

# **Futurity, Governance and the Terrorist Risk: Exploring the Impacts of Pre-emptive Modes of Regulation on Young Muslims in the UK**

Post the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks, national security issues have become an axial political concern in many western countries. Since this time a cluster of political elites, security experts, policy makers and academics have posited that the potentially catastrophic nature of the ‘new terrorism’ practised by Islamic Fundamentalist networks demands pre-emptive modes of legislation, surveillance and policing. The constellation of ideologies surrounding ‘new terrorism’ have led to the promotion of future based tools of risk analysis, such as horizon scanning, scenario testing and simulated disaster management. A discernible shift in risk assessment is in train from retrospective probabilistic estimations of harm to a pre-emptive approach heavily oriented slanted to dystopic future imaginings. This paper unpacks the assorted modes of pre-emptive regulation that have emerged in response to ‘new terrorism’ and problematizes their impacts on Muslim minority groups. First, we show how the socio-political construction of new terrorism has catalysed a changing set of security discourses within western nation-states which permit unprecedented forms of legislation and undesirable forms of policing and surveillance. Second, drawing upon evidence from a qualitative study in the North-West of England, we illumine the detrimental impacts of pre-emptive forms of counter-terrorism legislation on the liberties, values and lived experiences of young Muslims.

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## **Introduction**

Following on from the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks,<sup>1</sup> the practices, habits and political values of young Muslims have been subjects of intense speculation amongst security experts, politicians, policy makers, youth workers and media professionals. Within academia there has been a renewed focus amongst critical social scientists on issues around ethnicity, exclusion, justice and risk (Hudson, 2003; 2006, McGhee, 2008; Spalek, 2002; 2008). Despite a welcome spike in interest in the problems and issues faced by ethnic minority groups, there remains a paucity of qualitative research in criminology that is specifically oriented to the ways in which dominant ideological notions of the terrorist threat and the material implementation of extraordinary counter-terrorism measures have impacted upon the experiences, attitudes and identities of young British Muslims. Responding to this lacuna, in this paper we draw upon findings from a small scale empirical study in the North-West of England designed to explore the links between victimization, identity and cultural values amongst young Pakistanis. We elaborate two connected themes which emerged in discussions, namely responses to the experience of racist victimization and the wider consequences of risk labelling and counter-terrorism regulation for mobility, self expression and behaviour in the public sphere. In revealing the range of reactions of young Muslims to individual and institutional victimization, we suggest three prevalent responses that emerged amongst our participants: those of disenchantment, infuriation and responsabilization. Prior to elaborating our findings, it is first necessary to frame the broader socio-economic, cultural and political context in which the study is best understood and in which the perspectives of our participants need to be grounded.

### **Regulation and Counter-Terrorism Legislation: Reducing Risk or Labelling the ‘Other’?**

It should be stated from the outset that the threat of political violence is real not fictional, as the attacks in Bali, Madrid, New York and Washington testify (see Hillyard, 2005: 4). In the UK, in addition to the 7/7 attacks in which 52 people were killed, there have been a series of aborted terrorist attacks, including the ‘21/7’ incident and the failed car bomb attacks outside a London nightclub and at Glasgow airport. Alleged un-hatched plots have also been intercepted by the British intelligence services, including plans to detonate liquid explosives on intercontinental flights bound from the UK to cities in the United States (Laville, 2006). In response to these episodes, the police and security services have been on heightened alert to terrorist attacks and enhanced attention has been directed to acts of ‘home-grown terrorism’ perpetrated by British born nationals (Clark, 2007; Evans, 2007). It is, of course, expectable that the State should seek to reduce threats to public security through the range of powers at its disposal, including proposing appropriate criminal justice legislation, conducting intelligence operations and engaging in legitimate policing. This point accepted, we would argue that in each of these areas the British State has sanctioned and implemented disproportionate forms of regulation that have had grim ramifications for Muslim minority groups. Further, inequitable modes of regulation

make up part of a wider process through which British Muslims are labelled as risky ‘others’ that threaten the security of the nation.

Yet within that nation, alongside much vaunted successful operations to disrupt terrorist ‘cells’, there have been several alarming cases of violent and over-zealous policing based on faulty intelligence, such as the Stockwell Tube killing of Jean Charles de Menezes, the Forest Gate raid and the illusory Old Trafford bomb plot (see Mythen, 2008: 311; Mythen and Walklate, 2006b). As we shall illumine, there are, regrettably, many more undocumented lower level incidents of harassment and intimidation that evade media headlines and public attention. Indeed, our study indicates that hostility, suspicion, ill treatment and racist abuse are routine features of everyday life for young Muslims in contemporary Britain. It should be recognised too that British Muslims are far from unique in experiencing intolerance and victimization post 9/11. As well as in the United States, studies have reported a substantial rise in racism against Muslim minorities across Europe, most notably in France, Sweden and the Netherlands (see Allen and Nielsen, 2002; Quraishi 2005: 61). This point notwithstanding, the UK is peculiar in the *scale* of recent counter-terrorism legislation and the *extent* to which aspects of this legislation have impinged on the civil rights and liberties of British Muslims. Meshing with a longstanding fixation with the regulation of domestic crime post 9/11, brewing political anxieties in the UK about the risk of ‘homegrown’ terrorism have led to the introduction of a raft of undemocratic counter-terrorism measures that have tangibly impacted on the everyday movement and practices of Black and Asian minorities.

The UK has a long history of developing terrorism legislation, with extraordinary measures being implemented as a result of political violence stemming from the Northern Ireland conflict (see Hillyard, 2005). Although much of this legislation was introduced at the time as temporary, a large portion of it remains on the statute book. Thus, the UK already had relatively strict counter-terrorism laws that predate the current government’s term of office.<sup>2</sup> Despite the ‘advanced’ state of legislation - and as a direct response to the apparently unprecedented threat of ‘new terrorism’ - a raft of counter-terrorism legislation has been introduced over the last decade, including the Terrorism Act 2000; the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001; the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005; the Terrorism Act 2006 and the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008. New Labour have also drafted supplementary legislation that has been deployed to combat terrorism, such as the Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Act 1998 and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (see Hanman, 2009). The induction of these powers has been applauded by political proponents and senior police officers who claim that such Acts are sensible precautionary measures of ‘anticipatory risk’, required to reduce the possibility of future terrorist attacks (see Walker, 2008: 1395). Directly opposing this position, we have argued previously that the trend toward pre-emptive counter-terrorism legislation rests upon erroneously expansive ‘What if?’ questions and a problematic narrative of ‘new terrorism’ (see Mythen and Walklate, 2006a; Mythen and Walklate 2008). Further, we posit that specific regulatory measures have unduly skewed the balance between national ‘security’ and the upholding of civil liberties and had severe and unjust consequences for innocent people at the sharp end of such

regulation. The growing emphasis on preventive detention and modes of pre-emptive policing effectively erodes the liberties of suspects who have not committed crimes and undermines due process rights (see also Vaughan and Kilcommins, 2007). Rejecting the government's claims that the degree of threat is commensurate with the legal response, it is the proportionality of these laws in particular which is critical in establishing their (il)legitimacy. Various aspects of counter-terrorism legislation introduced by New Labour have been roundly criticised, among them the expansive and imprecise definition of 'terrorism', the unjust use of control orders, incremental increases in the length of pre-charge detention, restricting the right to politically protest and the indiscriminate use of stop search powers. Putting aside the legal minutiae of such forms of legislation, we are concerned here chiefly with the combined impacts of different modes of regulation ushered in as a response to the threat of 'new terrorism' on Muslim minorities in the UK. In this regard, the recorded police data does not augur well. Post the 9/11 attacks, the number of Asian people stopped and searched under anti-terrorism laws in the UK rose by near on 400%, from 744 in 2001-2002 to 2,989 in 2002-2003 (Morris, 2004). Following the 7/7 bombings, there was a seven-fold increase in the number of Asian people stopped and searched by British Transport Police (Dodd, 2005). These are but surface manifestations of regulation amidst a much broader and deeper atmosphere of distrust and suspicion.

In addition, to the controversy over extension of stop search powers, a range of controversial elements of terrorism legislation have been proposed, such as the extension of detention without charge by up to 90 days and the right to infer guilt from suspects' silence. Others have been controversially and problematically implemented - such as control orders and the charge of 'glorification' of terrorism. Both civil rights groups and Muslim Community groups have expressed grave concerns about the impacts of problematic aspects of counter-terrorism legislation on Muslim minority groups and, in particular, young people (see Liberty, 2007; 2008, Muslim Council of Great Britain, 2008: 3). Notwithstanding the detrimental impact on community relations, there are broader questions surrounding the efficacy of section 44 powers in reducing the terrorist threat. Indeed, in 2004 the Metropolitan Police Authority gave evidence to the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee as follows: 'Section 44 powers do not appear to have proved an effective weapon against terrorism and may be used for other purposes. It has increased the level of distrust of police. It has created deeper racial and ethnic tensions against the police. It has trampled on the basic human rights of too many Londoners. It has cut off valuable sources of community information and intelligence. It has exacerbated community divisions and weakened social cohesion'.<sup>3</sup> Despite these reservations, stop and search powers have become a key part of the government's 'tough on terrorism' agenda. Under current law the police have to state a specific reason for stopping someone and/or searching them unless they invoke anti-terrorism legislation in so doing. If the stop search is conducted under section 44 of counter-terrorism legislation the police have only to determine that the suspect is in an area that may be a potential terrorist threat rather than suspecting the person of having committed a crime or preparing to do so. As Liberty notes (2005) the use of stop and search on a seemingly permanent rather than an exceptional basis and in all rather than locations at threat, has and is

producing tensions between Asian youths and the police in many cities with large Muslim populations, such as London, Manchester and Birmingham.

It is clear that the introduction of multiple forms of counter-terrorism regulation has itself been underpinned in media and political circles by dominant discourses of (in)security around the terrorist threat. These discourses have invariably defined British Muslims *en bloc* as a risky, suspect population, raising the intensity of scrutiny on Muslims in general and potentially exacerbating the degree of public suspicion directed towards young male Muslims (Abbas, 2005; Poole, 2002). The mass media - and in particular tabloid newspapers - have routinely depicted second and third generation Muslim youth as an unruly and risky 'alien within' (Saeed, 2007: 451). In contemporary times, British Muslims thus find themselves cast as posing a threat to national security and presenting problems of regulation for the criminal justice system (Mythen, 2008: 310; Moore *et al.*, 2008: 6). What is more, young Muslims inhabit a contradictory and ambiguous place and space in relation to their values and identities, being depicted as a high-risk group whilst simultaneously being exhorted to assimilate more fully into traditional British customs (see Khan and Mythen, 2008; McGhee, 2008; Spalek *et al.*, 2008).

A body of empirical research has already established that individuals from minority ethnic communities are disproportionately subjected to criminal justice interventions and penal sanctions (see Heaven and Hudson, 2007: 367). Regrettably, in its haste to fortify the 'tough on crime' mantra through strong counter-terrorism laws, New Labour has given little consideration to what enhanced 'national' security might mean for British Muslims, nor how crime, welfare and security policies have been disproportionately driven by the politicalisation of the terror agenda. The identification of young male Muslims as a risky group has led to specific incursions in terms of counter-terrorism strategies of surveillance and intelligence gathering. This said, it should be pointed out that discrimination against Muslim minority groups is historically embedded and manifested in myriad forms (Said, 1985; 1997). Prejudice and racism are not simply an isolated consequence of media stereotyping or ill conceived counter-terrorism laws. Rather they are endemic phenomena, expressed through and across institutional discourses and practices (Mirza *et al.*, 2007). The material inequalities remain striking. Compared to other ethnic groups British Muslims of South Asian descent are more likely to be unemployed, live in inferior housing and suffer relatively poorer quality of health (see Abbas, 2005, Platt, 2006). British Asians also face higher levels of discrimination in employment and in education than their White counterparts (Modood, 1997; Abbas, 2007). A recent study commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported that the poverty rate for British Pakistanis stands at 55%, compared with 20% amongst White British people (Palmer and Kenway, 2007). Insofar as patterns of ethnic inequality are historically ubiquitous, institutional responses to the events of 9/11, 7/7 and '21/7' have crystallised underlying anti-Islamic sentiments and worsened the future life chances of young Muslims living in the UK.<sup>4</sup>

Sociological and criminological research has long demonstrated that Black and Asian minorities have been treated as 'other' within the criminal justice system, leaving them party to differential

forms of sentencing, detention, policing and justice (Hall, 1984; Hudson and Bramhall, 2005; Hudson, 2006; Spalek, 2008). The institutional labelling of dangerous ‘suspect populations’ has resulted in particular communities being party to inordinate forms of regulation (Hillyard, 1993; McConville, Sanders and Leng, 1991). The present designation of risky status to British Asians has many facets, being variously connected to the problems of violent crime, ‘honour killings’, drugs, illegal immigration, fraudulent welfare benefits and religious incitement. This perceived ‘riskiness’ operates mundanely as a threat to the ‘fabric’ of predominantly White British culture through transgression of school dress codes or refusal to neglect traditional forms of worship, and profanely through religious extremism and radicalisation. This routine stereotyping has accelerated still further in recent years around the problem of terrorism, with media portrayals of the radical and extreme terrorist ‘other’ being both ethnically and culturally explicit (see also Walklate and Mythen, 2008: 215). Scaling down a further level, it is British Pakistani communities in particular that have been portrayed in the media as unruly, separatist and insular (Saeed, 2007: 452). While mundane risks have been attached to British Muslims as a collective, the profane risk of terrorism has been glued more firmly to young Pakistani males. Although subject to challenges, the idea of Muslims as dangerous ‘others’ has largely been perpetuated by sections of the media, right wing politicians and the police and security agencies.<sup>5</sup>

### **Unheard Voices: Focussing on Young British Muslims**

Since the 7/7 bombings, much has been thought, said, written and presumed about the behaviour and political values of young British Pakistanis. Despite this outpouring in interest, the subsequent governmental strategies designed to ‘engage’ young British Pakistanis have largely been top-down attempts to challenge radicalization and thus minimize the terrorist threat. Rather than seeking to understand the everyday lives and landscapes of this group much of the political debate has centered on their cultural dislocation from ‘mainstream society’ and the need for young Pakistanis to ‘integrate’ more readily and openly into British society. Insufficient attention has been directed towards reflecting on what increased securitization and regulation - most notably expressed through the implementation of counter terrorism legislation and police targeting and surveillance - might mean for the everyday actions, movements and perceptions of young British Pakistanis. As such, there remains a distinct shortage of micro-analytical studies which prioritize experiences, thoughts, values and attitudes from the inside looking out, rather than the outside looking in. It would not be stretching the truth to state that young Muslims have been talked at, talked for and talked around. They have not been talked to. Before we draw out the principal findings from our study it is first necessary to provide a capsule account of the methodology.

The expansive nature of the discursive construction of young Muslims as threatening others has meant that there has been little space for this group to express their feelings comfortably in a public arena untainted by a dominant discourse which depicts them as problematic, threatening and dangerous. Confronting this trend, this small scale study explores the impacts of the current climate of securitization around terrorism on the identities, attitudes and values of a group of

second and third generation British Pakistanis. The findings reported here are based on focus group discussions and subsequent in-depth interviews conducted in the North-West of England in 2007.<sup>6</sup> The research involved a series of four focus group sessions in different venues with 32 British Muslims of Pakistani heritage aged from 18 to 26 years, supported by subsequent follow up interviews. Both the ethnicity and the age of our participants were significant factors in designing the study, leading us to assemble a purposive sample. Connected to the trajectory of our project, a purposive sample was required for several reasons. First, the ethnic and generational group participating in the study have recently experienced hostility and suspicion as a direct result of being defined as a threat to national security. Second, due to the assorted demands of heritage and birth, family and peer groups, British Muslims in this age band are more likely than other generational groups to experience and negotiate liquid, hybridic identities. Third, empirical studies have shown that as a result of foreign policy, British born Pakistanis feel alienated from and excluded by British society (Mirza, 2007; 1990 Trust, 2006).

Our participants were divided equally in terms of gender and were accessed through extant contacts involved in work with young Muslims within the local community and via snowball sampling. Through the construction of our research design we set out to explore three overarching and connecting strands of inquiry. We were interested in our participants' perspectives on media representations of Muslims; the relationship between risk and identity construction and the impacts of counter terrorism legislation on experiences of victimization. The primary research questions in these areas were broken down into subset questions designed to act as levers to open discussion within first phase focus groups. Without being prescriptive, facilitating discussion around these issues enabled a full and comparable data set which remained faithful to the reflections and opinions of participants. In second phase follow-up interviews we were able to discursively probe key issues arising in the focus groups and subject discrete topics to deeper levels of analysis. This mixed method enabled us to build up a dense collective picture in focus groups and to compliment this with rich individual testimonies and narratives in successive interviews.

The focus group method was deemed suitable for the first phase of the study as it affords the possibility of open discussion amongst peers with similar cultural viewpoints and experiences. The focus group method has also been seen as a mechanism for providing marginalized groups with an opportunity to express themselves relatively freely (see Krueger, 2003). Further, focus groups are advantageous when investigating complex situations and attitudes and can create an environment that is conducive to discursive exploration of sensitive subjects (Morgan, 1993; Silverman, 2002). As we shall illumine, the focus group method also gave us the opportunity to identify and probe intra-group differences through interaction, dialogue and disagreement. After transcribing the focus groups, prescient themes or phenomena were labelled as they arose, following the practice of axial encoding, enabling fracturing and re-assembly of the data in multiple forms. Both frequent and discursively salient issues were identified through thematic analysis and these themes were further excavated in follow up interviews. The second phase of

in-depth interviewing was designed to draw out thick descriptions, particularly through encouraging the relation of personal narratives. The interview stage permitted detailed investigation of prescient issues arising in the focus group phase and also enabled the cross checking of ambiguities and contradictions. The individualized format of the interviews was designed to complement the collective perspectives garnered in the focus group stage of research in order to give a rounded reflection of the experiences, feelings and opinions of participants.<sup>7</sup>

When we discuss victimization in the context of our send we understand it to describe both the act by which someone is rendered a victim, the experience of being a victim and the sociocultural process by which this takes place. This broad understanding allows for victimization to be both ideological (i.e. pertaining to ideas and values that victimize individuals or groups) and a process with material consequences for those that are victimized (e.g. through verbal abuse or physical assault). To this end we wish to document dominant responses to both ideological and material forms of victimization, by speaking in turn to three themes surrounding media (mis)representation, responses to victimization and the management of ‘risky’ identities.

### ***The Media, Risk and Victimization: Turning Victims into Villains?***

Although the roots of victimization are both deep and wide, it is indubitable that since 9/11 Muslims have been cast by sections of the police force, judiciary and parliament as a problematic, and risky ‘other’. Further, following on from the events of 7/7 and 21/7 young Muslim men have been increasingly depicted in media and political discourse as a problematic suspect population (see Abbas, 2005, 2007; Mythen and Walklate, 2006a; Saeed, 2007). As a result of these incidents, the police, the State and intelligence services have focused on young British Muslims as a ‘risky’ group that present a potential threat to national security (Spalek *et al.*, 2008). To gauge our participants feelings about victimization, both in relation to terrorism legislation and more broadly, we asked a range of open questions about the interactions of our participants within different social institutions and their experiences within the broader public sphere. All of our participants felt that institutional racism still existed and most had and told first hand narratives of how they had been victimised, bullied and/or discriminated against in institutional settings. Our participants had experienced victimization in various institutions and many of them discussed explicit forms of prejudice suffered within education, the workplace, by the police, or within the legal system. In relation to our first theme, the media was singled out as an important filter of religious bias that generally dealt in crass stereotypes, encouraged unequal treatment of Muslims and justified their categorisation as ‘other’. Although our general findings in this area are beyond the scope of this paper, there are important aspects of media framing that were identified as serving to produce ideological forms of victimization that fuel material forms of racism and social exclusion that we do wish to touch on.

Prior to contemporary concerns about so called ‘home-grown’ terrorism, Muslims have invariably appeared in the media as a problem group (Poole, 2002; 2005, Mirza, 2007). To step out into the wider context, Moore *et al.’s* (2008) exemplary empirical study into media images of Islam in the UK between 2000 and 2008 has shown that dominant representations of British

Muslims include associations with terrorism, religious and cultural difference and extremism. Further, four of the five most common discourses used about Muslims in the British newspaper press couple Islam/Muslims to threats or problems. Further, the most common nouns used in relation to British Muslims are ‘terrorist’, ‘extremist’, ‘Islamist’, ‘suicide bomber’ and ‘militant’ (Moore et al., 2008: 3). Through the media lens, British Pakistanis males are rarely depicted as contributing positively to society and commonly classified as ‘high risk’, associated with terrorism, urban unrest and street crime. The young people that we spoke to felt that this distorted representations of Muslims had escalated dramatically in recent times, through images and discourses surrounding religious extremism, radicalisation and the ‘war on terror’.

**Moderator:** How are Muslims and Islam portrayed in the media?

**Rehana:** ‘Always in a negative light. For example, terrorists obviously, 9/11, 7/7, headscarves, it’s just been one thing after another. Always in the media, always on the front page of the newspapers. Always suspecting young men with beards, pictures in newspapers of men with Muslim names that have converted into Islam.

**Zaineb:** ‘Not only about terrorism. What about all the stories about Muslim men beating their wives, Muslim women and the culture clash, arranged marriages. They always show us to be like cave men’.

**Abid:** ‘Muslims are definitely shown in a negative light, always; they are not going to integrate, don’t trust them, they doing things on the side, they don’t want to get on with you or whatever. Its like that priest, what was his name? Abu Hamza. What they did with him, always bringing extremist into the media, talking about Islam in a really bad way. It just makes people feel that all Muslims are the same way. So if they see a man on the street with a beard and a hat on his head then he’s surely carrying an AK 47 as well’.

As Ziaddin Sardar (2002) argues, after 9/11 media representations of Muslims became more extreme, with Muslims commonly designated as either ‘terrorists’ or ‘apologists’. It should be stressed that our participants were very keen to challenge dominant (re)presentations of Islam/Muslims in media discourse and in particular the equation of ‘Muslim’ with ‘terrorist’.<sup>8</sup> Meeting Moore’s study on representation, at the level of media consumption there was a prevalent feeling amongst our participants that Muslims were being represented in prejudiced ways by the media through stereotypes and caricatures that rendered them risky and villainous. In relation to issues around crime and national security, our participants felt that due to the well publicised actions of a small minority, *all* Muslims had been tarred with the same brush. It was pointed out that extreme criminal or terrorist actions undertaken by White British people did not lead to all White people being cast as dangerous or out of control, nor were White people alluded to in derogative terms as ‘Christians’. Much of the frustration for the young people that we spoke to was one born out of what they saw as a *risk reversal*. Several participants pointed out that British Muslims were amongst the most law abiding of ethnic groups, yet were dominantly portrayed as unruly, threatening and violent. For some of our participants who had experienced

racist violence first hand, this motion from victim to villain was frustrating and unpalatable. At the centre of this risk reversal lies an identity claim around criminality which is also a power play. As Malik (2008) observes, embedded within dominant views about the threat posed by Muslim youth is both a distortion of and a conflation between cultural risks and security risks. Crime statistics have consistently shown that British citizens of South Asian descent are far more likely to be victims of serious crimes than perpetrators of them. Despite this, in media circles the spectacular but extraordinary instance of the terrorist attack at once trumps and masks the endemic problems of racism and discrimination embedded within the lives of young Muslims who find themselves routinely surveyed, suspected and questioned in public life. In short, the relatively safe are representationally rendered risky.

### ***Identity and Victimization: Positioning the Self***

The second theme that emerged in our analysis surrounds the different ways in which our participants responded to racially motivated victimization. Although we did not ask directly about these issues, questions around the media and identity produced answers which roamed into discussion of the constitution of racist ideologies and the experience of victimization. Data analysis indicates that racially motivated victimization were seen to operate at two interwoven levels, the individual and the collective. The degree of individual physical intimidation and harm endured by our respondents was sobering. In this category, forms of individual racist victimization directly experienced included physical attack, being spat on, verbal abuse, damage to property and having clothing forcibly torn or removed. We would point out that we do not anticipate that our sample is unique or extraordinary with regards to the degree of individual victimization suffered. Evidence from larger scale studies suggests that there has been a widespread increase in racist victimization directed at Muslims post 9/11 (Allen, 2002; Hopkins, 2007, Richardson, 2004). Forms of collective victimization were seen to pertain more to discrimination routinely enacted by institutions on Muslims as a group. In this vein our participants discussed domestic security policy, foreign policy, policing, the criminal justice system, education and the media. Although we have defined these forms of victimization separately for analytical purposes it is important to point out that they are - and were articulated as - in interchange. For example, governmental and media discourses of Islam and Muslim nations as dangerous were seen to pave the way for aggressive foreign policy and discriminatory counter-terrorism measures. The young people that we spoke to expressed concerns across the piece regarding counter-terrorism legislation. Many took issue with specific aspects of legislation such as section 44 of the 2000 Terrorism Act. Others talked of the routine forms of surveillance, scrutiny and intimidation they had experienced at the hands of the police. Whatever the nature of the qualm, be it general, experiential or specific, the net consequences for the young people that we spoke to were restrictions in movement, intimidation and harassment in the public sphere and an overall feeling of unnecessary blanket victimization based not on suspicion of their actions but suspicion of their skin colour. The most common complaint that we encountered was that of police stop searching the individuals in our focus groups, their peers and members of their family. Vocal concerns about the disproportionate use of police stop powers and, in particular

section 44 powers to stop and search under the Terrorism Act 2000 were voiced by several of our participants:

**Saif:** 'I've been stopped three or four times for questioning but then obviously they're not got anything, and I realize, yes, they've stopped me because of how I look, because they think I look a bit suspicious. Each time they've checked who I am, tried to see if I have a criminal record. I don't mind being stopped if I was doing something that looked suspicious, but all I've been doing is walking down the street or waiting for a bus, things like that. You can't help feeling there just picking on you for some reason. So it's really embarrassing being questioned like that. It makes you feel like you have done something'.

[Murmurs of agreement]

The available official evidence suggests that those in our study are not exceptional in their position as suspects nor in the frequency with which they were apprehended, questioned and searched by the police. Individuals from ethnic minorities are considerably more likely than White people to be stop searched.<sup>9</sup> A steering group set up by the Metropolitan police in response to community pressure around the misuse of stop search powers recently reported that persistent disproportionality in the use of police stop and search powers in relation to ethnic minority groups and ongoing uneasiness amongst Asian communities over police use of certain powers, such as section 44 of the Terrorism Act (MPS, 2008: 4). Chiming with Sharp and Atherton's (2007) study, we found relations between the police and our participants to be strained, indicated by a lack of confidence and trust.

One of the central findings regarding victimization was the intra-group range of responses to the general experience of being victimized. Across our focus groups data analysis patterned three types of response to victimization which we have dubbed: infuriation, disenchantment and responsabilization. To be clear, these responses are to be regarded as ideal types and best seen as a continuum rather than as absolutes. Although there was visible positional clustering in our sample, people also located themselves at various nodes between these types as well as fitting them snugly.<sup>10</sup> The first set of responses that we have categorised as infuriated reflects the feelings of the predominant portion of our sample. The infuriated expressed their resentment and sense of injustice at being victimized by venting their anger:

**Aafreen:** 'It's pure victimization. Every Muslim I know has friends or family who've been hassled by the police, so people are bound to get angry. When it's happening to people you know for no other reason than how they look, it can't be anything other than discrimination. Which Muslims do you know won't get affected by that?'

**Zareena:** 'I'm angry. What else can you feel? All the legislation they've brought in is used to target Muslims. Like stop and search, they're not using that on White people, it's used against Asians and Muslims. It makes you worry about people, you know. They can stop you on the streets; search your property whenever they want. It's a racist's dream come true. Look what

happened with the Forest Gate thing. Everyone's asleep then the next minute all hell breaks loose and that guy ends up shot, no charges or anything. That's the reality of what's happening'.

As captured in the exchange between Aafreen and Zareena, the mix between the individual and the collective is critical in consolidating opposition. Further, the stranding together of the local, the national and the global is fundamental for the infuriated. During focus group exchanges the anger of personal victimisation was firmly indexed to the suffering of Muslims in the country generally, and, subsequently - often through reference to the Ummah - the suffering of Muslims in other nations. The infuriated are related to but distinct from the second group that we have described as disenchanted. The disenchanted include those that predominantly responded to victimization with a sense of bewilderment, resignation and world-weariness. Although the outlook presented was again one of cultural and geographical connectedness, the disenchanted were pessimistic about the present and the future. The attitudes of the disenchanted are typified in this dialogue between Aisha and Zaineb:

**Aisha:** 'But when I think about it, I just feel powerless to do anything. And to be honest, it makes me really sad when I read about Muslims in Iraq and what's happening to them'.

**Zaineb:** 'I know what you mean. You could talk about it forever but get nowhere and it is so depressing like it's never going to end. I feel depressed talking about it now'.

As the dialogue illustrates, this sense of disenchantment was general rather than specific. It extended beyond being let down by the treatment of Muslims in the UK, to disillusionment with the wider political system, foreign policy and global affairs. Reaching beyond our study, it would seem that disenchantment - often shaded into and layered over by feelings of powerlessness and disconnection - is common amongst young Muslims who often lack the cultural and economic resources to act in power bound spaces and feel unrepresented by and disconnected from formal politics (see Abbas, 2007: 724; GFK, 2006).

In so far as the bulk of our participants expressed a mix of infuriation and/or disenchantment at the plight of Muslims, there were also a visible cluster of participants for whom victimization was seen as a challenge of selfhood and/or faith. This group wished to subvert the negative phenomenon of victimization into a positive exercise in social tuition. For the responsabilized, victimization had generated the desire to challenge ignorance and misunderstandings about Islamic faith and traditions. The responsabilized saw themselves as having an important social role as educators on history, culture, faith and politics. Ameen typifies the attitudes of the responsabilized group:

**Ameen:** 'I became a lot more practising after, you know, 7/7, because, you kind of feel it's your responsibility because everything people have been fed in the media is Muslims are terrorists and you kind of feel it's your responsibility to let them know that Islam's not about terrorism. So personally for me these sort of events have changed my identity because you kind of feel a bit more responsible that you need to show people Islam's not about terrorism and a big part of

Islam anyway is to tell people what your religion is. And a big part of that is to show your identity through your actions and how you act to other people’.

The responsabilized preside at the opposite pole from the infuriated and this difference of positioning inevitably led to discursive disagreements. Insofar as the responsabilized commonly found themselves providing potted accounts of Islam and/or explaining Islamic customs to curious non-Muslim Britons, infuriated individuals rejected the need to have an educative role, particularly when confronted by individuals with monolithic and blinkered views of Muslims.

### **Deflecting Danger(ousness): Liquidity and the Performance of ‘Safe’ Identities**

Having related perspectives on media representations of Islam and responses to the experience of victimization, the third theme we wish to elaborate surrounds identity management and risk.

During the course of our study we encountered a series of what we might call ‘pulls’ and ‘pushes’. The young people we spoke to gave voice to complex - and often ambiguous demands - on the self as a site of identity, display and expression. Before we unpack illustrative vignettes from the data it is worth returning to the broader habitus in which identities are made, shaped and negotiated. Aside from the fitful contemporary atmosphere around national security, young Asians in Britain negotiate and navigate their identities in the midst of various pulls and pushes. Second generation South Asian British Muslims find themselves in between the robust cultural ties with heritage cemented by their parents and the diffuse needs and demands of White British culture. The identities of young British Muslims are thus contested in many ways, most obviously between sections of British society that refuse to accept their ‘Britishness’ and the pressure exerted by elders to retain and nurture Islamic cultures and traditions. As Abbas (2007: 726) reasons: ‘faced with the demand for conformity from majority society, Muslim minority communities are precariously balancing many potentially conflictual modes of being’. For our participants, a combination of global ‘pushes’ - such as 9/11, the invasion of Afghanistan, the Iraq War - and local experiences had served to solidify their faith in Islam and the aspects of their identities that related to religion and politics. These ‘pushes’ were combined with an assortment of ‘pulls’ including the spiritual (re)embedding of faith, cementation of bonds with older relatives and friends and affirmations of ethnicity.

Our participants accepted that their identities would change over time and place and that they were multi-faceted. While 75% of the sample specified Islam as the primary factor in their identities the large majority of our sample (80%) also cited two or more elements to their identities with religion, ethnicity and nation being the major factors. Our findings tally with those of larger scale research studies such as the NOP poll taken by QFK (2006) which random sampled 1,000 British Muslims. The 2006 GFK/NOP poll that found 78% of their 1,000 strong sample said Islam was ‘very important’ to them. Similarly, Peach (2006) employed data from the 2001 census to reveal that 74% of Muslims gave primacy to Islam in terms of their identity. Modood (1997) points out that Muslim youth strongly associate with their family’s religious origins with very little erosion of group identification occurring inter-generationally. Although

generalizations cannot be made due to the small size of the sample, our findings mirror more sizeable studies which show that young Muslims are more likely to have stronger senses of their Muslim identity than those aged over forty five (see GFK, 2006: 23). In many respects our findings align with Modood's (1997) reactive pride thesis. Identity construction amongst Muslims has undergone major changes and minority assertiveness has arisen in second and third generations. For previous generations identity was implicit in cultural practice; it is now an explicit creation and the assertion of a politicised ethnicity. Modood argues that young Muslim's deployment of Islam as a primary referent of identity can be expressed as a new found assertiveness that is 'sometimes a religious revival, sometimes a political identity, sometimes both' (Modood, 1997: 386). Insofar as we would concur with this summation, identity formation amongst young Muslims has to be reframed and reinterpreted in accordance with the current sociopolitical climate. For many of the young people we spoke with, 9/11 and 7/7 have served as definitive moments at which their religious and political identities were both thrown into question and crystallized. Insofar as none of our participants openly supported either Salafist interpretations of Islam or the actions of those who had actively taken up Jihad against the West, there was a general understanding of and sympathy for the grievances that had led some to turn to political violence. Whilst indiscriminate terrorist attacks were largely rejected, the participants in our study were united in their belief that legitimate and unresolved political, religious and cultural grievances still exist and that these grievances are fundamental in catalysing the violent actions of 'radicalised' Muslims. In particular, the military incursions into and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan were frequently cited in talk alongside the intransigence of the British State in challenging atrocities enacted by the Israeli State's in Palestine and Gaza. It was felt by many that the invasion of Iraq was a disproportionate and incongruous response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and that these actions were driven by wider political and economic goals for the US and UK governments. The discussions we observed suggest that unless the issue of foreign and military policy can be openly debated - along with the shortcomings and errors therein - there is little likelihood that young Muslims will be supportive of a government that does not seem to understand them or listen to their voices let alone represent them. For our participants, the solidification of Muslim identity is a process which has clearly been impacted by 'pushes' of adversity in defiance of hostility and victimization:

**Aisha:** 'I can only say that I more Muslim now than I have ever been. You know when 9/11 happened I was quite young so it's been a big part of my life. Muslims my age have had to decide where they stand and in a way I think without 9/11 young Muslims would have fallen away from the community. So it's like everyone is against us. Got to stand firm, you know. We've all made that decision'.

**Zain:** 'I was in my first year of university when 9/11 took place. I remember walking through to ... university, and all of a sudden some youths shouted at me: 'You did it! You did it! You did it, you terrorist!' And I was just, 'What?' You know, and then I realized they meant 9/11. Initially, as I was quite young at that point, I was a bit intimidated and scared at first. But then as things

progressed and I began to realize what was happening it actually strengthened me in my identity and in wanting to be identified as a Muslim regardless of what people thought’.

As the recent history of Catholics in Northern Ireland or Black people in the United States shows, marginalised or demeaned identities can become stronger through opposition to dominant culture and ideology. Although there was a desire to firmly root religious identities in immutable aspects of Islam, our participants tended to conceptualise and talk of their identities as Muslims as fluid and changing both spatially and temporally, as the testimonies of Aisha and Zain indicate. The narratives of Aisha and Zain encapsulate both the flux and the liminality of identity as it is articulated in negotiation with cultural conditions. What Bauman (2000) has referred to as ‘liquid’ identities are arguably comparatively pronounced amongst young British Muslims. The complexities and difficulties faced by young British Muslims in hanging their identities together are manifold. Perhaps more than any group in the UK at the moment, young Muslims are in the middle of an ideological tug-of-war. Politically, young British Muslims are situated in a complex position in which they must decide on their affiliations and loyalties and come to an accommodation somewhere between the enticements of radical Islamism at one extreme and governmental notions of multicultural British citizenship at the other. The young Muslims we spoke to are having to construct and maintain their sense of self and community in a physical and imagined environment in which they are paradoxically cast as a threat to the security of the nation and are invited to align more readily with its ‘core values’. It is at various nodes of this spatial continuum between threat and coercive accommodation that young British Muslims cohere and navigate their identities:

**Abid:** ‘The bottom line is, Muslims in this country are under a lot of pressure, they are blamed for everything that has gone on and people pick up on that, its in the newspapers, its on the TV, the politicians are always going on about it, then they bat from the other side as well about racism and integration and all that, so Muslims don’t have a chance, that’s what I’m saying.’

**Zain:** ‘Yeah, it’s that type of thing that kind of thing that stops you from identifying yourself with being British. On the one hand they want us to be British but then they treat us like the enemy. Everywhere you look it seems as though everyone is against us at the moment. I don’t think I’m being dramatic when I say that.’

**Saif:** ‘They want it both ways. On the one hand we’re told to integrate and on the other they tell us you’re not wanted.’

In relation to inner feelings of identity based on heritage and faith, we detected a clear trend toward the solidification of Muslim identities. Yet these ‘pulls’ were negotiated alongside various ‘pushes’ which produced limits to self expression:

**Rehana:** ‘I hate having to always check myself you know at work or with your friends. You can’t talk about what you actually want to talk about in case they think you are an extremist. You

can't say that you think that they did 9/11 due to Palestine and Muslim oppression; you can't say that they did 7/7 because of Iraq'.

The climate of suspicion placed on young Muslims around terrorism since 7/7 has clearly produced convoluted and ambiguous effects, encouraging practices of self regulation and restriction. In our conversations we detected a contradictory trend of the entrenchment of faith based identities alongside reducing willingness to visibly display Islamic identity in public. Whilst there were exceptions - individuals who presented themselves as either highly 'westernised' or steadfastly Islamic - for most, negotiating conflicting modes of inner feeling and outward cultural display had become part and parcel of everyday life. Thus, the heightened degree of hostility towards Muslims since 7/7 had not only led to the entrenchment of Muslim identities, but had also impacted upon the way in which people expressed their 'Muslimness', including their outward displays of faith, political opinions, body presentation and dress. For many, fear of abuse - on the street, in shops and on public transport - had restricted freedom of movement in the public sphere, use of community facilities and visits to hostile areas. We would emphasize that these restrictions were more imposing than the risk assessments around crime that White Britons may make on a routine basis, such as where to park the car or which cash point may be safe to use. For our participants, the tangible fear of being assaulted and abused had limited pivotal aspects of identity building such as visiting friends, going to college or attending the Mosque. Echoing Hopkins' (2007:197) study, we detected a clear sense in which the enactment of physical geographical boundaries impacted upon 'emotional geographies' in relation to the way in which young Muslims perceived the spaces and places around and outside their communities of abode.

It was notable that previous victimization had led to numerous strategies of identity management, often geared toward the need to prove the self as 'safe' and thus reduce the potential for victimization. Past experience had for many demonstrated that - in addition to skin tone - visible and audible differences such as language, clothing and facial hair were prone to increase the risk of becoming a victim. While the wearing of traditional dress was celebrated by those keen to promote strong Muslim identities, for others the statement of difference was considered a producer of vulnerability that was more likely to provoke racist abuse. As a consequence, many reported playing down their 'Muslimness' at the level of surface appearance (see also Hopkins, 2007: 197). As such, there were pressures to conform to and perform ascendant notions of 'safeness', which included things like sporting Western dress and speaking in English and excluded things like wearing of the hijab or jubba and using 'risky' objects such as rucksacks.

The participants within our group were bound up with managing their (ascribed) risk identities. In short, they perpetually have to (re)define themselves in a context in which they are considered a potential social threat. Clearly, the 'push' of performing safeness on a day to day level is a time rich and energy consuming exercise. What is more - casting back to the risk reversal and coupling the notion of ascribed dangerousness to the materiality of their own victimization - our participants described themselves as situated in a paradoxical position of fearing and being

feared. On the one hand, they were justifiably fearful, both of the possibility of being discriminated against, harassed or bullied. On the other, they felt intensely the pressures of being categorized as the feared, the dangerous 'other'. This dramaturgical safety 'push' was manifest in sundry attempts to diffuse or deflect risk labelling, such as modifying dress, removing clothing, reducing the use of Urdu in certain public places or keeping what one participant humorously described as an 'acceptable European regulation length beard'. As an ensemble, such practices - exercised either by the outward fading of difference or visible reproduction of dominant White British traits - are at least in part designed to reduce racist victimization through the conscious public performance of 'safeness'. For us, it is a disheartening reflection on British society when that the threat invoked by displaying legitimate facets of the self and community invokes the suppression of expression and overt regulation of cultural identity.

## **Conclusion**

Within the context of being impacted by the discourse of the terrorist threat, institutional discrimination and forms of counter terrorism regulation in this paper we have recounted some of the views and perspectives of a group of young British Muslims. Whilst the testimonies, narratives and outlooks we encountered were diverse, here we have concentrated on three clusters of findings which coalesce around notions of risk and the experience of victimization. We have relayed the opinions of our participants on how Muslims and Islam are misrepresented in the media, focusing on the ways and means by which victims are turned into villains. We have also explicated the triumvirate of responses to racially motivated ideological and material victimization amongst our sample. Finally, we have unpacked some of the impacts of (potential) victimization on the identities of our young people and the ways in which identities are managed, expressed and concealed.

The ways in which young Muslims see themselves, are seen - and, perhaps moreover, see themselves being seen - is critical not just for criminologists but also for community leaders, politicians, social workers, legal professionals and policy makers. Our chief focus here has been on the ways in which dominant ideologies of (in)security, the politicization of the terror agenda and processes of legal securitization situate and affect young people. Insofar as we have drawn attention to the interface between the terrorist risk, identity and victimization, it is important to stress that this interface cannot be decoupled from longstanding domestic problems faced by Muslim minority groups including those around social exclusion, the unequal distribution of resources, religious bias, lack of political representation and unequal economic power relations. These historically unresolved domestic issues connect centrally to a seam of current international issues such as the outcomes of the catastrophic 'war on terror', the deployment of exclusionary foreign policy and unwarranted military occupations. Broadening our discussion out, the events of 7/7 have hastened the need to understand the grievances and injustices that may motivate disenfranchised British Muslims on the margins to undertake a terrorist attack in their country of birth. Returning to current political occupations with the terrorist threat and how best to prevent future attacks by British nationals, it is concerning that in most instances those that could help

explain and articulate the attractiveness of ‘radical’ and ‘extreme’ ideologies have largely been excluded from discussion. Instead, the dominant political debate which has followed on from 7/7 in the UK has been relatively narrow in focus and has often circumnavigated both the people and the issues that may throw light upon the full nature and scale of the problem. In short, young British Muslims have often been talked around and necessary engagement with the expressed motivations of religiously radicalised individuals has been elided. Whilst government policies have been formulated to try to challenge and intervene in the process by which young Muslims become radicalized, little attention has been given to contests over the meaning of radicalization or how it relates to British foreign and military policy, neo-imperialism and a failure to intervene with appropriate resources to challenge racial inequalities, social injustices and institutional discrimination. In order to retain purchase on contemporary problems and to encourage representation in the discipline it is vital that criminologists continue to take heed of and develop of minority perspectives (see Phillips and Bowling, 2003).

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that both Muslim Youth and Muslim Minority communities are diverse rather than homogeneous congregations (Garland *et. al.*, 2006; Saeed, 2007: 443). The ways in which self-identities are managed will vary and will be structured by other factors, such as ethnicity, education, class, place, gender and political outlook (Modood, 2006). What we have presented here is a snapshot of the perspectives of a group of British Pakistanis living in the North-West of England. It is critical that we give voice to and try to understand the motivations, proclivities and aspirations of young Muslims living in the UK. Further extensive and detailed and sensitive empirical research is required to probe the combined effects of institutional discrimination, the pervasiveness of anti-Islamic discourses and new forms of terrorism legislation on the identities of young Muslims. Yet pressing for positive and impactful solutions is perhaps a more meaningful exercise than documenting the problem in richer detail. While we would wish to end on a note of hope, this may not accurately reflect the dialogues and narratives we facilitated and listened to. For us, much of what we were exposed to and enlightened by boils down to a basic question of raw feelings. Whilst our participants demonstrated incredible resilience and robustness in the light of unfair pressures and abuses, victimization, discrimination and racism, if we were asked to describe how the young Muslims we spoke to actually felt, the answers are sobering and concerning. Despite a range of perspectives being articulated, in the light of experiencing three feelings chimed loudly and frequently: frustration, stigma and anger. This disagreeable experiential mix needs to be socially addressed swiftly. Not by the development of ever more restrictive and Byzantine counter-terrorism legislation, nor by exhortations to integrate, nor by strategies to de-radicalise ‘vulnerable’ individuals and communities. Many of the practical solutions are much simpler than this. But they do require meaningful political action and engagement, rather than rhetoric. For our participants they include being properly listened to, having adequate political representation,<sup>11</sup> removing the ‘elephant-in-the-room’ status surrounding British foreign and military policy in Muslim countries, tackling ethnic inequalities and confronting the criminal injustices suffered by Muslim minority groups.

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<sup>1</sup> There are important questions to be asked about how 'terrorism' is defined, by whom and under what conditions (see Gearty, 1991; Mythen and Walklate, 2006a). In the light of recent acts of State violence in Iraq, Afghanistan and Gaza - sanctioned by the UK, US and Israeli governments - these questions are pressing and prescient.

<sup>2</sup> The trend toward legal activism in combating terrorism is part of a wider New Labour trend of utilising changes in legislation as drivers of regulation.

<sup>3</sup> Written evidence from MPA to Select Committee on Home Affairs, 8 July 2004 cited in Liberty (2008: 5).

<sup>4</sup> It is fair to say that these forms of discrimination and prejudice fall unevenly and unequally across different ethnic groups. For instance, the Bangladeshi and Pakistani populations are relatively economically excluded, whilst British Asians of Chinese origin have fared better (see Open Society Institute, 2002: 363).

<sup>5</sup> This is exemplified in the public support given by senior politicians and high ranking police officers to the targeting Muslim minority groups in the fight against terrorism. Conservative leader David Cameron has publically stated that Black and Asian communities will have to tolerate increasing use of stop and search to combat the growth of violent crime in those communities. Meanwhile, the Chief of British Transport Police appeared to condone racial profiling in his assertion that: 'Intelligence-led stop and searches have got to be the way ... we should not waste time searching old white ladies. It is going to be disproportionate. It is going to be young men, not exclusively, but it may be disproportionate when it comes to ethnic groups.' (see Dodd, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> The member of the research team that facilitated the focus groups and conducted the in-depth interviews is a second generation British Muslim fluent in English, Urdu and Punjabi.

<sup>7</sup> The research project was reviewed and sanctioned by the University of Liverpool's Ethics Committee. Confidentiality and anonymity for participants were assured by adherence to the ethical guidelines provided by the British Society of Criminology as set out in the Code of Ethics for Researchers in the Field of Criminology. Research participants were briefed on the purpose of the research and the range of topics to be discussed and freely given informed consent was attained from all engaged in the study. Research participants were informed that they had have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage for any reason and without recrimination. The names of all participants have been changed in reporting the data to ensure anonymity.

<sup>8</sup> Ironically, as we opened up our first focus group with the question 'How would you define your identity?' one of our participants began by stating 'I'm a Muslim, but I'm not a terrorist'.

<sup>9</sup> Following the Metropolitan Police Service's own data, stop search rates for Black people in London rose from 30% from 2001 to 2002, while for Asian people they increased by 41%. The White population experienced a rise of just 8% (MPS, 2004: 21).

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<sup>10</sup> It ought to be pointed out that there were different weightings placed on and around these relative positions. The most statistically numerable were the infuriated, followed by the disenchanted and the responsabilized.

<sup>11</sup> Throughout British history there have been a total of just 3 non-white Cabinet members. Currently Black and Asian Members of Parliament number 15, a mere 2% of the total number of MPs.