



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Funny looks: British Pakistanis' experiences after 7th July 2005*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/80515/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Hussain, Y and Bagguley, P (2013) *Funny looks: British Pakistanis' experiences after 7th July 2005*. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36 (1). 28 - 46 (18). ISSN 1466-9870

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.645844>

Reuse

Unless indicated otherwise, fulltext items are protected by copyright with all rights reserved. The copyright exception in section 29 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 allows the making of a single copy solely for the purpose of non-commercial research or private study within the limits of fair dealing. The publisher or other rights-holder may allow further reproduction and re-use of this version - refer to the White Rose Research Online record for this item. Where records identify the publisher as the copyright holder, users can verify any specific terms of use on the publisher's website.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Funny Looks: British Pakistanis' experiences after 7th July 2005

Abstract

This paper examines the experiences of British Pakistanis living in West Yorkshire after the 7th July bombings in London in 2005. Based on qualitative interviews conducted in the Beeston and Hyde Park areas of Leeds and the nearby town of Dewsbury in 2006, the paper considers a number of important themes that have emerged since the bombings including: locality and segregation, views about the London bombers, experiences of racism and Islamophobia, citizenship and identity.

Keywords: Pakistanis, racism, Islamophobia, London bombings, terrorism

Well you would just get on the bus sometimes and you get funny looks, because you're carrying a bag, you could be just carrying a shoulder bag and it's like you get funny looks... and that's happened to me a few times, you get on the bus and you just get funny looks. (Saima Khan, Dewsbury)

Introduction

'Funny looks' from people in white dominated public spaces became one of the central experiences of British Pakistanis after the London of 7th July 2005. In this paper we analyse the changing experiences of British Pakistani Muslims in the three localities associated with the bombers. Pakistani Muslims especially have been the focus of official, media and popular concern about 'terrorism' and suicide bombings since 2001 (Abbas, 2005), and this was heightened by the discovery that three of the four 7/7 bombers were British Pakistanis (Brighton 2007; Kundnani 2007; McGhee 2008; Werbner 2009).

We begin by examining questions of citizenship and identity after the 7/7 bombings. Since the 1990s ethnic minority identities in Britain have increasingly been conceptualised as mutable and contextual in contrast to previous essentialist models of ethnic identity (Hall 1990; Brah 1993; Modood et al. 1997; Werbner and Modood 1997). In relation to South Asian Muslims the focus of recent debates has shifted to a concern with how ethnicity, religion and nationality are articulated as sources of identity (Dwyer 1999a; Hopkins, 2004; 2007a; Bagguley and Hussain 2008, pp. 143-57). Many of these recent contributions have focused on generation and gender, exploring how these complex articulations of identity take specifically gendered and generational forms (Seidler, 2007). We seek to draw upon and assess these debates in the light of the 7/7 bombings and the reactions of Pakistani communities in the localities most associated with the bombers themselves.

The pathologisation of particular places and communities (Parker and Karner, 2010) has been central to much of what Werbner (2009) has termed the ‘failure of multiculturalism discourse’ since 2001. After the 2001 riots a concern developed with community cohesion and the ethnic segregation of urban space (Cantle 2001; Bagguley and Hussain 2008; Finney and Simpson 2009). The segregation debate was constructed around the idea of South Asian Muslim communities becoming dysfunctional, isolated from mainstream British society, with inherent inter-generational conflict and poor educational performance. Many of the religious and cultural practices of British Pakistani communities were identified as the source of these problems in public policy discourse (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008: 159-73). These concerns intensified as part of the government’s counter terrorism policy (Brighton 2007; Husband and Alam, 2011; McGhee 2008), and have dominated public discourse about Muslims so that there is now a constant media pressure to uncover ‘what is really happening’ in Muslim communities (Werbner 2009: 40).

Increased incidents of racism and Islamophobia were widely feared after the 7/7 attacks. We show that such experiences were more subtle and patterned than these expectations might suggest. Our concern is not with their quantity or severity, but rather with experiences of racism and Islamophobia and how they are interpreted. A further important theme is the distinction between racism and Islamophobia that has received some, but in our view insufficient attention (Modood 2005; Dunn et al. 2007). Our aim is not to investigate the complex inter-relations between contemporary racisms, Islamophobia and nationalism. Rather our goal is to address the kinds of the meaning attributed to experiences of racism and Islamophobia by British Pakistanis who were living in the critically important locales of Beeston, Dewsbury and the Hyde Park district of Leeds.

We want to suggest that the ‘funny looks’ in the title of this paper arise out of a fear of ‘the stranger’ (Bauman, 1991). After 7/7 in particular it seems that the dominant concern is not with ‘Muslims as enemies’ but ‘Muslims as strangers’. The 7/7 bombers were UK citizens, but their acts were those of ‘enemies’. What lies behind the ‘funny looks’ is the uncertainty that arises when confronted by someone being impossible to classify despite being a familiar and everyday sight. The 7/7 bombings and the reactions to them rendered ordinary Muslims suddenly visible. They became seen as incongruous and ambivalent and therefore offensive to dominant modern western sensibilities, disrupting the assumptions of the viewers. Thus the wearing of Islamic dress becomes stigmatizing; the funny looks are a stigmatizing gaze on Muslims. As only some Muslims, especially women, can be identified as such they carry the ‘burden of representation’ of the stigmatization of all British Muslims that has emerged since 2001. In our view this illustrates the process by which a ‘... feature of a certain category of persons is first made salient by being made brought into public attention, and then interpreted as a visible sign of a hidden flaw, iniquity or moral turpitude. An otherwise innocuous trait becomes a blemish, a sign of affliction, a cause of shame. The

person bearing this trait is easily recognisable as less desirable, inferior, bad and dangerous'. (Bauman, 1991: 67).

These developments have given rise to the particular gaze interpreted by some Muslim women in particular as 'the funny looks'. These are very much a 'felt perception' amongst many of our interviewees. Although we did not observe them directly, we might speculate whether they were due partly to the increased self-consciousness of Muslims where they might be projecting others' perceptions of them. However, it was evident from the vivid accounts of them from our interviewees that these were powerful experiences entailing strong perceptions. They were seen as a noticeable development after the 7/7 bombings, especially amongst women who were visible Muslims.

Methods

The data were collected as part of a larger qualitative study of how people from different ethnic groups – African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, white British, Indian and Pakistani – reacted to the London bombings of 7th July 2005. The fieldwork was conducted by trained interviewers in the districts of Hyde Park and Beeston in Leeds and the nearby town of Dewsbury. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposively selected sample of men and women and younger (aged under 35) and older people (aged 35 and over) from each of these communities accessed through a mix of personal contacts, community organisations and snow-ball sampling. The themes of the interviews were designed to reflect a number of theoretical issues as well as issues that had arisen in the public debates about the 7/7 bombings.

The Pakistani diaspora in the UK totalled 706,539 in the 2001 Census. Most male Pakistani migration to the UK took place in the 1960s and 70s with many women following up until 1982 (The Change Institute, 2009). Now a majority of British Pakistanis have been

born in the UK. In the Beeston area the 2001 Census of Population shows that just over 6% of the population in 2001 were of Pakistani ethnic origin, in Hyde Park they made up 5% and just over 16% per cent of the population of Dewsbury. Each area also had smaller ethnic minority populations especially of Indian background in Hyde Park and Dewsbury and Bangladeshis in Beeston. Otherwise each locality was predominantly White. All three areas had levels of unemployment twice or more than the national rate in the 2001 Census of Population. Manual working class employment is dominant in Beeston and Dewsbury accounting for about a third of local employment compared to 20 per cent nationally in 2001, whilst Hyde Park's class profile is skewed by its proximity to the city's universities with many students living there (Office for National Statistics, 2003).

Interviews were carried out by ethnically and religiously, and in some circumstances gender matched interviewers. All interviewees agreed to be interviewed on condition that they would remain anonymous, and we have used pseudonyms. However, we have retained references to each locality as keeping these anonymous would have been superfluous given the publicity that the locations have already received.

A total of 141 interviews were completed. The highly structured and differentiated nature of the sample means that we have been able to identify patterns and themes within each of the sub-samples. The Pakistani sub-sample that is the basis for the analysis here totalled 18 men and 21 women. The work reported here only pertains to the analysis of the interviews with those from the Pakistani communities in each of the localities. We have carried out a thematic analysis of the data, identifying the issues that emerged from the interviewees' responses to our questions.

Citizenship in question?

British Pakistanis often express hybridised forms of collective identification (Brah 1993; Dwyer 1999a). However, for Muslims these are increasingly expressed in relation to Islam in

response to global political conflicts and British social, cultural and political movements and changes (Hopkins 2007b; Jacobson 1997; Samad 1992). We examine the complex and variable forms of collective identifications between Britishness, Pakistani identity and Islam, and their views about the introduction of citizenship tests and testing in English that have been introduced to qualify for British citizenship (Fekete, 2009).

We found complex and variable forms of identification with Britain, Pakistan and Islam. Given the location and timing they demonstrate a remarkable resilience contrary to some assumptions about British Pakistani Muslims not really identifying with Britain (Maxwell, 2006; McGhee, 2008). Salma Majid (under 35) from Dewsbury told us: ‘Well I’m British first, I am born here and then I am a British born Pakistani.’ In contrast to this were people like Khalid Khan (under 35) from Dewsbury who said: ‘At the moment I am a Pakistani living in England.’ This exemplifies a clear difference between ‘first generation migrants’, such as Khalid and those who were born in the UK. There is a sense of being a British citizen based upon the location of birth. However, not all referred to ‘Pakistani ethnicity’ as an aspect of their identity, as others prioritised their religious identity. For instance Iqbal Javed (under 35) from Dewsbury told us: ‘I am British at the end of the day, I am a Muslim, but I am British.’ For some British citizenship was more formal, eschewing emotional attachments to Britain, expressing emotional attachments to Pakistan, and feeling excluded from British society:

I was like born here, but most of my life I’ve been in Pakistan ... so I’m like between both but I really class myself as a Pakistani. I don’t class myself as British or anything like that even though I have British nationality and British passport ... but I don’t feel British, I feel more Pakistani than British, and I know my Pakistani culture, and, you know, the lifestyle there more than I do here, and we’re not accepted here, so I’m a Pakistani. (Umar Shan, under 35, Beeston)

Mahmuda Ali (over 35) from Beeston described herself as a Pakistani Muslim. As an older first generation migrant she did not think of herself of as British. Although she did not retain her Pakistani passport, she was thinking about applying for one as a result of the reaction to the 7/7 bombings: 'I did not before but we are considering it now...' Saira Chadoury (under 35) from the Hyde Park area of Leeds has dual nationality possessing two passports, one Pakistani and the other British. For her this was only a formal designation, rather than an identification of real meaning or emotional substance, implying that it has only been made an issue for her by external circumstances. Her 'English' nationality, as she called it, was a simple fact of where she lives:

It's something that's never actually been an issue for me, to say which one I value more. I have a Pakistani nationality, and I have an English nationality, and to me they are just passports. I live in this county and it's who I am and that's how I see it.

For the older generation there always seems the possibility of returning to Pakistan, but as Rehana Shah (aged over 35) from Dewsbury compared herself to the younger generation: 'They were born here, they've got British passports and this is their home, they can't pack their bags and leave to somewhere which isn't their home'. Part of this emotional attachment to Pakistan amongst the older generation is concerned with the memory of 'home', was also connected to a desire to 'reproduce' and maintain Pakistani culture in a British context (Werbner, 2009). Whilst national identity might be seen in formal legal terms, culture, in terms of the practices of ethnicity and being a good Muslim, is what counts. The complex process of ethnicity, in terms of cultural continuities and changes, operated in an intertwining fashion with the changing significance and meaning of religious identifications:

You need to remember where you are from, that is part of your identity, who you are and who your parents are. You need to know where you come from don't you? A sense of belonging, that you do belong to this wider community, it is good to belong there, it is good to be a Muslim. It is not a bad thing. That is what I mean. (Parveen Tariq, under 35, Beeston)

The question of people identifying primarily as Muslim, rather than Pakistani, is not new (Jacobson 1997; Samad 1996). It has been attributed to the universal and non-ethnic character of the global Muslim umma (Jacobson 1997), and the increased politicisation of Islam and Muslims (Samad 1996). Those born in the UK who self-identified as Muslims often described themselves as 'British Muslims'. However, in terms of the significance of these identifications for themselves their Muslim identity took priority alongside British and Pakistani identifications:

I would describe myself as a British Muslim ... I might have said British first, but I am a Muslim first. I am always going to be a Muslim first, because that is who we are. And my parents migrated from Pakistan in the 1960's we were all born here ... mum always made us become proud of our identity of been Pakistani as well, so I class myself as being a Pakistani as well. (Fariya Bibi, under 35, Beeston)

Of those who identified themselves as primarily Muslims, some noted how this had changed recently. This illustrates the contextual and mutable character of these collective identifications, especially in response to non-Muslims being more interested in peoples' religion. In this sense a Muslim identity is being increasingly imposed on people through wider social and political developments (Samad, 1996). This tendency to increasingly

identify oneself with religion, rather than ethnicity, interacts with people's increased knowledge of Islam:

Before I used to concentrate on I'm a British Pakistani, Islam wasn't an agenda in those days. It's really important now, and everywhere I go they always ask what religion you are. It's obvious now that I'm wearing a scarf, but some people feel as though it's their job to ask, they have to double check. The more I've got to know about Islam and Islam as a complete way of life, if somebody asks me now, what am I and who am I, I just say I'm a Muslim. (Kaneez Farid, under 35, Hyde Park)

These developments, and wider political debates, raise the question of what 'Britishness' means to British Pakistanis after the 7/7 bombings. For our interviewees this ranged from positively embracing what they felt were good features of British society, to rejection and exclusion from it. The first of these was a kind of multicultural Britishness, where Britain was seen as somewhere that accepted diversity, and recognised and respected difference in a positive way. This was generally expressed by women:

I think British really for me is living together, and this is the only country that I know that has so many different cultures, so many people from different religions and different countries, and we all live together and I think that's what British is for me, and is just really respecting each other and I think I do that. (Saira Chadoury, under 35, Hyde Park)

However Kaneez Farid (under 35) also from the Hyde Park area defined Britishness for herself in terms of the fact that she was born here. This meant that she had been socialised into certain aspects of what she saw as the dominant culture leading her to prefer some traditional English foods and speaking with a local accent. As a result she felt that her

Pakistani background had receded somewhat into the background, so that what mattered most was where she is here and now:

It means everything to me because I was born here, it's what I've been exposed to, my schools, teachers, friends, the water I've drunk. I eat fish and chips and traditional English breakfasts. I'm from Yorkshire, I've got a Yorkshire accent, I've got Yorkshire friends and everything represents me. Even though I'm a Pakistani, you asked me a question earlier about where I was from, I know where I'm from but I've forgotten. (Kaneez Farid, under 35, Hyde Park)

Others spoke of being part of and contributing to the community in a material sense, and abiding by the laws of the country by being a good citizen, and this was especially prominent amongst male interviewees. For Khalid Khan (under 35) from Dewsbury Britishness meant: 'Being a part of the community and helping, becoming a part of the economy, the country and to work for the good of the community. Being a good citizen of a country.' Ali Mamood (under 35) also from Dewsbury highlighted language as well as an established normal presence in the country: 'British is speaking English, living in Britain, in England, working in England and basically doing what a normal British person would do.' We encountered very few who saw Britishness in entirely negative terms, and these were amongst the older generation with a minority effectively rejecting the notion of Britishness as meaning anything positive as Rehana Shah (over 35) from Dewsbury said: 'British society to me is lager louts, drinking, pub going culture.' Although we found this view mostly amongst the older generation others have found this cultural rejection amongst younger Pakistani Muslims as well (Hopkins, 2004: 266).

One of the controversial issues to arise from the official reports into the 2001 riots was the suggestion that English tests become a criterion for British citizenship for new

migrants from outside of the European Union (Cantle 2001). We found a diverse range of views about this suggestion. These ranged from those who felt that this was a useful skill and supported these requirements, through those who saw that speaking English was essential to living in the UK, but felt the requirements were too stringent, to some who saw them as a new form of immigration control. Parveen (under 35) from Beeston saw the value of the new English language requirements, as they enable new migrants to be independent: ‘Well I think it is good to know English, because then you can become independent. Because if you are living in England it is good to know it like if someone is knocking on your door you can speak to them.’ Illustrating the ways in which views about this issues cut across generations Mudassar Bashir (over 35) also from Beeston, expressed similar sympathies: ‘I think everybody should learn English, regardless of the first second or third generations, and that way you can communicate with the society and you can take part in everything.’ Some even expressed a strong view in favour of a firm regime of citizenship testing, as it would assess the strength of a potential migrant’s desire to be a British citizen:

I think it’s really necessary, because the main medium of communication in this country is English, and you should know about the country, only then should you be allowed to become a citizen, otherwise it’s just another person living here. (Khalid Khan, under 35, Dewsbury)

However, most of our interviewees were to some degree critical of the new citizenship tests with their English language requirements. Although she felt that it was necessary to learn English as this was an essential skill for living in the UK Saira Chadoury (under 35, Hyde Park) argued that most British people would not be able to pass it: ‘Some of those

questions are so difficult, even the people that have been born bred here, all the generations that have lived in this country don't know it'.

Salma Majid also recognized the importance of English as a social skill important to living in the country, although she did not regard it as essential, as her parents had coped without being fluent in English. However, she felt that the policy was really aimed at migrants from the South Asian sub-continent, and did not think that the policy applied to European migrants who she felt had similar levels of English language competence:

... when our parents came they didn't have much English or anything... I mean the government are quite one sided in one sense because they are looking more towards the Asian continent ... you have got a lot of European Union new countries now that are coming in to England and can't even speak the language either, they don't know much about England, they don't know nothing, but it's ok for them, because of, they are from the European Union, it shouldn't work like that. (Salma Majid, under 35, Dewsbury)

There is both resilience and diversity amongst our interviewees accounts of their citizenship, ethnic and religious identities after the 7/7 attacks. We see continued evidence of hybridised identifications with Britain, Pakistan and Islam. In these places after the attacks and the political and media reactions to them (Werbner, 2009) one might have expected to have changed and perhaps become more homogenous. The political reactions to them have added to the salience of Islam for people's identities, and this has reinforced longer term political factors (Samad, 1996; Modood, 2005). Views about citizenship and English tests were diverse some seeing fluent English as a useful skill, others seeing it as a new form of immigration control aimed at South Asians.

Perceptions of locality, neighbourhood and segregation

Beeston, Dewsbury and Hyde Park amongst other places developed strongly negative reputational geographies after the 7/7 bombings (Parker and Karner, 2010). Media and political discourses constructed the places as dysfunctional and creating the 7/7 bombers (Seidler, 2007). These constructions clashed with the experiences and perceptions of our interviewees. Popular perceptions of localities are the modality through which ethnicity is lived and Islamophobia and racism are experienced. Places are contexts where diverse processes intersect and are lived in different ways (Parker and Karner, 2010). We found a very strong affirmation of the quality of local life in Beeston, Hyde Park and Dewsbury. Some younger people described how they had been born and bred in their area, and continued to choose to live there because of the quality of local community life. They often recognised the strength of local South Asian communities, and valued the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of these places. These were not the ‘dysfunctional’ communities that have often been described in many policy debates both before and since the bombings:

It’s ok. It’s not too bad. We’ve got a close nit community, with the Asian people, there’s mixed race there, you get students, you get white people, black people, so it’s quite diverse in that sense. (Nadeem Ali, Hyde Park, under 35)

People recognised the impact of the bombings on the image and reputation of the areas, for example Rehana Shaha (aged over 35) described Dewsbury as being: ‘...on the map now for all the wrong reasons, the July 7th bombings that put us on the map, with one of the bombers being from here’. However, the positive emotional attachments that local people had to the area mean that they were resistant to the negative wider representations that had recently developed about them:

It's home, and I think because of what's been happening over the last year, there haven't been any disturbances because people see it as their home, and want to live in peace with each other. (Yusaf Alam, over 35, Dewsbury)

Alongside these accounts of Beeston, Dewsbury and Hyde Park being good places to live ran other narratives of degrees of separation of neighbourhoods in Beeston and to some extent Dewsbury. People's perceptions and views about segregation may tell us little or nothing about how such patterns of residence have come about and may in fact be rapidly changing (Finney and Simpson 2008). What is also noticeable is how far some people, especially in Beeston, had taken on board the official discourse about segregation that has emerged since the 2001 Cattle report. This highlights how people may draw upon wider public and political debates to make sense of their own lives and experiences with the consequence that the real processes which generated them and continue to change them are obscured. However, some saw the ethnic segregation of British neighbourhoods as relatively normal and typically resulting from the choices of where people preferred to live or to have their children educated:

... the English tend to buy houses where the English people are, and the Asians buy houses in the Asian communities, unless some people don't mind mixing. There might be ten Asians in one street, two English or something. Some people are more racist, and they don't want to live like that. Some people don't mind, there are certain areas for everything. (Kani Iqbal, Beeston, under 35)

... the local school is mainly full of south Asian children, there's only about three or four White children in the whole school, so I've actually heard one of the people from

one of the external agencies that works with the school, she's said to me people will not send their children to that school because it's full of as she said 'Asian children'. (Mariam Shahaz Dewsbury over 35)

Segregation is not just a matter of where people live, but is also a case of who they interact with in other spheres of life (Department of Communities and Local Government 2008; Jayaweera and Choudhury 2008). The failure to adequately recognise this is one of the critical weaknesses of the community cohesion and segregation discourse. One obvious source of variation in terms of people's contact with non-Muslims and people outside of the Pakistani community is the length of time that people had been settled here:

I haven't been living in this country for that long to have close friends in other communities. I don't really have close friends as yet at all, it's just the people who we meet or the relatives or the professional relationships. (Khalid Khan, Dewsbury, under 35)

Many of the older interviewees cited cultural differences as reasons for not interacting very much with people beyond the South Asian community. Mohammad Jamil (aged over 35) from Beeston told us: 'The thing is the white community are a very free willed people, they don't care about faith and stuff; they drink and stuff, so that's why we don't mix much with them.' In contrast younger people such as Zara Malik (under 35) from Dewsbury described how she had lots of non-Muslim friends and participated in a wide range of social activities with them: 'Yes, because I've got lots of friends that are non-Muslims and we go out for meals, we go to the cinema, they'll come over to my house, I'll go over to theirs.' In a similar way Muhammed Ahmad (under 35) from the Hyde Park Leeds told us how he met

and interacted with non-Muslims in many spheres of his life: 'Work, everywhere, when you go shopping the chemist whatever you know. You see them all the time you talk to them.'

There were no differences between the three localities, nor did there seem to have been any significant impact as a result of the 7/7 bombings on views about their communities and interactions with non-Muslims. Rather the differences lay in whether or not people had been born and grew up in the UK. This is only indirectly related to age. A majority of those aged over 35 whom we interviewed were born in Pakistan (75 per cent) compared to only 15 per cent of those aged 35 and under. Those born in the UK were more likely to talk about meaningful interactions with non-Muslims. Much of this difference may be explained by the language skills of those born and educated in the UK and their greater opportunities for forming relationships with non-Muslims through education and employment (Department of Communities and Local Government 2008; Jayaweera and Choudhury 2008).

Views about the London bombers and suicide bombing.

Media and some academic and policy debates have focused on the apparent level of support or sympathy for the London bombers amongst British Muslims (Field, 2007; Mirza et. al. 2007). This evidence has largely come from opinion poll surveys, but they find very limited support for terrorism, rely on very limited samples and give very little insight into the reasoning behind the responses (Field, 2007, p. 468; Mirza et. al. 2007, p. 14). This is one area where qualitative data such as ours can make a contribution.

We found that our interviewees were highly critical of the bombings, as they saw them as morally wrong, but also because of the wider negative consequences for Pakistani and Muslim communities in Britain. Some did say that they could understand why the bombings were committed, but this was very different from actually supporting them. From men and women, young and old we found moral condemnation of the bombers primarily on

the basis of religious beliefs: 'Islam condemns all these either in Britain or all over the world they condemn this'. (Mudassar Bashir, Beeston, over 35)

Our interviewees recalled how the bombings and the whole idea of suicide bombing as a political strategy was condemned in local mosques. People made a distinction between the use of violence for political ends as distinct from non-violent forms of action such as distributing literature and organising demonstrations. In these instances the bombings were seen as being in contravention of the moral codes of Islam, for example: 'I remember going to the Mosque and they were saying suicide bombing it is totally wrong you cannot do it.' (Iqbal Javed, Dewsbury, under 35).

Another response that many people remarked upon was the unification of the Muslim community. Muslim identity became more important illustrating how such collective identifications are both mutable and contextual and how the political reactions to the 7/7 bombings highlighted Muslim identity. There was a desire to be 'normal Muslims', and this isolates and excludes those involved or supportive of collective political violence. People also wanted to deal with the issues, so that similar events in the future can be avoided:

I think it's brought the whole of the Muslim community together with everything happening, because it's like one out of I don't know how many that has actually done this, and then you see the rest of us, and they are like just doing their normal daily Islamic duties. (Salma Majid, Dewsbury, under 35)

The Muslim community has become more united, because they don't want these things to happen again, and they just want to be together, and to act on it, so that future things like that can be avoided. (Khalid Khan, Dewsbury, under 35)

These perspectives contrast with the more simplistic media and political accounts involving an exaggerated and irrational fear not just of Muslims in general, but British Pakistani Muslims in particular (Brighton, 2007; McGhee, 2008; Werbner, 2009). Our findings also contrast with opinion poll findings of British Muslims being supportive of the bombings (Field, 2007; Mirza et al, 2007). This sense of enhanced unity emphasized how ordinary British Muslims were different from the suicide bombers, and cut across differences of gender and generation highlighted by Seidler (2007).

The new presentation of the racist and Islamophobic self

It is clear that many of those whom we interviewed felt that they experienced a change in the attitude or mood of many non-Muslims towards them - the 'funny looks' referred to in the title of this paper. Furthermore, these experiences were variable especially with respect to location. Where people were perceived as 'strangers' (Bauman 1991, pp. 53-74), they were more likely to experience 'funny looks'. These can be thought of as 'front-stage' performances of racist and Islamophobic behaviour (Picca and Feagin 2007). In response people told us they were often avoiding certain places at certain times, dressing in 'non-Muslim' ways or resisting the 'funny looks' in individualised ways.

The reactions provoked by women who wear the hijab or niqab have given rise to discussions of the gaze in relation to Muslims. In some discussions Muslim women are perceived as 'victims' of an 'exotic patriarchy' that offends liberal Western assumptions (Fortier, 2008). However, in such a context wearing the hijab, becomes an act of resistance and a source of security against Western male power (Franks, 2000: 920). The hijab has also become a sign of 'Islamic fundamentalism' in the popular imagination and the object of considerable debate (Fortier, 2008). Arguably this is now a '... disciplining technology used by non-Muslims against the Muslim population as a whole...' (Fortier, 2008: 84).

Almost half of our interviewees reported ‘funny looks’ and most of these were women. Two more interviewees reported verbal abuse and a racially motivated attack on property. Of the remaining half of the sample, who were mostly male and over 35, two thirds of them had heard of friends and relatives who had experiences ranging from ‘funny looks’ to direct physical attacks. What is significant in our analysis is the meaning attributed to the ‘funny looks’ by those of our interviewees who experienced them directly.

People felt that there were certain symbols which seemed to provoke such reactions, such as the carrying of a backpack, or wearing clothing perceived as Islamic. When people were outside of their immediate neighbourhoods in predominantly white spaces, they were more likely to say they experienced these looks. They would come from strangers rather than non-Muslim people they had known for some time and regarded as friends. Anyone recognisably Muslim and carrying a backpack outside of South Asian areas would often draw suspicious looks from non-Muslims:

Well you would just get on the bus sometimes and you get funny looks, because you’re carrying a bag, you could be just carrying a shoulder bag and it’s like you get funny looks... and that’s happened to me a few times, you get on the bus and you just get funny looks. (Saima Khan, Dewsbury, under 35)

Ali Mamood from Dewsbury (under 35) talked about how generally strangers react to him: ‘They react to you differently, they look at you, stare at you, they take more notice...’ The phrase ‘funny looks’ captures quite cogently the subtle shift in everyday behavioural Islamophobia or racism since the 7/7 bombings. For those who are identifiably Muslim this was a subtle but noticeable shift in behaviour. Before they would have simply been ignored, but now they had become familiar yet threatening. This has had the effect of producing a shift in the ‘presentation of the racist self’ (Picca and Feagin 2007). Using Goffman’s analogy they

suggest that racist behavior has been moved ‘backstage’ and is performed in private ‘white spaces’. One possible reaction amongst non-Muslims to the 7/7 bombings and the political and media response to them has been to make racist or Islamophobic hostility become more explicit or to move it back to the ‘front stage’. As some have put it the political and media response has given people ‘permission to hate’ (Poynting and Mason, 2006: 367). Thus previously hidden ‘back stage’ racist or Islamophobic performances of some non Muslims have now become the ‘front stage’ funny looks that our interviewees described to us.

Many of our interviewees made an important distinction between non-Muslim people who were familiar friends and those who they encountered more casually. For instance Nadeem Ali from the Hyde Park district in Leeds told us that her white friends had not really changed in their attitude towards her. However, she went to describe how she felt people she meets more casually reacted:

... with my white friends they know who I am as a person so to that extent they didn’t change with me. But obviously generally when you meet people, their perceptions have slightly changed, they are a bit more reserved, like I said before. (Nadeem Ali, Hyde Park, under 35)

If the experiences were only of verbal abuse rather than the racially or religiously motivated violence that is reported to some extent in the media, the effects are nevertheless still felt at an individual level. This seemed to be especially the case for women who, because of their mode of dress were more readily identifiable as Muslims and therefore more likely both to experience casual verbal abuse and question themselves about their dress:

One time I was walking up with my niece and somebody drove past and called me a Paki, I got angry and thought how could they say something like that and then drive

past like cowards. It's mental abuse that people have to cope with, if I had to deal with that all the time it would really affect my mental health and as a Muslim.

(Kaneez Farid, Hyde Park, under 35)

For some these concerns extended beyond worrying about what might happen to changes in behaviour to avoid potential inter-personal conflict with non-Pakistanis or non-Muslims. In response to both explicit racist comments as well as the 'funny looks', some people had begun to dress differently, so as in effect to 'pass' as non-Muslims in certain places and at certain times. This self-policing was a defence strategy against the subtle and not so subtle Islamophobia and anti-Pakistani racism:

They used to wear like Hijabs and stuff and they don't anymore. I know a few people who have done that... Well one or two like racist comments were made to them like, 'Oh have you got a bomb under there or something?' And things like that so they don't wear them anymore. I try not to walk anywhere far on my own, which I used to before. (Saima Khan, Dewsbury, under 35)

In contrast some had sought to resist this, seeing this self-policing as a kind of capitulation to racism and Islamophobia. For example Mahmuda Ali, (aged over 35 from Beeston) wears both 'Western' and Asian clothes and her decisions about this have not changed as a result of 7/7 in fact they seem have generated a sense of personal resistance as she says in a defiant voice when asked about this: '...if I want to wear Asian clothes when I am going out I will wear them.' Mariam Shahaz from Dewsbury (aged over 35) explained how she sometimes switched between Western and South Asian forms of dress and noticed how differently she was treated when she wore South Asian forms of dress after the 7/7

bombings. She goes on to explain how she will continue to wear what she chooses as it expresses part of her identity:

I've always dressed in a westernised way and that obviously hasn't changed, but I do sometimes dress in traditional clothes and when after the bombings I was on a bus and everybody as soon as I got on the bus everybody automatically looked at me, and as I had my bag with me they would look at the bag as well. I was aware of people always staring at me as I was walking past them, they would be doing something and stop what they were doing and always look at you.

Interviewer: Has that put you off wearing Asian dress?

No it has hasn't. That's part of my identity and will never change.

Just as Mariam experienced the 'funny looks' in a public place outside of her community others noted this as well. Whilst within the neighbourhoods where they lived there was no change in how they were viewed, there was elsewhere:

... it's just when you start going out of the community ... the way they look at you and their perceptions, mostly when you go in to town maybe, but actually within the community there was no change as such. (Nadeem Ali, Hyde Park, under 35)

In conclusion we see evidence from our interviews of Pakistani Muslims now being seen as strangers (Bauman, 1991), as familiar but threatening, as physically close but spiritually distant. Women especially have been subject to this gaze (Fortier, 2008), to these 'funny looks' which represent a shift to a more explicit presentation of a racist or Islamophobic self (Picca and Feagin, 2007). However, this has been met with both increased self-policing by some and resistance by others. Some think carefully about what they wear and where they go on their own, but others carry on regardless resisting the 'funny looks'.

Conclusions

As Maxwell (2006) aptly summarized, British South Asian Muslims have been caricatured in popular and mainstream political discourses as rejecting Britishness, living in segregated ghettos, and subscribing to anti-establishment religious movements. Such a caricature has its origins in the immediate response to the 2001 riots and has been elaborated and embellished as part of the government's counter-terrorism policy (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008; Husband and Alam, 2011). We have found no real empirical basis for this, and our interviewees were proud to be British, hostile to 'extremism', with many mixing with non-Muslims. At the same time they have become increasingly concerned about an anti-Muslim backlash and many are critical of the policies introduced by the government in the name of integration and counter-terrorism. Many of these themes cut across the gender and generational divisions highlighted by some previous writers (Seidler, 2007).

We based the title of this paper on one of the comments from one of our interviews about the 'funny looks' she felt that she experienced in public places after the 7/7 bombings. For us it seemed to not only describe the experience of many 'visible' British Pakistani Muslims since those events, but also symbolizes some aspects of the relationship between British society and British Pakistanis since 2001 and especially since 2005. We have suggested a conceptualization of this in terms of Bauman's (1991) idea of the stranger as a collective imagination of a group who are at one familiar but unknowable. As a result of the reactions to the 7/7 bombings some non-Muslims now apparently see Muslims as a possible threat. Their gaze upon Muslims is sometimes one of acute and anxious ambivalence. It is the expression of this ambivalence that British Pakistani Muslims felt they were experiencing as 'funny looks'.

References

ABBAS, TAHIR ed., 2005 Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure, London: Zed Books

BAGGULEY, PAUL and HUSSAIN, YASMIN 2008 Riotous Citizens: ethnic conflict in multicultural Britain, Aldershot: Ashgate

BAUMAN, ZYGMUNT 1991 Modernity and Ambivalence, Cambridge: Polity Press

BRAH, AVTAR 1993 Cartographies of Diaspora: contesting identities, London: Routledge

BRIGHTON, SHANE 2007 'British Muslims, multiculturalism and UK foreign policy: 'integration' and 'cohesion' in and beyond the state', International Affairs, vol. 83, no. 1, pp. 1-17

CANTLE, TED 2001 Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team, London: The Home Office

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2006 2005 Citizenship Survey: Race and faith topic report, London: Department for Communities and Local Government

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2008 Citizenship Survey: 2007-08, Cohesion Research Statistical Release 4, London: Department for Communities and Local Government

DUNN, KEVIN M. et al. 2007 'Contemporary racism and Islamophobia in Australia: Racialising religion', Ethnicities, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 564-589

DWYER, CLAIRE 1999a 'Contradictions of community: questions of identity for young British Muslim women', *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 31, pp. 53-68

FEKETE, LIZ 2009 *A Suitable Enemy: Racism, Migration and Islamophobia in Europe*, London: Pluto Press

FIELD, C D. (2007) 'Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain: the evidence of opinion polls, 1988-2006', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 447-77.

FINNEY, NISSA AND SIMPSON, LUDI 2009 *Sleepwalking to Segregation? Challenging myths about race and immigration*, Bristol: the Policy Press

FORTIER, ANNE-MARIE 2008 *Multicultural Horizons: Diversity and the limits of the civil nation* London: Routledge.

FRANKS, M. (2000) 'Crossing the borders of whiteness? White Muslim women who wear the hijab in Britain today', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 5, pp. 917-29

HALL, STUART 1990 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in Jonathan Rutherford (ed) *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, London: Lawrence and Wishart

HESSE, BARNOR et al. 1992 *Beneath the Surface: Racial Harassment* Aldershot: Avebury

HOPKINS, PETER 2004 'Young Muslim Men in Scotland: Inclusions and Exclusions', *Children's Geographies*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 257-272

HOPKINS, PETER 2007a "'Blue Squares", "proper" Muslims and transnational networks: Narratives of national and religious identities amongst young Muslim men living in Scotland', *Ethnicities*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 61-81

HOPKINS, PETER 2007b 'Global events, national politics, local lives: young Muslim men in Scotland' *Environment and Planning A*. vol. 39, pp. 1119-1133

HUSBAND CHARLES AND ALAM YUNIS 2011 Social Cohesion and Counter-Terrorism: a policy contradiction? Bristol: Policy Press.

JACOBSON, JESSICA 1997 'Religion and Ethnicity: Dual and Alternative Sources of Identity among Young British Pakistanis', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 238-256

JAYAWEERA, HIRANTHI and CHOUDHURY, TUFYAL 2008 Immigration, faith and cohesion: Evidence from local areas with significant Muslim populations, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

KUNDNANI, ARUN 2007 *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st Century Britain*, London: Pluto Press

MAXWELL, RAHSAAN 2006 'Muslims, South Asians and the British Mainstream: A National Identity Crisis?', *West European Politics*, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 736-756

MCGHEE, DEREK 2008 *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights*, Maidenhead: Open University Press

MIRZA, MUNIRA et al. 2007 *Living Apart Together: British Muslims and the paradox of multiculturalism*, London: Policy Exchange

MODOOD, TARIQ 2005. *Multicultural Politics: racism, ethnicity and Muslims in Britain*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

MODOOD, TARIQ et. al. 1997 *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: diversity and disadvantage*, London: Policy Studies Institute

OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS 2003 2001 Census Standard Tables: local authority districts

PARKER, DAVID AND KARNER, CHRISTIAN 2010 'Reputational geographies and urban social cohesion', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 33, no. 8, pp. 1451-70

PICCA, LESLIE H. and FEAGIN, JOE R. 2007 *Two-faced Racism: whites in the backstage and the frontstage*, London: Routledge

POYNTING, S. AND MASON, V. 2006 'Tolerance, Freedom, Justice and Peace? Britain, Australia and Anti-Muslim Racism since 11 September 2001', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 365-91

SAMAD, YUNAS 1996 'The Politics of Islamic Identity among Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in Britain', in Terence Ranger et. al. eds *Culture, Identity and Politics*, Aldershot: Ashgate

SEIDLER, VICTOR JELENIEWSKI 2007 *Urban Fears and Global Terrors: Citizenship, multicultures and belongings after 7/7*, London; Routledge

THE CHANGE INSITUTE 2009 *The Pakistani Muslim Community in England*, London: Department for Communities and Local Government

WERBNER, PNINA and MODOOD, TARIQ 1997 *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, London: Zed Books

WERBNER, PNINA 2009 'Revisiting the UK Muslim diasporic public sphere at a time of terror: from local (benign) invisible spaces to seditious conspiratorial spaces and the 'failure of multiculturalism' discourse', *South Asian Diaspora*, vol. 1 no. 1, pp. 19-45

Acknowledgements

The research reported here was conducted with the support of the British Academy (Research Grant number SG 41810)

YASMIN HUSSAIN is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Leeds.

ADDRESS: School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT,

UK. Email: y.hussain@leeds.ac.uk

PAUL BAGGULEY is Reader in Sociology at the University of Leeds.

ADDRESS: School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT,

UK. Email: p.bagguley@leeds.ac.uk