
Article:
Britton, N.J. orcid.org/0000-0001-5786-9637 (2019) Challenging the racialization of child sexual exploitation: Muslim men, racism and belonging in Rotherham. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 42 (5). pp. 688-706. ISSN 0141-9870

https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1467030

Challenging the racialization of child sexual exploitation: Muslim men, racism and belonging in Rotherham

Joanne Britton[1]
Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

ABSTRACT
This paper presents findings from original research exploring the impact on Muslim men of a child sexual exploitation scandal that attracted significant attention to the northern English town where they live and contributed to a sustained detrimental effect on local community relations. It foregrounds men's accounts to reveal their agency and resilience in responding to racism that they identified as resulting from the scandal. It reveals how their accounts disrupt dominant discourses foregrounding Muslim self-segregation and lack of integration, demonstrating positive attachments and claims to localized space, and commitment to belonging. In doing so, it shows how men's responses to racism challenge racialized forms of knowledge about Muslims.
The paper draws attention to the significance of localized forms of belonging in facilitating the inclusion of Muslim minorities. It also highlights the importance of centring Muslim men as historically speaking subjects in accounts of issues involving them.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 2018 : Accepted

KEYWORDS Belonging, child sexual exploitation, integration, multiculturalism, Muslim men, racism

In Britain, concern over the involvement of Muslim men in crimes involving child sexual exploitation, commonly known in media and public accounts as 'on-street grooming', has arisen following a substantial number of cases in areas with a significant Muslim population. These have attracted sustained attention due to the considerable number of offenders and victims and identification of most offenders as Muslim men, mainly of Pakistani ethnic origin. Newspaper headlines such as "Revealed: conspiracy of silence on UK sex gangs. Most convicted offenders of Pakistani heritage" (Norfolk, 2011), "Why Asians set sights on white girls for fun" (Martin, 2011) and "British Pakistani men ARE raping and exploiting white girls … and its time we faced up to it" (Champion, 2017) demonstrate attention drawn to offenders' ethnic background, which has been seen as a key, relevant factor in explaining both men's involvement and the inadequate response of statutory authorities to exploitation cases (Cockbain, 2013 and Tufail, 2015). They illustrate how the categories Muslim, Asian and

[1] Email: n.j.britton@sheffield.ac.uk

Pakistani have been conflated and used inter-changeably to identify offenders (Cockbain, 2013). Cases have been interpreted as highlighting the failure of multiculturalism to effectively manage cultural diversity and integration of Muslim minorities (Winnett, 2011).

This paper explores local Muslim men's accounts of racism experienced following a child sexual exploitation scandal in Rotherham, one of a number of English towns and cities that have become synonymous with 'on-street grooming'. National attention was drawn to the scandal in 2011 by Andrew Norfolk, an investigative journalist for The Times newspaper, who uncovered the prevalence of this model of sexual offending among offenders of Pakistani ethnic heritage (Norfolk, 2011). In 2014, the Jay Report on findings of a public inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham drew further attention to the scandal (Jay, 2014). It identified Muslim men as the main offenders and included a 'conservative estimate' that approximately 1400 children had been exploited over a sixteen year period by many men (Jay, 2014:29). Police investigations have resulted in successful prosecutions of several men in the years following the publication of the report, with many cases on-going (Halliday, 2016; D'Arcy, 2017)

The paper presents findings from an original research project investigating the impact of the scandal on Muslim men, their families and other local Muslims. It explores the accounts of a small sample of Muslim men, showing their agency and resilience in responding to different dimensions of racism that they identified as resulting from the scandal. These include racism experienced at the micro level of everyday life, through routine practices and interactions, and racism experienced as a result of the emotional politics of race in which Muslims are positioned locally as outsiders. In addition, structural dimensions of racism arising from the local erosion of multicultural gains and associated discrimination affecting Muslims as a group. The paper explains how men's accounts of these different dimensions of racism disrupt dominant discourses foregrounding Muslim self-segregation and lack of integration, and, in doing so, challenge the positioning of Muslim men, and Muslim minorities generally, as problematic outsiders (Casey, 2016). It reveals how wider structures and discourses about the failures of multiculturalism connected with the exploitation scandal to impact on local Muslims' multi-dimensional experiences of racism. The men's accounts present an alternative, critical perspective that includes localized, positive claims to space and commitment to belonging, countering dominant problematizing views of Muslims (Parekh, 2006; Lentin and Titley, 2011:19). This, it is argued, challenges racialized forms of knowledge about Muslims and highlights the significance of localized forms of belonging in facilitating the inclusion of Muslim minorities.

The final aim of the paper is to show how men who participated in the research critically and reflexively engaged with the category 'Muslim' in responding to racism as historical speaking subjects with agency. 'Muslim' as a

category of identification has become over-determined in accounts of Muslim men's lives, concealing its complexity and heterogeneity (Brubaker, 2013). Whilst it is now common for Muslim men to be identified and held accountable as such by non-Muslims and other Muslims, the problematization of Muslim men results in their voices being marginalised, misrepresented or silenced. In paying attention to Muslim men's accounts of their responses to racism, the paper promotes inclusion of Muslim men as historically speaking subjects in media, public and academic accounts of issues involving them.

The racialization of child sexual exploitation

'On-street grooming' emerged in the UK as a general descriptor for a wide range of major criminal offences involving prostituting, trafficking and abusing mainly girls and young women. It is a model of offending in which Muslim men, particularly of Pakistani origin, are seen as disproportionately involved (Cockbain, 2013; Tufail, 2015). In a series of extensively reported cases, men have been found guilty of a variety of very serious crimes, including rape, false imprisonment, sexual assault and sexual activity with a child. These have attracted sustained media and public attention, feeding into broader debates about Muslim men as a racial crime threat (Cockbain, 2013; Tufail, 2015).

Racial meanings have been invoked in accounts of Muslim men's involvement in child sexual exploitation by foregrounding the culture and ethnicity of offenders and identifying it as key to understanding their offending and statutory authorities' inadequate response to it (Cockbain, 2013; Tufail, 2015). Culture and ethnicity do the work of racialising, without explicit mention of religion (Garner, 2010; Murji and Solomos, 2005:3). Emphasis has been placed on the apparent problematic inability of Pakistani Muslim men to transcend culture and ethnicity, with, for example, arranged marriage depicted as a cultural practice that functions to anchor men to what are viewed as regressive traditions (Martin, 2011). By bringing racial meanings into play through foregrounding culture and ethnicity, Muslim men's involvement in these kinds of crime has been directly linked to failed multiculturalism. Misguided multicultural sensitivities have been seen to prevent exploitation being tackled by various public agencies fearing accusations of racism (Winnett, 2011). Muslim communities have been accused of ignoring exploitation due to lack of loyalty towards outsiders (Norfolk, 2011b).

The figure of the Muslim on-street groomer embodies anxieties about the position of Muslims in UK society by contributing to problematizing accounts of Muslim men that foreground criminality, cultural dysfunction and social exclusion (Alexander, 2004; Abbas, 2005; Fekete, 2009). Highly emotive, it has wider resonance in legitimizing Muslim men as targets of social stigma and contempt for Muslims overall. It resonates with dominant discourses of Muslim sexualities in which stereotypes of miserable Muslims are personified in the figure of the tyrannical Muslim man who preys on white girls (Chambers et al,

2018:10). Disgust is an understandable emotional response to crimes of child sexual exploitation. It is also an emotion that plays a part in the mediation of race (Tyler, 2008). Disgust reactions to the figure of the Muslim on-street groomer extend beyond offenders themselves so that Muslim men, in general, are subject to racialized contempt, fear and revulsion. Pathologised as repellent objects in dangerous proximity, they become legitimate targets of visceral hatred and are subject to racialized positioning as problematic outsiders requiring regulation (Nayak, 2010; Tyler, 2008; 2013).

The racialization of Muslim men's involvement in child sexual exploitation contributes to the multi-dimensional view of the Muslim population as a threat, particularly with respect to arguments advocating multiculturalism's crisis, death or failure (Parekh, 2006; Kundnani, 2007; McGhee, 2008; Finney and Simpson, 2009; Pitcher, 2009). 'Parallel lives' has become a resilient explanatory framework for understanding a lack of integration and social cohesion in areas with a significant Muslim population, with Muslims cast as an internally cohesive, homogenous grouping self-segregated from mainstream society (Abbas, 2005; Bagguley and Hussain, 2008; Cantle, 2001; Finney and Simpson, 2009, McGhee, 2008). On-street grooming is one of a range of issues, including forced marriage, female genital mutilation and veiling, that have become associated with Muslims, prompting questions about how to manage the apparent Muslim problem (Samad and Eade, 2003; Razack, 2004; Meer, Dwyer and Modood, 2010). As well as reinforcing problematizing ideas about Muslim masculinities, these are seen to take the form of discrete moral panics, which contribute to an on-going, cumulative process of producing Muslim men as contemporary folk devils (Morgan and Poynting, 2012; Britton, 2018).

Failing multiculturalism: the local context

As a result of the child sexual exploitation scandal, Rotherham has become one of a number of English towns and cities represented in media and public accounts as an example of how multiculturalism has failed due to problems with the local Muslim population. This portrayal of the town as a failing space of multiculturalism is related to wider, significant social and political change in UK society. It shows how key issues of national identity and belonging are played out at the local level, reinforcing how places are, politicised, culturally relative and historically specific (Noble, 2004; Noble and Poynting, 2010). Voting patterns are indicative of how the local and national inter-connect, with the shifting dynamics of place prompting struggles over identity and belonging. In Rotherham, wider debates regarding the failures of multiculturalism, and associated problem of Muslims, fed into localized ethnic divisions arising from the scandal to influence election results. In the 2015 UK general election, 30 per cent of votes cast in the town were for the anti-immigration, Eurosceptic, populist UK Independence Party (UKIP), which took a considerable 12.6 per cent of the vote nationwide. Despite growing minority populations, towns like

Rotherham are less ethnically diverse than other parts of England and retain a significant white majority population. Pakistani Muslims are the largest minority, at 3 per cent of the local population (Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, 2012). A key feature of the UK's referendum on membership of the European Union was the higher number of votes cast for Brexit in relatively deprived areas with a small black and minority ethnic population. 31.5 per cent of Rotherham's population live in areas that are among the most deprived 20 per cent in England and the level of deprivation in the most deprived areas increased between 2007 and 2015 (Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, 2012). 67.9 per cent of votes cast in Rotherham were for Brexit, considerably more than the national total of 51.9 per cent (BBC, 2016).

These election and referendum results reflect Rotherham's dominant white mono-cultural history and identity, based on an industrial past and connected working class heritage. The town's recent history has been shaped by the sustained detrimental impact of de-industrialisation and neo-liberal reduction of the state. It has also been shaped by migration, both post-World War Two and more recent, which has resulted in increased ethnic diversity, albeit to a lesser extent than urban areas in the UK. Black and minority ethnic residents in the town are concentrated in three of twenty-one wards, deprived areas close to the town centre (Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, 2015). A pattern of ethnic clustering that is repeated in other towns and cities, feeding discourses of segregation (Finney and Simpson, 2009). However, Rotherham is representative of UK towns and cities more generally in that routine navigation and management of cultural difference has become more commonplace as a result of increasing ethnic diversity (Amin, 2002, Neal et al, 2018; Noble, 2005; Vertovec, 2007; Wessendorf, 2016). The accounts of Muslim men presented below indicate the impact of conflict on how cultural difference is navigated and managed as the child sexual exploitation scandal affected localized relations of multi-culture.

The research

The paper draws on interviews with Muslim men that I conducted as part of a wider study exploring the impact of Rotherham's child sexual exploitation scandal (Britton, 2018). The conceptualisation, design and execution of the study emerged over two years through my collaboration with local Muslim women, who acted as gatekeepers in accessing Muslim men. Interviews were carried out with men whom the women identified as appropriate participants. They were, in different ways, actively involved in local social and political life, which may help to explain their willingness to participate. As a result, I make no claims about the representativeness of the sample, particularly as interviews did not involve the more excluded of local Muslim men. The paper does not provide a generalizable account of Muslim men's experiences but offers insight into men's agency and

resilience in responding to racism and negotiating localized multicultural relations.

It was challenging to address local Muslims understandable disinclination to participate in research following seriously detrimental media and public attention. My slowly evolving collaboration with local Muslim women was crucial in accommodating significant ethical and political sensitivities arising from the exploitation scandal. We gradually developed relationships of mutual trust and understanding that facilitated participation. My deep, long-standing familiarity with Pakistani Muslim culture and traditions was also important, shaping all stages of the study. It reduced the risk of me being viewed with suspicion, increasing people's willingness to participate and what they felt comfortable sharing. Having no prior personal contacts or involvement in the town was also beneficial as participants assumed I had limited understanding of what had been happening there, providing detailed accounts.

The age range of the eight men interviewed was twenty-six to fifty-two. They were from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, employed in a wide range of public and private sector occupations, including youth and community work, health-related services and taxi driving, and others were a small business owner, an artist and a lawyer. All but one was married with children. Six were, in their words, 'born and bred' in Rotherham and two had lived in the town since they were young children. Their self-identified ethnic background was either Pakistani or Azad Kashmiri. Men chose the location for the interview. Four were interviewed in their workplace, one at a public library, one at his home, one at my office and one, remotely, by telephone. Interviews were organised around several topics including the impact of the scandal on men, families and the town and were digitally recorded, transcribed and anonymised. Men were willing to talk in detail about the scandal and its impact and, as a result, I loosely adhered to the interview schedule in order for them to discuss what was important to them, without interruption. As a professional transcription company transcribed the interviews, the first stage of data analysis involved listening to audio files several times, in addition to reading transcripts. Data analysis was thematic, using an inductive approach to focus on dominant themes emerging from the data. These included everyday racism, eroding multicultural gains and localized belonging and attachment to place, explored below. Pseudonyms are used.

Everyday racism

Various experiences recounted by men in the study draw attention to how racism is routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices and interactions, which are integral to analysis of racism overall (Essed, 1991:2). They agreed that such experiences were notably more numerous than before the scandal became public knowledge. This is supported by data showing a significant increase in racist incidents recorded locally (TellMAMA, 2016). At the micro level of day-to-day life, the banality, high frequency and routineness of

these encounters resulted in resignation to experiencing racism in public space, making it less safe and inclusive (Noble, 2005). Commonplace, mundane and outside of formal institutional contexts, they highlight the significance of the everyday in constituting boundaries of racialized difference (Smith, 2014). For example, men's accounts reveal how the impact of the scandal involved a heightened racialized visibility, with local Muslims marked as bodies out of place, not the natural or legitimate occupants of public spaces in the town (Puwar, 2004). This included the significance of the intangible and unsaid in multicultural encounters, as silences, looks and gestures work to exclude (Nayak, 2010). Hassan, attempted to express the usually unspoken, emotional politics of race in observing "you get a sense where you walk through town or walk through Rotherham town and you, I don't know, it's kind of a surreal type of thing. It's like something in the atmosphere or something like that". Articulating his awareness of being positioned as the symbolic embodiment of the Muslim on-street groomer, Samir explained "whenever I'm out and about, you know, it's odd, I always think, you know, what do other people think of me? How do they class me? Do they think I'm involved? I'm somehow a paedophile?".

There was a consensus that Muslims wearing culturally specific dress were more likely to experience incidents of everyday racism, particularly women with headscarves. Although Muslim men are the symbolic embodiment of the on-street groomer, Muslim women therefore experienced a similar detrimental impact of the scandal. Participants recalled encounters from everyday life that made themselves and other local Muslims feel uncomfortable, unsafe and unwelcome. Commonplace experiences of everyday racism included being verbally abused and spat at, and experiencing a lack of consideration, politeness and kindness in routine interactions. These are mediated by wider discourses that encourage expressions of contempt by problematizing both Muslim men and women:

I was coming here (to the town centre) actually, just after the (EU) referendum, and I was thinking about my meeting actually. I think it was about quarter past five, so I was thinking what the agenda was and … suddenly this woman actually put her window down and swore at me, and I was just quite shocked. By the time I had taken the number down she just drove off. It just shocks you actually because the police station's around the corner … I've just parked up and I'm just coming down to the (council) building. So I've had two or three incidents (Khalid)

Everyday life experiences, such as Khalid's, are integral to supporting forms of racialized knowledge (Smith, 2014). Acknowledging the regularity and ordinariness of these experiences draws attention to how cumulative encounters with everyday racism reduce access to public space and freedom to move through and participate in it, without anxiety and fear. Everyday lived

experience is shown to play a part in the regulation, and racialization, of space, enhancing social exclusion, and grounding belonging in movement through specific spaces (Noble and Poynting, 2010).

A related common feature of men's accounts is strategies of accommodation that they adopted to minimise risk of exposure to everyday racism. These included changing routines to avoid places seen as potentially hazardous, using the car instead of walking and more chaperoning of children and young people. Resulting personal racialized cartographies shrink space, reducing everyday inter-ethnic contact and opportunities to build trust and identify commonalities. Reduced inter-ethnic contact also resulted from strategies adopted by local non-Muslims following the scandal, which had a detrimental effect on Muslim businesses as, for example, Rashid recalled "if you had a restaurant or fast food trade, you know, people would say 'no, I'm not going to so and so's restaurant' or whatever'. People suffered basically through no fault of their own".

As well as minimising risk, there is evidence in men's accounts that their accommodation strategies also involved resisting exclusion resulting from experiences of everyday racism, in opposition to discourses foregrounding self-segregation. Recalling an incident of harassment experienced by Muslims at a weekly bazaar, Khalid recalled "the following week my wife goes 'I don't want to go,' and I go, 'look, you should go'. I had some meetings so I couldn't go and then the following week I went with her. I goes, why should she stop shopping just because of that?". His solution challenged threatened exclusion from local shared space and secured opportunities for informal inter-ethnic sociability. He acknowledged that his efforts to avoid self-segregation were partially successful until he could persuade his wife to attend unaccompanied, again indicating the relevance of gender to experiences of and responses to everyday racism.

In addition to examples of racism in mundane, informal everyday life, there is evidence in men's accounts of how racism was routinely created and reinforced by a series of more formalised practices and interactions that had occurred in the town, prompting resistance arising from their claims to local space. Most prominent were demonstrations in the town centre by the English Defence League (EDL), an English national far right group, which mobilises around anti-Muslim sentiment and uses street protest as its principal political activity (Rogaly and Qureshi, 2013; Winlow, Hall and Treadwell, 2017). The group positioned Rotherham as a prime example of the consequences of failed multiculturalism by tapping into unmarked whiteness under-pinning the town's dominant history and identity. Its demonstrations draw attention to the territorial component of everyday racism, illustrating how the public realm is contested physical and symbolic space. Local residents of different ethnic backgrounds experienced curtailed freedom of movement on demonstration days, contributing to common, shared understanding that demonstrations involved misappropriation of public space by troublesome outsiders. However,

Nasir's account refers to contentious policing of demonstrations, which was widely interpreted as discriminatory because it involved keeping local Muslims away from the town centre:

We were saying, look, these marches through town are having a devastating effect. They'd (police liaison officers) come in. I'm a part of the council of mosques. They'd come to us and say 'tell your congregation not to go out'. I guarantee they didn't do that when they went to the pubs or the churches and didn't tell the other people of the town not to come out. But us Muslims, 'don't come out' (Nasir)

From this perspective, police efforts to maintain law and order during demonstrations supported the routine practices and interactions that create and reinforce everyday racism. Mirroring the response of local authorities to far right demonstrations in other places in England, it amounts to rejection of Muslims as legitimate occupants of public space and acceptance of a far right group's entitlement to occupy it (Rogaly and Qureshi, 2013).

Some men's accounts of contentious, discriminatory policing focused on an incident in which twelve local Muslim men were arrested and charged in response to public disorder during a far right demonstration in the town in 2015. It became known locally as the case of 'the Rotherham twelve', a reference to 'the Bradford twelve', Asian men who were charged with and acquitted of terrorist offences following an anti-fascist march in 1981 (Perraudin, 2016). Local Muslim organizations' response to the case centred on the men's right to self-defence, which was vindicated when they were acquitted of all charges (Perraudin, 2016):

When we go into our town centre and when we are confronted by the fascists and some people take action to defend themselves, which absolutely everybody in this country has a right to do, they are then arrested and charged with violent disorder … the Muslim community just feels like the, sort of, the authorities have got free reign to do whatever they want, because, you know, the police now, in response to what's come out, they want to be tough on the Muslim community (Samir)

Samir's account demonstrates his agency and resilience through emphasising his, and other local Muslims', legitimate claims to public space and right to protest against the demonstrations. As his account suggests, these were seen as being undermined as a consequence of the scandal, with the authorities reluctant to support the interests of Muslims. His account provides another example of how men positioned themselves as local insiders, challenging racism and resisting segregation arising from the impact of the scandal.

Eroding multicultural gains

All of the participants had in-depth knowledge and understanding of the different, complex dimensions of the child sexual exploitation scandal, including various criticisms of the authorities' responses to it that are in the public domain. Their paid employment in local public and voluntary sector organizations or unpaid involvement in community organizations contributed to their detailed insight. As a result, they positioned themselves as knowledgeable insiders, with comprehensive awareness of the impact of the scandal locally. Some of their accounts include criticisms of local authorities overlooked in dominant media and public accounts of the scandal's impact. Rather than examples of everyday racism, these suggest more formal, institutionalised dimensions. Examples included changes to the local regulation and governance of Muslim minorities, threatening a decline in liberal tolerance of multicultural gains and reduced civility towards diversity (Lofland, 1989). From participants' accounts, it is clear that, over time, local Muslims had achieved success in gaining recognition for and accommodation of specific needs and interests. Relatively minor multicultural gains mentioned, such as signs providing directions to mosques and facilitating Muslim customs regarding funerals and burial, legitimize claims to space and facilitate place-based attachments. These were seen as under threat in what amounts to a symbolic transfer of entitlements from the minority Muslim population to the white majority. Local multicultural politics, in the wake of the exploitation scandal, therefore connected with national concerns regarding failing multiculturalism by focusing on managing problematic Muslim minorities (Parekh, 2006; Lentin and Titley, 2011). This was understood to involve stifling the collective voice of local Muslims and criticism of local authorities, encouraging self-segregation. Samir's reflection demonstrates the resilience of localized attachments to place, feeding into his concerns about the consequences for Muslims of negatively shifting patterns of multicultural relations:

I still feel very emotionally attached to what goes on in Rotherham and, you know, I just feel that there's been an absolute, sort of, turn for the worse by the authorities. So, for example, the council now they've got a free hand to say or do anything, even if it's discriminatory towards Muslims, without any hesitation (Samir)

Half of the participants mentioned new, punitive forms of regulation introduced by the local authority to protect the interests and safety of tenants and taxi users. This included a landlord registration scheme to help improve the standard of rental properties in the town and improved security measures for taxis, including the compulsory installation of cameras in cars. The involvement of taxi drivers was identified as a common feature of cases of child sexual exploitation (Casey, 2015; Jay, 2014). Anis's comments show how these were seen as deliberately targeting and disproportionately disadvantaging Muslims,

many of whom earn a living as landlords and taxi drivers and who are already disadvantaged due to wider structural factors, including a precarious local labour market:

What this in fact means is you pay £650 to be a landlord for that property. It's per property, so if you've got ten...yeah. That then brings in an inspector who then reviews your property and gives you a catalogue of works that need to be done. This is private sector. Those areas that are chosen are all areas with large BME communities. Now, there are good reasons for it as well but I'll tell you first of all what the impact is. So, overnight, your costs have gone up considerably, if you're a landlord. And if you're a Pakistani, what's the biggest two areas of income generation areas for local Pakistani people? Taxi drivers, landlords (Anis)

These new forms of regulation support racialized forms of knowledge, positioning Muslims as a problem to be addressed and ignoring the detrimental economic and social impact on Muslims locally. By criticising the local authority, Anis challenged both stifling of local Muslims' voices and threatened erosion of multicultural gains.

Another key feature of participants' accounts, indicated in the previous section, is informed criticism of the police, who were seen as threatening multicultural gains due to being unreliable in defending and protecting Muslims. A pattern of inadequate policing emerges from accounts claiming lack of protection from racist harassment and attacks, and racialized scapegoating of Muslims to disguise serious failings of the police and other authorities. Umar's account refers to the racist murder of Mushin Ahmed, an elderly Muslim man who was unconnected to child sexual exploitation, yet identified as a 'groomer' by two men who attacked him in the street while on his way to early morning prayers (TellMAMA, 2016b). It was part of a significant increase in racist incidents recorded locally, ranging from relatively banal to very serious (TellMAMA, 2016a):

So the police failing to do their job resulted in them failing to protect us the Muslims. They didn't come out. We had Mushin Ahmed. We had no statements of condemnation on his death. We had no media coverage of his death nationally. He was murdered. You know, a taxi driver was left fighting for his life. We haven't had the police come out and say, "hang on, we are dealing with the (Child Sexual Exploitation) crisis. We've got the (National Crime Agency) working here. We're going to get the perpetrators, but the majority of the Muslim community weren't involved or did not know". But they can't do that. They won't do that. Because, then, the pertinent question is "you (the police) knew, where's your accountability?" (Umar)

Like Anis's, Umar's critical account challenges stifling of local Muslims' voices and threatened erosion of multicultural gains. By positioning themselves as local insiders, both demonstrate agency and resilience in drawing attention to the detrimental impact of the exploitation scandal on local Muslims and the need to resist resulting developments that threatened increased exclusion of Muslims.

Localized attachment to place

Men's accounts show how the impact of the exploitation scandal affected their ontological security by threatening their sense of continuity and stability in feeling at home locally (Noble, 2005). They reveal the emotional politics of race, in which multicultural intimacies and visceral hatred co-exist, and the resulting increased ambivalence of localized place-based identification (Nayak, 2010). A diminished sense of togetherness and increased sense of rejection is notable in Umar's critical account, which embraces discourses positioning the town as an inclusive, multicultural space:

What shocked me was in Rotherham we had a slogan which was 'One Town, One Community, Rotherham Proud.' That was the slogan and that was very all encompassing. All belonging, all taking ownership**.** As soon as the Jay Report came out, we weren't a 'one community', we were like the foster kids that they never wanted (Umar)

Umar's account highlights the detrimental, exclusionary impact of the scandal on local Muslims. This was recognised in formal responses to increased inter-ethnic divisions, including 'Love is Louder', a voluntary sector pro-love, anti-hate campaign promoting kindness and supporting communities, and 'LoveRotherham', an initiative by local churches to love, care and pray for the town. These helped to provide a corrective to increased ontological insecurity, at least for those participants who mentioned them.

Participants' accounts reveal the persistence of affirming inter-ethnic exchanges and friendships, facilitating the endurance of positive attachments to place. All acknowledged the emotional support of non-Muslim friends and acquaintances, who explicitly distinguished between perpetrators of child sexual exploitation and the majority of local Muslims. Only one mentioned losing a long-standing, non-Muslim friend as a result of the impact of the scandal. However, their accounts show how they were still positioned and problematized as Muslim by non-Muslims who were trying to be sympathetic, indicating the salience of Muslim as a key category of identification. Hassan mentioned 'I have Asian friends and white friends. The only thing I've, kind of, noticed that some of my white friends might refer to it (on-street grooming) as a joke or something that, you know, connects to it. But then they realised what they've just said and they've apologised'. Apologising draws attention to Hassan's assumed difference from the jokers and similarity with on-street groomers, as Hassan acknowledged

in reflecting "I consider myself as a British born Muslim … my faith is there but it's not a defining part of my identity and, if I'm talking, I won't bring it up in any conversations".

In responding to the over-determination of Muslim as a key category of identification, men's accounts include identity claims-making centred on forging an ethnically inclusive, localized sense of belonging. They challenged ethnic divisions resulting from the scandal by highlighting commonalities arising from shared social class position, and related lack of economic opportunities, and from shared experience of belonging in a town with a specific history and identity. Positive claims to space included the argument that the town must be taken back from outsiders, particularly critical news media and far right agitators, whose activities were seen as instrumental to disturbing inclusive attachments to place. Samir agreed to participate in media interviews in his capacity as a representative of a local Muslim youth organization. He saw it as an opportunity to promote an alternative perspective on local Muslims and the town:

No, I wasn't afraid at all. I felt the best thing to do was to provide a counter narrative to all the hate and, sort of, the field day the national media were having …. but I always felt like, if they gave you thirty seconds, you know, on the news at ten o'clock, that thirty seconds is quite valuable in providing a counter narrative. Rather than absolutely staying silent and letting somebody else be that voice. So that was my personal view and that of our group and, not just myself, others. We provided a response (Samir)

Samir's account reveals his agency and resilience in challenging forms of racialized knowledge emerging from the scandal and providing a counter-narrative to problematizing accounts of Rotherham and Muslim men. This is particularly notable given that he had experienced racist abuse whilst being interviewed in public spaces. His willingness to publicly present an alternative perspective, despite risks, indicates his persistent, positive sense of belonging and emotional attachment to place. Both are evident when he declares, "one thing I always say is I'm absolutely proud of being from Rotherham, you know, wherever I got to in my career is because of the foundation that was given to me by education in Rotherham, you know, my teachers there, you know, my family and friends that supported me".

The resilience of localized belonging and emotional attachment to place are evident in Riaz's critique of how Muslims became positioned as problematic outsiders as a result of the scandal. His account draws on the dominant history and identity of Rotherham to advocate inclusion of Muslims and promotion of a shared local identity that transcends ethnic and religious differences:

The term 'host community' is wrong because how long is it going to take for me to be integrated? I'm thirty five years old. I surely have contributed to the tax and welfare system here that I should be part of Rotherham …. One of the biggest frustrations, and I'll say this, is the backlash. Amazing, as the Jay Report came out and all this came out, how some of this community had been here for fifty, sixty years. Our forefathers had worked their pants off in the steel works … people like myself have had very good relationships with lots of people … But suddenly, overnight, I felt like our community or, like, me had become separated. Suddenly you become either Asian or you're English. You become a Muslim or a non-Muslim (Riaz)

For Riaz, acknowledging his Rotherham origins provides an opportunity to challenge dominant media and public accounts of the town and express his positive sense of belonging and attachment to it. He recalled an event that he attended through his paid, health-related employment:

Just after the Jay Report came out and all this was up in the air, I remember going to a talk in Birmingham at the NEC and there was two thousand delegates and I talked there and I put Rotherham United football stadium up in the background and I made sure...I made a point that I was from Rotherham, just to prove that, you know what, we're hearing a lot of doom and gloom, and my favourite quote I have is when people complain of the darkness, we should light a candle. So I'm a great believer in that. So I wanted to be that candle and show that determination. I've got all the kind of demographics of what you've just seen in the paper, of doing something wrong. But I want people to look at the difference and say, 'there's a contrast' (Riaz)

Riaz's agency and resilience as the person who lights a candle also involves providing a counter-narrative to problematizing accounts of Rotherham and Muslim men. This further demonstrates how real-life interactions and practices can destabilise racialized forms of knowledge (Smith, 2014).

Conclusion

Muslim men's accounts presented in this paper highlight the significance of localized claims to space and localized forms of belonging in disrupting dominant discourses of Muslim self-segregation and lack of integration (Casey, 2016; Finney and Simpson, 2009). The accounts document men's multi-dimensional experiences of and responses to racism that operate to position Muslim men, and Muslims generally, as criminal, cultural dysfunctional and social excluded. They reveal that increased experiences of racism following a localized exploitation scandal threatened men's inclusive sense of belonging but did not result in defensive withdrawal from the public sphere. Instead, men positioned themselves and other Muslims as local insiders, challenging racism and

articulating place-based attachments. Their accounts reveal strategies adopted to resist exclusion and promote positive sociality. These provide a counterweight to the racialized positioning of themselves and other Muslims as problematic outsiders (Parekh, 2006; Lentin and Titley, 2011). They provide insight into how localized conflict is managed by Muslim minorities.

Participants' claims to local space and localized forms of belonging draw attention to the potential of local, ethnically-inclusive place-based identifications as facilitators of integration, in contrast to the positioning of places with significant Muslim populations as segregating spaces of failed multiculturalism (Thomas et al, 2017). Their accounts articulate perceived commonalities based on shared history, experiences and interests arising from the structural circumstances of local residents' lives. This includes shared experiences of and responses to detrimental media and public attention as a result of the exploitation scandal. They shift the focus away from ethnic and religious differences, creating opportunities for local residents, including those from the white ethnic majority, to re-imagine the history and identity of local shared space in a more inclusive way. This can help to alter dominant perceptions of white residents that 'parallel lives' are a lived reality in places with a significant Muslim population (Thomas et al, 2017:16-17).

The accounts presented here encourage reflection on the longer term, sustained impact of racism experienced by Muslims, with negative implications for the future of multiculturalism and multicultural conviviality at local and national level (Gilroy, 2005). This includes considering evidence indicating that localized civic rebalancing of multiculturalism can tip the scales away from accommodating Muslim minority interests (Meer and Modood, 2008). It also includes considering recognition that cumulative experiences of racism results in Muslims feeling simultaneously less at home in both local spaces and the national space (Noble, 2005). This inter-connectedness of local and national issues is paramount at a time of significant social and political change, with exit from the European Union raising critical questions about belonging and identity in post-Brexit Britain. The British nation cannot be re-homogenised, and neither can the places that comprise it, so it is essential to re-imagine the nation as a dynamic, inclusive, multi-cultural space (Gilroy, 2005). The men's accounts show how some of this re-imagining can be done at the local level as localized claims to space and commitment to belonging contribute to disputing racialized forms of knowledge about Muslims and disrupt dominant imaginaries promoting the ethnic exclusivity of places.

This is not straightforward as participants' accounts also suggest that being publicly and assertively Muslim as a way of being British remains challenging due, at least in part, to the persistent over-determination of the category 'Muslim' (Brubaker, 2013; Modood, 1992; Meer and Modood, 2013). Participants recounted being positioned and problematized as Muslim even when experiencing positive forms of sociality. 'Muslim' as a category of practice

is strengthened by focusing on religious and ethnic difference, potentially overstating the significance of both to individual and group identity and supporting anti-Muslim sentiment. Their accounts indicate why some Muslims assert a Muslim identification, as a way of revalorizing what has been devalorized (Brubaker, 2013:3). This frustrates inclusive localized claims to space and commitment to belonging.

The paper has foregrounded Muslim men's accounts in order to highlight Muslim men's agency and resilience in responding to localized conflict and connecting forms of racism. Conclusions drawn from the paper must not be overstated given that the data presented is from a small sample of relatively, engaged, included Muslim men. Muslim men, in general, continue to be marginalised as historical speaking subjects in media and public representation of Muslims and academic studies of racism. The accounts presented here promote greater inclusion of a range of Muslim men's voices in considering the position of Muslims in Muslim minority societies.

References

Abbas, T. ed. 2005. *Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure*. London: Zed Books.

Alexander, C. 2004. "Imagining the Asian Gang: Ethnicity, Masculinity and Youth After 'the Riots'." *Critical Social Policy*, 24: 526-49.

Amin A. 2002. "Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity", Environment and Planning A, 34: 959-980.

Bagguley, P., and Hussain, Y. 2008. *Riotous Citizens: Ethnic Conflict in Multicultural Britain*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

BBC. 2016. EU Referendum: South Yorkshire backs Brexit. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-36617899.

Britton, J. 2018. Muslim Men, Racialised Masculinities and Personal Life, *Sociology.* http://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/pKIE96MFBbieC9DEDHrI/full.

Brubaker, R. 2013. "Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice: A Note on the Study of Muslims in European Countries of Immigration." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36 (1): 1-8.

Cantle, T. 2001. *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*. London: The Home Office.

Casey, L. 2016. The Casey Review: A Review into Opportunity and Integration. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

Casey, L. 2015. *Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council*. London: Crown Copyright.

Chambers, C. Phillips, R., Ali, N., Hopkins, P. and Pande, R. (2018) "'Sexual Misery' or 'Happy British Muslims'?: Contemporary Depictions of Muslim Sexuality". *Ethnicities*. http://journals.sagepub.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1177/1468796818757263.

Champion, S. 2017. "British Pakistani men ARE raping and exploiting white girls … and its time we faced up to it." *The Sun*, 10 August 2017. https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4218648/british-pakistani-men-raping-exploiting-white-girls/.

Cockbain, E. 2013. "Grooming and the 'Asian sex gang predator: The construction of a racial crime threat." *Race and Class* 54 (4): 22-32.

D'Arcy, S. 2017. "Rotherham child abuse: 12 more men charged in sexual exploitation investigation." *The Independent*. 4 October 2017. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/rotherham-latest-12-more-men-charged-child-sex-abuse-investigation-a7983726.html.

Essed, P. 1991. *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary theory*. London: Sage.

Fekete, L. 2009. *A Suitable Enemy: Racism, Migration and Islamaphobia in Europe*. London: Pluto Press.

Finney, N., and Simpson, L. 2009. *'Sleepwalking to Segregation?': Challenging Myths About Race and Migration*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Garner, S. 2010. *Racisms: An Introduction*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Gilroy, P. 2005. *Postcolonial Melancholia*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Halliday, J. 2016. "Rotherham: Eight men jailed for sexually exploiting teenage girls." *The Guardian*. 4 November 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/04/rotherham-child-sexual-exploitation-eight-men-jailed.

Jay, A 2014. *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997-2013*. Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

Jones ,H. 2013. *Negotiating Cohesion, Inequality and Change: Uncomfortable Positions in Local Government*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Kundnani, A. 2007. *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st Century Britain*. London: Pluto Press

Lentin, A., And Titley, G. 2011. *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age*. London: Zed Books.

Lofland, L.H. 1989. "Social life in the public realm. A review." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 17: 453–482.

Martin, D. 2011. “Why Asians Set Sights on White Girls for Fun.” *Daily Mail*. 31 January 2011.

McGhee, D. 2008. *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Meer, N., Dwyer, C., and Modood, T. 2010. “Embodying Nationhood: Conceptions of British National Identity, Citizenship and Gender in the ‘Veil’ Affair.” *The Sociological Review* 58 (1): 84-111.

Meer, N., and Modood, T. 2013. “Beyond “Methodological Islamism”? A Thematic Discussion of Muslim Minorities in Europe.” *Advances in Applied Sociology* 3 (7): 307-313.

Meer, N., and Modood, T. 2009. “The Multicultural State We’re in: Muslims, ‘Multiculture’ and the ‘Civic Re-balancing’ of British Multiculturalism.” *Political Studies* 57 (3): 473-497.

Modood, T. 1992. *Not Easy Being British: Colour, Culture and Citizenship*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

Morgan, G., and Poynting, S. eds. 2012. *Global Islamophobia: Muslims and Moral Panic in the West*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Murji K., and Solomos, J. 2005. “Introduction: Racialization in Theory and Practice.” in K. Murji and J. Solomos. *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nayak, A. 2010. “Race, Affect and Emotion: Young People, Racism and Graffiti in the Postcolonial English Suburbs.” *Environment and Planning A* 42 (10): 2370-2392.

Neal, S., Bennett, K., Cochrane, A., and Mohan, G. 2018. *Lived Experiences of Multiculture: The New Social and Spatial Relations of Diversity*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Noble, G. 2005. “The Discomfort of Strangers: Racism, Incivility and Ontological Security in a Relaxed and Comfortable Nation.” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26 (1): 107-120.

Noble, G., and Poynting, S. 2010. “White Lines: The Intercultural Politics of Everyday Movement in Social Spaces.” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 31 (5): 489-505.

Norfolk, A. 2011a. “Revealed: Conspiracy of Silence on UK Sex Gangs. Most Convicted Offenders of Pakistani Heritage.” *The Times*. 5 January.

Norfolk, A. 2011b. “Some of these men have children the same age: they are bad apples’ – sexual grooming. The grooming of white girls by gangs of Pakistani heritage is an issue that few in the community will address.” *The Times*. 5 January.

Parekh, B. 2006. “Europe, Liberalism and the ‘Muslim Question.” in T. Modood, A. Triandafyllidou, and R. Zapatu-Ferrero. Eds. *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Perraudin, F. 2016. “Call for inquiry as Asian Men who Fought Far-Right Extremists are Cleared.” *The Guardian*. 16 November. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/16/asian-men-far-right-rotherham-cleared-violent-disorder.

Pitcher, B. 2009. *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Puwar, N. 2004. Space Invaders: Race, gender and bodies out of place. London: Berg.

Razack, S.H. 2004. “Imperilled Muslim Women, Dangerous Muslim Men and Civilised Europeans: Legal and Social Responses to Forced Marriages.” *Feminist Legal Studies* 12: 129-74.

Rogaly, B. and Qureshi, K. 2013. “Diversity, Urban Space and the Right to the Provincial City.” *Identities* 20 (4): 423-437.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. 2015. *Demographic Profile of Rotherham 2015*. Rotherham: RMBC.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. 2012. *Key Statistics for Rotherham 2011 Census*. Rotherham: RMBC.

Samad, Y., and Eade, J. 2003. *Community Perceptions of Forced Marriage*, London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Smith, A. 2014. “Rethinking the ‘Everyday’ in ‘Ethnicity and Everyday Life’.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2014.987307.

TellMAMA. 2016a. “*Another Hate Crime Attack in Rotherham. Afghan Taxi Driver Assaulted*.”

https://tellmamauk.org/another-hate-crime-attack-in-rotherham-afghan-taxi-driver-assaulted/.

TellMAMA. 2016b. ‘The Mushin Ahmed Trial: When Anti-Muslim Hate Turns to Murder’, 29 February 2016. https://tellmamauk.org/the-mushin-ahmed-trial-when-anti-muslim-hate-turns-to-murder/.

Thomas, P., Busher, J., Macklin G., and Rogerson, M. 2017. “Hopes and Fears: Community Cohesion and the ‘White Working Class’ in One of the ‘Failed Spaces’ of Multiculturalism.” *Sociology*. http://journals.sagepub.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1177/0038038516676775.

Tufail, W. 2015. “Rotherham, Rochdale, and the Racialized Threat of the ‘Muslim Grooming Gang.” *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Democracy* 4 (3): 30-43.

Tyler, I. 2013. *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neo-Liberal Britain*. London: Zed Books.

Tyler, I. 2008. “Chav Mum Chav Scum.” *Feminist Media Studies*. 8 (1): 17-34.

Vertovec, S. 2007. :Super-diversity and its Implications.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 (6): 1024-1054.

Wessendorf, S. 2016. “Settling in a Super-Diverse Context: Recent Migrant’s Experiences of Conviviality.” *Journal of Intercultural Studies*. 37 (5): 449-463.

Winlow, S., Hall, S., and Treadwell, J. 2017. *The Rise of the Right: English Nationalism and the Transformation of Working-Class Politics*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Winnett, R. 2011. “Child sex grooming ‘not investigated because of political correctness’’. *Daily Telegraph*. 24 June.