Because there are associations between a place and its wealth, its residents and their income, as well as ethnicities and 'behaviours'/'cultures', it is arguably convenient to make mental shortcuts that end up becoming established routes to understanding. Once existing racial codes and thinking are internalized in such ways, the race thinking narrative becomes

normative and therefore all the more difficult to overcome.

However, cars offer much richer and vibrant forms of data which connect with issues linked with the realms of economy, employment and identity; as well as aspiration, leisure, conflict and art, and with a range of human emotions which the car facilitates and conveys: data drawn from individual car owners provides texture and depth, allowing our insights to become more nuanced and grounded and less prone to drawing, for example, racist conclusions. The car, and car culture, allows us to explore not only how and where patterns of racialized discourse take place, but also to deconstruct, resist and, ultimately, to allow processes of deracialization to become normative and everyday. To that end, what may seem to be a nerdish interest in car culture yields deeper exploration and understanding of identity and diversity at an historical moment where such facets of human life – for academic, policy and public discourse – appear to have become less important than fixations with extremism, fear and insecurity.

Conclusion

Diary Entry, 12 September 2012

As I fill my car, a red Mitsubishi GTO pulls up in the next bay. It's a stunning car, looks like it's just been washed and maybe even detailed. It's low to the ground and the large, black wheels give it almost an unreal, impressionistic feel on the eye. It's ten plus years old but it still looks good; all curves and scoops and bulges. A young Asian, Pakistani I'm predisposed to assuming given where we are and what I know about these sorts of cars, gets out to refuel.

I wait in the queue to pay and the driver of the GTO stands behind me. I keep stealing a look at his car and keeping thinking about turning around and speaking to him, getting a foot in, introducing myself and asking him about his car. But I feel like a whore because I've doing a lot of that, lately and it kind of gets wearing after a while. But… these cars, they don't come along every day so eventually I do the usual introduction and he seems genuinely

interested in what I'm saying. We move our cars out of the bays and continue our conversation which includes some mention of stereotypes: You know, some cars seem have different meanings when certain types of people are in the driving seat. He asks me to elaborate. Well, some people might think that a young guy like you wouldn't be able to afford to run a car like this. I mean, you're how old? Twenty-seven, he tells me. You're twenty-seven, you're from Bradford and you're Asian or Pakistani and you're driving a three-litre sports car? How does he afford that? So people jump to conclusions about what you do. Maybe he deals drugs or something else a bit dodgy. You know how it is, right? He knows what I mean and we make some more talk about some of the hassle he gets from people about his choice of car, and the fact that he loves his cars, especially Honda CRXs. But then he puts me on the spot: What do you think I do for a living? Now me, not being one to make judgements or be stereotypical in my process, I'm keen not to commit. But he presses me. So I tell him. Well,

I don't really know but if I had to guess, I'd say maybe you work in an office, maybe in a factory or warehouse or something? I exaggerate the upward inflection at the end of the sentence so I sound like some California Valley school girl just to make sure he knows this is not me saying this. He smiles and then hits me with: I'm a Consultant. I work at LGI [Leeds General Infirmary]. Fuck. Who'd have thought? I mean, seriously.

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11. Imagining a Muslim Diaspora in Britain? Islamic Consciousness and Homelands Old and New
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Introduction

The 15 million people of Muslim descent now settled in Western Europe represent the most significant movement of labour into the continent since the Second World War. Representing a wide range of nationalities, with their own particular cultures and histories of migration and settlement, they maintain diverse connections to their homelands old and new. Increasingly, many have been born and brought up in Europe and inhabit complex hybrid identities, as well as making citizenship-based claims for equality and respect. Nevertheless, amongst such groups, a growing consciousness of an overarching 'Islamic' identity has been growing in recent years. Its focus is feelings of belonging to, and participation in, a one-billion-strong Muslim community (*umma*) worldwide. Suggesting that the frame of a 'Muslim diaspora' complements the study of Muslim Britain at local and national scales, this brief essay critically explores the emergence of trans-national Islamic consciousness in the UK since the 1960s and 1970s.

Defining 'the Muslim Diaspora'

The last two decades have seen notions of diaspora and transnationalism become extremely fashionable in scholarly and political discourse. To some extent, these concepts revisit traditional issues in the study of migration and minorities, race and ethnicity, which explore processes of movement and settlement. However, the classic definitions of diaspora relate it to a group's consciousness of, and connection to, places and people elsewhere, whether in terms of a homeland or other historic centres of dispersal. While there is a danger that an emphasis on 'diaspora' constantly returns analyses to a question of *roots* in the

past rather than *routes* in the present, the shift in terminology does recognize that many people's contemporary lived experiences can no longer be seen as contained by the nation-state. Indeed, while diasporas have often succeeded in remaking 'homes' abroad, some theorists have pointed to the significance of the metaphorical spaces 'in-between' old and new homelands for imagining alternative forms of belonging. Symbolically and ritually connecting Muslims through time and across space, the idea of a transnational *umma* is especially well resourced to suggest a consciousness of community which need not conflict with being at home in particular locales but does shape people's orientations to the past, present and future. However, perhaps especially when attachment to the old country has faded, and/or in the face of present exclusion, it does retain the potential to transcend place and envision alternative moral and political orders.

The Limits of Diaspora

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the limits as well as the possibilities of a diasporic Muslim identity: in Britain, for example, there are two other scales that routinely shape the configuration of Islam.

First, Islam is most immediately tangible at the scale of the neighbourhood and most especially in terms of Muslim institutions such as mosques. While ritual gatherings have enabled congregations to affirm and transmit homeland beliefs and practices since the 1950s and 1960s, such institutions have also had to adapt to new local environments, cooperating when necessary across various religious and ethnic divisions, and especially when presenting a public face to outsiders. However, mosques have also been a location for struggles over status and power, as well

as instruments of exclusion, particularly in relation to women and young people.

Second, the secular state and its public institutions have profoundly shaped the dynamics of being Muslim in Britain. Approaches to the recognition and regulation of Muslims as 'Muslims', have been configured very differently over time, with the claims of religious leaders accommodated by some local councils during the 1980s, long before there was national-level legal protection of citizens against religious (as opposed to racial or ethnic) discrimination. However, with the UK government perceiving the nation-state to be simultaneously threatened by crises of cohesion and security following riots in 2001 and the events of '7/7', the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda of the late 2000s has unambiguously marked a clear shift in the state's gaze from 'race' to 'faith' to 'Muslims'.

The Muslim Diaspora in Context

The significance of more transnational Islamic networks, activism and imaginaries in the UK can only be understood in dynamic relationship to these local and national scales. However, as the Iranian revolution of 1979, and the Arab Spring more recently, demonstrated so iconically, in the late-modern Muslim world Islamic revivalism has become central to articulating young people's hopes for better futures across borders as well as within them. Of course, nascent British Muslim diasporas were not isolated from such global processes even in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, South Asian origin Islamic movements, such as Jama'at-i Islami, had a small but well-organized following in the UK amongst mainly urban origin migrants (often students and professionals) from this period. However, for demographic reasons, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that their discourses impacted on British-born Muslims. Amongst educated segments of the second and third generations, a significant minority embraced the idea of following a universalizing 'true' Islam as a strategy of self-identification. In so doing, a multi-ethnic, Islamized modernity now articulated in an English-language vernacular, was distinguished

from the ethno-cultural homeland Islam of their parents and the mosques.

In many ways, this began to mark the end of diaspora as ethno-national affiliation. It also helped many map out clear boundaries for behaviour, in (con)testing Western contexts of cultural pluralization and consumer capitalism. Even amongst those who were not pious or educated, feeling blocked out of Britain and rarely feeling at home when visiting the subcontinent, the idea of Islamic identity (if not practice) was in some way appealing.

From Diasporic Politics to Everyday Transnationalism

While the idea of the *umma* has a clear historical and territorial orientation in terms of Mecca, the birthplace of Islam and its Prophet, like their co-religionists overseas, some British Muslims have responded to various international conflicts and injustices in the postcolonial Islamic world by producing a more de-territorialized *ummatic* discourse calling for unity and self-reliant action amongst Muslims as a victimized community of suffering.

In Britain, the era of a diasporic Muslim identity politics was first catalysed during the Rushdie Affair of 1989, followed by the Gulf and Bosnian wars of the early to mid-1990s, the on-going situation in Palestine and Kashmir, and the 'war on terror' in Afghanistan and Iraq following '9/11'. All have triggered heartfelt feelings of Islamic co-responsibility towards Muslim peoples and places elsewhere. For a very small number, more widespread conspiracy theories and utopian dreaming have been translated into trans-local action, including taking up arms overseas or at home. However, the predicament of Muslims across the diaspora has more often resulted in charitable giving, as well as peaceful protest and productive participation in a burgeoning British Muslim civil society. Moreover, for a growing number of Muslims in the UK, cosmopolitan connections to the wider Muslim world are becoming part of a more everyday transnationalism, whether in terms of

media consumption, seeking education, fashion or travelling for religious tourism.

Conclusion

It is apparent, then, that the dynamics of Muslim Britain must be understood at a combination of local, national and transnational scales. It is also important to recognize that at each of these scales, powerful notions of what counts as Islam tend to get imposed as the norm. In contrast, more 'demotic' or everyday lived experiences of being Muslim in the home, the street or elsewhere have been marginalized in research as much as in public policy. So, while in the past policymakers and researchers overlooked the significance of religion, it is common now for formal and institutional constructions of religion to be overplayed. Indeed, the way that both government and Islamic leaders can view 'Muslim' identities as relatively fixed can be mutually reinforcing. Another consequence is that the fuzziness of everyday improvisations of 'doing' religion can become obscured, with hard boundaries always assumed between 'religion' and 'culture' and 'religion' and the 'secular'. What is required instead is an account which locates the multiple and often competing ways in which

Islam is, or is not, narrated and performed in specific, structurally constrained contexts. Such an agenda will properly refocus attention on differently positioned embodied subjects and the reasons why they do, or do not, identify as Muslims, at specific intersections of class, gender, ethnicity, generation and sexuality.

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12. Rethinking 'the Muslim Community': Intra-minority Identity and Transnational Political Space

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Introduction

Since 5 February 2013, Shahbag intersection in central Dhaka has been occupied by tens of thousands of Bangladeshis demanding justice for war crimes. The occupation has been taking place in the context of an 'International Crimes Tribunal', set up by the ruling Awami League in 2010, to investigate crimes committed by Islamist politicians during the Liberation war of 1971. At its peak it is thought to have involved as many as 500,000 protesters (Anam, 2013) and the area was quickly dubbed Shahbag Square, prompting what some are calling 'the Bangladesh Spring' – the biggest mass protests the country has witnessed in 20 years.

However, on 28 February the demonstrations turned violent after Delwar Hossain Sayeedi, vice-president of Jamaat-i-Islami, the country's largest Islamic party, was sentenced to death. Jubilation in Shahbag Square was quickly followed by violence between Jamaat supporters and the police, and almost 100 people have been killed in clashes which have swept the country since. Commentators in the UK[1] have highlighted the grief and anger the tribunal has stirred, particularly among the younger generation (Shukla, 2013). They have reported on the powerful sense of national pride and collective possibility that Shahbag reveals (Anam, 2013), as well as the intractable political gulf the recent bloodshed underscores (Al-Mahmood, 2013). However, few have considered what this political crisis on the other side of the world means here in the UK, and what it might tell us about Muslim identities in contemporary Britain.

From Shahbag Intersection to Tower Hamlets

Conflict between the secular nationalist spirit of Shahbag and supporters of Jamaat came to London on 9 February 2013. Local followers of the uprising demonstrated in Altab Ali Park in London's East End. Protesters were met by Jamaatis, stones were thrown, but the protest continued undeterred (Cohen, 2013), an encounter which demonstrates that in the UK, as in Bangladesh, the Liberation War continues to be fought over in the present (Alexander, 2013). The relationship between Bengali organizations in the UK concerned with finding and prosecuting 'war criminals' from 1971 (such as the Nirmal Committee) and more Islamist-inspired groups are known to be strained, and these tensions have implications for the new generation of young politically engaged British Muslims (Eade and Garbin, 2006). But little is known about how relations between these groups form the basis for identities and claims-making in the UK, and even less about how relations between these groups may work their way into the contemporary spaces of British Muslim politics.

Taking these questions seriously requires us to historicize debates around South Asian Muslims in the UK, and challenges the homogenizing terms of those debates. Constructed as the privileged site of 'community' and static immutable 'tradition', South Asian Muslims in the UK have been most usually defined through cultural absolutes located outside the political process or history. But this representation is quickly unsettled by history itself; revealing the complicated trajectories of social and political engagement that position Muslims in very different ways. Exploring 'intra-minority' identity disrupts monological assertions of 'difference' with insights into the multi-layered and contested dimensions of diasporic space. Here, the position of Urdu-speaking 'Biharis' in Bangladesh is a case in point, and one that raises important issues for Muslim identities in Britain.

Contesting Community and Citizenship: Intra-minority Muslim Identities in Bangladesh

Originating in Northern and Eastern India, the 'Urdu-speaking Bihari[2] community' were first displaced in the Indian Partition of 1947, before Bangladesh's War of Liberation in 1971 displaced many for a second time. It is thought that around three million Bengalis lost their lives in the Liberation struggle, and the new country was left profoundly traumatized. Following the 1971 war, the entire 'Bihari' community were branded enemy collaborators and socially ostracized. Some fled overseas, particularly to the US, Pakistan and the UK, while others, having been dispossessed by the state, found themselves in temporary camps set up nationwide. For 36 years those living in the camps were recognized as a 'de facto stateless' community by UNHCR. In May 2008, they regained their citizenship in a High Court Ruling thought to have finally turned the situation on its head; however, their uncertain status has been highlighted yet again in the current political turmoil.

My previous research (Redclift, 2013) has compared the trajectories of those displaced into camps with those who had been able to retain their homes during the 1971 war, examining the precarious nature of claims to rights before and after the transition to formal citizenship. The research involved semi-structured and narrative interviews, documentary analysis, focus groups and participant observation conducted between 2006 and 2009, and it developed the concept of 'political space' to capture the way in which identity and citizenship are structured in space, over time, and through social position. It argued that citizenship is not a stable identity of law and fact but a shifting assortment of exceptions, rejections, inclusions and denials, and the concept of 'political space' is better equipped to deal with the inequalities of 'race', ethnicity, age, class, space and gender hidden behind citizenship's beneficent facade. 'Political space' better reflects the fractious, contested and constantly evolving nature of political identity, which

can clearly be seen in Bangladesh today, and it opens up debate about the role of transnational political engagement in shaping claims to future belonging in the UK.

Transnational Political Space in the UK

New research develops this analysis by applying it to those 'Urdu-speakers' who left Bangladesh in 1971 and established themselves in Britain. As Muslims of Indian origin they were labelled 'Biharis' in East Pakistan and became known as 'Stranded Pakistanis' following the Liberation War. However, their links with the Indian, Pakistani or Bengali communities in the UK are unknown. It investigates the extent to which 'Urdu-speakers' experience and perform their identity differently in different settings and the extent to which issues of gender, generation, class and space inform or challenge ethnic, national and religious solidarities. Tensions between Pakistan and Bangladesh persist, but how has this historical memory of conflict been carried forward into the diaspora?

Shahbag Square shows us the importance of history in the present, and Altab Ali Park shows us that this history informs experiences in the UK, but what is its role in the formation of British Muslim identities today? Do new attachments to place challenge exclusionary national identities or simplistic accounts of diasporic cultures, or do they create new exclusions and additional simplifications? And does the increasing role of religion in discourses around South Asian Muslims assuage ongoing tensions or shift the transnational political terrain?

Conclusion: Unpacking 'the Muslim Community'

South Asian Muslims are still all too often represented in British popular discourse as a single monolithic bloc. The specific and variegated histories of social and political engagement that constitute the demotic and discordant, multi-layered and contested 'Muslim community' have

been largely ignored. Exploring 'intra-minority' identity is, therefore, an important task. It expands our understanding of 'hidden minorities', as well as relations *between* and *within* minorities, bringing historicity and spatiality to bear on our understanding of Muslim identities in the UK. In recent weeks the struggles and solidarities of transnational political space have been stirred, and this project situates contemporary claims to citizenship and community in the UK within the context of a historical legacy that continues to shape the diasporic present.

Notes

1. The work of Saurabh Shukla, Tahmima Anam, Syed Zaim Al-Mahmood and Nick Cohen in particular is referred to in this paper.

2. A label that literally means 'from the state of Bihar' but is today associated with certain derogatory connotations.

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13. Along the Fault Lines of 'British Justice for British Citizens': Locating the Non-/British Muslim

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Introduction: British Justice for (Which) British Citizens?

When the campaigns against the extradition of Babar Ahmad, Talha Ahsan, Richard O'Dwyer and Gary McKinnon[1] united to demand justice and make claims to British sovereignty, they collectively called for 'British Justice for British Citizens'. Both reflecting and contesting a longstanding history of racial and religious exclusions of 'Britishness', the call for 'British Justice' made by British Muslim citizens illuminated the continuities between the colonial and the postcolonial, as well as pointing to the shifts. The altered terrain of the contemporary context was marked by the escalation of securitization under the War on Terror, which has singled out Muslims as the pre-eminent 'suspect community' and legitimized a host of measures which drastically curtail the civil liberties of all. In this context, the campaigns against extradition arrangements with the US, and the state responses to them, are revealing for what they expose about current articulations of racial (and religious) exclusion, and the boundaries of the nation. In particular, the narration of these four cases brought to the fore questions regarding the possibilities of British-Muslim citizenship, the boundaries of 'British Justice', and the racial fractures of nationalist identity invoked by the state for demarcating the borders of subjecthood.

Deciphering the Citizen

Significantly, the campaign for reform of the 2003 US–UK Extradition Treaty drew different responses for each of the four men. Following an 8- and 6-year battle respectively, whilst they were detained without trial, Babar Ahmad and Talha Ahsan lost their appeals against extradition in October 2012, along with three other Muslim men, when the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the prospective sentences faced by them in the US (80–100 years in solitary confinement) were not tantamount to torture. Ten days after their extradition, the Home Secretary ruled against the removal of Gary McKinnon, due to the vulnerability inferred from his Asperger's syndrome, which put him at high risk of suicide. Declaring his case to be an 'exception', Theresa May's decision displayed the humanitarianism offered to McKinnon that was at one and the same time denied to the Muslim men, whose health conditions also included Asperger's, as well as severe clinical depression, diabetes and physical disabilities. Richard O'Dwyer, facing much less severe charges relating to copyright offences, was let off with a fine and an agreement with the US authorities not to infringe copyright laws again.

The specifics of the individual cases notwithstanding, the popular and political discourses debating extradition reform ultimately involved a narrative of who counted as British and who did not, of who could claim state protection and who could not. The simple answer, of course, was '*British* Justice for *British* Citizens'. But the white elephant in the room was what to do with the 'British/Muslim', the 'enemy within'. Indeed, the suspension and increasing retraction of human rights and civil liberties under the War on Terror pushed for public comment on who could be treated with complete impunity, or even on who might be considered human. In a parliamentary debate on extradition in December 2011, where arguments were made for reform of the 2003 US–UK Extradition Treaty, Dominic Raab MP expressed the view that 'in taking the fight to the terrorists and the serious criminals after 9/11, the pendulum [had] swung too far the other way' (House of Commons Debate, 2011: c.82). Of primary concern was how a legal process stripped of all intent to due process, designed for targeting

'the terrorist', might also encompass the (white) British citizen. David Davis MP, for example, remarked:

> We should keep in mind that the rather draconian process that we have, which was put in place to defend us against terrorism, does not appear to have had much impact in that respect … The truth of the matter is that we will have far more Gary McKinnons extradited than Osama bin Ladens. (House of Commons Debate, 2011: c.91)

Clearly while these draconian processes were right and acceptable for the 'terrorist' they were in danger too of catching the (white/Christian) British citizen. The binary Davis invoked between Gary McKinnon, a young white British working-class male, and Osama bin Laden not only framed all Muslims as 'extremists', as 'terrorists', it also denied the possibility of a British-Muslim subject-citizen.

Expelling the (Non-)Citizen

But extradition arrangements are only one of a host of measures, legitimated by the state through the War on Terror, which have brought to the fore the precariousness of citizenship, of self-hood and of sovereignty. Legislation passed in 2002 allowed the Home Secretary to deprive dual-nationality Britons of their citizenship on national security grounds without consent from the courts. Since 2003, of the 21 British nationals who have had their citizenship removed, all but one or two are Muslim. Sixteen of these removals have occurred since 2010 under the present government and at least five individuals were British-born, with one man having lived in the country for almost 50 years (Woods and Ross, 2013). Two of the men, Bilal al-Berjawi and Mohamed Sakr, were subsequently killed by US drones, and another, Mahdi Hashi, was rendered by US authorities and now awaits trial in the US.

A Coda

What then does this tell us about the meaning of 'British citizenship' or, perhaps more pertinently, about the meaning of 'British Justice'? Clearly both have always depended on racial exclusions and qualifications, on processes of creating non-citizens.

In the contemporary moment the construction of the terrorist as the ultimate enemy, both without and within, has reinvigorated processes of dehumanization on which racisms rely and through which the 'non-citizen' is created. The identification of 'Muslim' as synonymous with 'terrorist', of 'terrorist suspect' as synonymous with 'guilt', and of 'terrorist' as code for 'irrational', 'uncivilized', 'religious extremist', has permitted a host of draconian measures for disciplining, ultimately killing, Muslims, whilst actions of state terrorism are legitimated under 'national security'. When the campaigns against the extraditions of Babar Ahmad and Talha Ahsan lost their battles in October 2012, the blow to anti-racist resistance was hard-felt, particularly amongst Britain's Muslims.

Did British citizenship count if you were Muslim? A precarious and ambivalent status, it seemed that regardless of ability to meet state requirements for being a 'good citizen', the protection of British sovereignty was never guaranteed and always racially qualified. As this disregard for British Muslim citizens is pursued – David Cameron's appointment of Lynton Crosby as his election campaign manager being the latest example – perhaps the Muslim question is really one which entails continued, ever more brutal, state racism.

Notes

1. All four faced extradition to the US for accusations of web/computer-related offences carried out whilst they were resident in Britain. Babar Ahmad was the longest-serving prisoner in Britain detained without charge or trial between 2004 and 2012. The US alleged that in the 1990s he had been a supporter of terrorism, committing terrorism offences in the USA from 1996 to 2003. Talha Ahsan was arrested in 2006 in relation to the same case as Babar Ahmad and detained without trial until 2012. Gary McKinnon, released on bail, was indicted by the US in 2002, accused of hacking into 97 United States military and NASA computers over a 13-month period, and Richard O'Dwyer was indicted for copyright infringement for managing a website which signposted to other websites where pirated media was downloadable (an act not illegal in Britain).

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