Reflexive Ethnicities: Crisis, Diversity and Re-Composition

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of how people reflexively relate to their ethnicity in the context of cultural and political crisis after the 7/7 bombings in London in 2005. Introducing a differentiated conception of reflexivity following Archer and Lash, the paper shows how cognitive, hermeneutic and aesthetic reflexivity (Lash) are expressed autonomously, communicatively and in a meta-reflexive manner (Archer) variably across and within ethnicities. Differentiated reflexive expressions of ethnicity are rooted in the politics and histories of ethnicities in relation to dominant discourses of whiteness and Britishness. The data is from a qualitative interview study of how different ethnic groups in West Yorkshire were affected by the 7/7 London bombings, with people of African-Caribbean, Black- African, Bangladeshi, Indian Pakistani and White backgrounds. The increased reflexivity of ethnic identity is seen to be rooted in the political crises generated by Britain's role in and response to, the war on terror, but also biographical experiences of contextual continuities, discontinuities and incongruities of migration.

Keywords: *Ethnicity, Reflexivity, Identity, 7/7 Bombings, Migration*

Introduction

- 1.1 Debates about ethnicity have highlighted the dynamic and mutable character of ethnic identities and their complex interplay with power and history (Brah 1996; Hall 1990). In the light of the 'war on terror' these concerns have particularly focused on Muslims resident in 'the West' (Hussain and Bagguley 2012; Abbas 2005; Bhattacharyya 2008; Meer 2010; Modood 2005; Poynting and Mason 2006). These questions were further highlighted by the 7/7 London bombings. The research reported here took place in the years after those events in the localities in West Yorkshire where the bombers lived and which were the object of much subsequent speculation and debate. Despite the long standing recognition of ethnicities constantly being in process and referencing 'contingent, conditional and provisional specificities' (Brah 1996: 175) there is insufficient recognition of how events such as the 7/7 bombings render ethnicities subject to renewed inspection and reflection. Some studies of racialized identities proceed as if such events and the national public debates around national identity, 'race' and Muslims had not taken place (e.g. Garner 2012). The recent focus on the tenth anniversary of the 7/7 bombings further underscore their significance for questions of ethnic, religious and national identity (BBC news 7 July 2015). Hence these issues continue to be of enduring and wider interest.
- 1.2 We explore how different ways of relating to ethnic identity might vary depending on their proclaimed ethnicity or even between people who might consider themselves to be of the same ethnicity after such events. How do these differ according to generation and experiences of migration and achieving formal citizenship? Such debates around how people identify with ethnicity have focused upon the rather common sense category of 'choice' (Song 2003; Waters 1990), and we seek to demonstrate in this paper how a differentiated concept of reflexivity based on the work of Archer (2012) and Lash (1994) provides a more sophisticated account of how people relate to dynamic, fluid and crisis ridden ethnic identities. This is the phenomenon that we refer to as reflexive ethnicities.

From Ethnic Choosing to Reflexive Ethnicities

- 2.1 For some time now it has been recognised that ethnic identities are best conceptualised as processual, and subject to revision in relation to changing social, cultural and political circumstances. These debates focus on the 'hyphenated' character of 'new ethnicities', whereby claims of minority ethnicity are routinely articulated albeit problematically with Britishness (Brah 1996; Hall 1990; Jenkins 1997; Modood *et. al.* 1997). Furthermore, religion has been hyphenated with Britishness, displacing ethnic terms such as Asian or Pakistani (Jacobson 1997; Samad 1996). Such processes entail both external categorisation, and internal assertions of ethnic identity (Jenkins 1997: 53). In these contexts of ever-changing identity hybridisation, the question of how individuals relate to these processes has been broached by authors such as Waters (1990) in the USA and Song (2003) in the UK. The concept of reflexivity is central to how ethnicity has been recently conceptualised:

... culture *becomes* ethnicity when – in the context of rapid and drastic changes and their far-reaching effects – social actors begin to reflect on what they used to think and do... (Karner 2007: 26)

It is precisely this three way relationship between social actors, ethnicity and crisis that we seek to explore here through the instance of the 7/7 bombings. It is an exceptionally clear case of precisely this process. However, the question of agency and reflexivity requires more critical attention than it has perhaps received in relation to these questions in the past.

- 2.2 There are important unresolved issues in how Song (2003) amongst others approaches the question of agency and structure in relation to ethnic choice. Agency appears as an empty black box, asserting explanatory power through the claim that it involves interaction between micro-processes and macro-level structures (Song 2003: 19). Precisely how this works remains unexplained. How to connect agency and structure is better conceptualised through discussions of reflexivity and its various forms (Archer 2003, 2012). It is our contention that at certain crisis points ethnicity and related racial and national identities and expectations of citizenship become the subject of intense public and private scrutiny as in the wake of the 7/7 bombings that was the focus of this research. Such crises would be instances of 'contextual discontinuity' for those who are now suddenly seen as a security threat (Hussain and Bagguley 2012). This raises a rather different set of questions about how ethnicity and racism work for with, and against different groups.
- 2.3 Rather than agency and choice being the core concepts linking individuals to the wider discourses of ethnicity, it is various forms of reflexivity that provide a better conceptualisation of these relations. The concept of reflexivity is preferable to agency and choice as it highlights how individuals routinely consider their circumstances and concerns. Reflexivity mediates between structural, political and cultural circumstances and people's actual actions (Archer 2012). The conception of agency implied by the term 'ethnic choosing' is perhaps too closely associated with some versions of rational choice theory. It is in this theoretical context that we feel that some wider conceptual debates contributed to by Archer (2003, 2007) and Lash (1994) regarding the general character of reflexivity and not normally associated with work on race, ethnicity and migration, can be usefully drawn upon.
- 2.4 Lash introduces his distinction between cognitive, aesthetic and hermeneutic reflexivity by critiquing the work of Beck (1994) and Giddens (1994) as entailing purely cognitive reflexivity or knowledge of social conditions or social structures. Whereas aesthetic reflexivity is centrally concerned with questions of especially popular culture, hermeneutic reflexivity is concerned with communities of shared meaning (Lash 1994: 158-9). Questions of ethnicity, national identity and racialization run through these analytical distinctions in complex ways. If as Lash suggests the cognitive reflexivity of Beck and Giddens is most closely related to institutional structures, then more formal questions of 'bureaucratic identities' seem most relevant. In this instance this would be managerially or bureaucratically defined ethnicities, questions of citizenship, passport ownership etc. Aesthetic reflexivity would be concerned more with ethnicity as the everyday lived cultures that people imagine characterise the ethnicities that they feel they belong to. Hermeneutic reflexivity would be concerned with uncovering the meaning of belonging.
- 2.5 Whilst in their very different ways Beck and Giddens, Lash and Archer present strong social change explanations of the 'rise of reflexivity', what we wish to add to this is the role of crisis in promoting or requiring reflexivity about ethnicity, nationhood and citizenship. Moments of 'identity crisis' are when people are forced to think about who they are, and where they belong. Processes or events experienced 'objectively' generate crisis effects if they cannot be handled without 'changing the rules of the game' (Habermas 1976). Collective identities have to be re-thought, re-defined or reinforced, and we all contribute to this re-composition of identities. In the

context of a fluid and mobile multi-ethnic social formation this is by no means straightforward, and we do not wish to suggest that the crisis has been resolved. Rather it continues to fester leaving an enduring legacy of institutional interventions and popular memory.

2.6 Archer (2012) distinguishes between four forms of reflexivity: communicative reflexivity, meta-reflexivity, autonomous reflexivity and fractured reflexivity. Autonomous reflexivity leads directly to action without discussion with others (Archer 2007: 193-4). Those interviewees who claimed a self-described 'White-British' or similar identity were autonomously reflexive about questions of identity in that they were self-reliant and confident about questions of identity for which their background and social context would otherwise have provided them with little support or guidance. Being meta-reflexive towards questions of identity entailed being critically self-reflexive about oneself and one's circumstances. In these cases identities were seen as more mutable, contingent, mixable and capable of being assembled in different combinations (Archer 2007: 230). Communicative reflexivity involves reflections about action being subject to discussion with and confirmation from significant and trusted others. Consequently it tends to produce actions that are compatible with those close to the person. These are of course the product of different life experiences and trajectories, and such diverse biographical trajectories explain much of the variability in identity claims. In summary Archer (2003: 168-9) suggests that communicative reflexivity tends to develop in stable circumstances with enduring and supportive social relations. In contrast autonomous and meta-reflexivity emerge in situations of 'contextual discontinuity' and 'contextual incongruity' (Archer 2012: 16), where trusted social relations suddenly disappear or are rapidly transformed. Especially important for this discussion would be the disruption of migration, which Lash recognised when he suggested that: '... the diasporic self is straight away aware of heterodoxy and aware of the possibility of a de-worlded position.' (Lash 1994: 162).

2.7 Whilst Archer's approach tends to focus on the forms of reflexivity (communicative, autonomous and meta-reflexivity), Lash's approach highlights the different aspects of the social (cultural aesthetics, the hermeneutics of community and the cognition of social situations) towards which people may be reflexive. Bringing these two approaches together enables us to examine how people might be communicatively reflexive (discussing with and seeking confirmation from others) towards aesthetics of their culture, the meaning of belonging to a certain community or cognitively in terms of their location with regards to citizenship. Secondly, people could be autonomously reflexive towards such questions, not seeking advice and confirmation from others about questions of culture, community and citizenship. Thirdly, meta-reflexives would be more distanced and possibly critical of cultural questions, what their community means to them and their location in terms of national identity and citizenship. Whilst originating outside of the routine theoretical debates around ethnicity, we believe these can offer important analytical insights enabling use to unpack in a more powerful way the rather vague metaphors of 'negotiation of ethnic identity' that litter the field.

Methodology

3.1 The data analysed here was generated as part of a project to examine the implications of the London bombings on 7th July 2005 for the local communities in West Yorkshire associated with the bombers. A total of 141 semi-structured interviews were achieved with residents of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, White, African-Caribbean and Indian backgrounds in 2005-06. The issues addressed in the interviews included: reactions to the London bombings as well as many of the issues concerning Islam and Muslims in the UK raised in subsequent public and political debates.

3.2 Men and women aged 16-35 and 36 and over from locally resident ethnic groups were sought for interviewing. The aim was to interview British born Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as migrants. As a result of this sampling strategy all of the Bangladeshi interviewees aged 36 or over were born in Bangladesh, 57 per cent of older Indian interviewees were born in India and 35 per cent in East Africa reflecting onward migration, and 75 per cent of older Pakistani interviewees were born in Pakistan. We aimed for a minimum number of interviewees from the different principal ethnic and religious groups, men and women, and each age group from each local area. Interviewees were sought through local contacts, community centres and groups and then snowballing onwards from these. Interviewees were selected and then approached by interviewers, with the role of gatekeepers kept to a minimum.

3.3 We have used pseudonyms, and we have not identified the locations where people lived to preserve anonymity. People were interviewed in places and times of their choosing by someone from the same ethnicity. The ethnic matching of interviewers to interviewees is controversial as it clearly reifies the categories that we wish to analyse (Gunaratnam 2003: 80-6). However, we decided on ethnic matching for several reasons. Sending South Asian female interviewers into largely white residential areas which had experienced hostility towards

South Asians raised significant safety concerns. Furthermore, some white people are much less likely to be 'honest' about their views on race when people from ethnic minorities are present (Picca and Feagin 2007). For those interviewees who lived in such areas we used a trained interviewer from a local working class background. Methodologically Whiteness was not an unproblematic norm, but justified the strategy of matching just as much as other ethnic groups. Furthermore, in some cases it was essential for the interviewer to be fluent in the first language of the interviewee. Matching may help to build cooperation, rapport and trust, although we recognise this might only be along the lines of ethnicity, religion, gender or class and locality and of course is not guaranteed and there remain inequalities of power in interview situations (Gunaratnam 2003). Overall, we felt that with the obstacles to access and data quality ethnic matching was desirable.

- 3.4 The interviews were transcribed and if necessary translated and analysed thematically. This entailed analysing the printed transcripts for similarities of meaning both within and across the ethnicities. We were interested in the similarities and differences in how people talked about their ethnic identity both within and across the boundaries implied by such claims. Quotations from interviews have been selected for their relevance for our overall analytical argument (Hammersley 1990: 107). We have sought to compare the themes of reflexivity towards ethnic identity between groups of different ethnic origins.

Autonomously and Communicatively Reflexive Ethnicities

- 4.1 Interviewees who readily identified themselves as White British were notable for treating this as 'taken-for-granted' (Bonnett 2000; Byrne 2006; Garner, 2012; Nayak 2003). This was characterised by an autonomous or communicative cognitive reflexivity, rather than something they 'chose'. People just 'knew' in a self-assured manner who they were, where they were from and where they belonged. For example, Victoria replied: 'I suppose I would say White and British', and in a similar way Grace a teenager said: 'British, White'. This had the effect of qualifying, hyphenating or adding to their Britishness with an assertion of white ethnicity. In contrast, some immediately highlighted a sense of indignation at the way in which they perceived some ethnic minorities hyphenate, hybridise and therefore in their view qualify and question their British identity. Asserting a British national identity that sought to subsume ethnic and religious difference within it is evident from Marie's response:

British. On the forms I have got to put, White, British. So if the Asians are British why can't they put they are British? Why do they have to tick that other box?

The asking of such rhetorical questions of the interviewer, seeking reassurance is characteristic of communicative reflexivity. As the interview progressed it became apparent that she criticised signs of an unwillingness to integrate on the part of South Asian Muslims in their assertion of their ethnic identities. She pointed out that as a Catholic she does not describe herself as a 'British Catholic' and that everyone should simply be 'British'. This was all said with an emotional sense of indignation at other people's preferences of ethnic and religious identification. Hence White-Britishness is imbued with meaning relationally against ethnic others who do not think and act 'like us' (Garner 2012).

- 4.2 Considering the meaning of the identities that they had immediately articulated, people explained what these meant to them. For example, Susan replied that: 'It just means that I live in England really?., That's all I'd say about, I don't really, I don't think that, I'm just me really, I don't really know (laughs)'. This illustrates the uncertainty and difficulty that many white interviewees expressed when pressed to think more explicitly what they meant when they said they were British. Susan's response illustrates many aspects of this. Firstly, that it indicates a geographical location, but note how she refers to 'England' and not the UK or Britain here, immediately implicitly excluding Scotland, Wales and the North of Ireland. Secondly, then laughing at her own inability to clearly articulate the meaning of something which she so clearly recognizes and is important to her. Whilst asserted confidently without reflection, questions of identity are clearly not routinely subject to reflection either on their own or with others, as a result they relate to their white Britishness in a communicatively reflexive manner. It has to be talked about with similar people before it can be decided. In a similar way Grace replied: 'That I was born in the UK and that is about it really.'

- 4.3 Other white interviewees pointed out the Scottish and Welsh dimensions only when they related to them personally. For instance, Victoria explained how Britishness was part of being white, but that this related to her family all being white and from England, Scotland or Wales. Thus this is quite different from the narrower white or English interpretations of being British:

I suppose I was born in Britain and all the family I have ever had around me since I was born are White and British

For some Britishness was a simple directly cathartic emotion. Primarily a sense of pride in being British. For example Maggie told us: 'I am proud to be a British citizen. Yes I am.' Jim also replied in a similar way: 'I'm proud of being British. Proud.'

4.4 Communicative or autonomous reflexivity is a characteristic of those asserting White-British identities, and reflects its 'contextual continuity' (Archer 2012) for our respondents. This is indeed not surprising as a now substantial literature has demonstrated the 'normality' of whiteness, its automatic association with Britishness and the absence of recognition of its inherent privileges (Bonnnett 2000; Byrne 2006; Garner 2012; Nayak 2003). Hyphenated identities are often assumed to be those of ethnic minorities (Modood *et. al.* 1997), but our evidence suggests that is now happening with the hyphenation of Whiteness. People perhaps more frequently prefer to refer to themselves as not just White or British, but as White-British. Behind such a subtle linguistic shift lies a significant social, political and cultural change. It is an often reluctant recognition of the multicultural and multi-ethnic character of contemporary Britain, yet we would suggest that for some at least it may also be a form of everyday resistance to that multicultural and multi-ethnic reality: an attempt to reclaim the hyphen, by asserting the essential whiteness of being British. This strategic essentialism is not just proclaimed by ethnicised minorities, but here is a mode of defending White-Britishness. Hyphenated whiteness however, carries with it different connotations from other hyphenated ethnicities. Fundamentally this is an expression of power and domination. Whiteness retains its cultural and political dominance but within a modified and rapidly changing ethnoscape (Garner 2012) – which explains its hyphenation – where Whiteness is in their minds no longer automatically equated with Britishness, but rather the Whiteness of Britishness has to be underlined and re-asserted in the face of crises and threats such as the 7/7 bombings. However for hyphenated minorities Britishness meant a forced hybridity, marginalisation, and the mobility and mutability of identity which give rise to a meta-reflexive relationship with ethnicities rather than one of simply choosing.

Meta-Reflexive Migrants

5.1 Many people from ethnic minorities were being meta-reflexive about how they identified themselves in relation to ethnicity and nationality, and amongst our interviewees this was especially noticeable amongst those who had migrated from South Asia, the Caribbean or Africa. They recognised the mutability of their circumstances, their changing social positions and knowledge of different societies. This was played out biographically for some depending upon where they were born, their experiences of migration or their parents' experiences of migration - forms of what Archer (2012) terms contextual discontinuity. They reflected on how their own ethnic and national designations had changed both as a result of their own personal circumstances, but also in terms of the options presented to them due to changes in wider societal definitions with which they might identify. These are often constructed as 'narratives of the self'. As the interviewers were largely 'ethnically matched', interviewees would often assume a common underlying knowledge. For example, Veronica Davis although she was born in the UK, her response captures very well this meta-reflexivity in relation to identity where she talks about how it used to be 'West Indies', became 'Afro-Caribbean' and now with the added extension of British: 'Well it always used to be West Indies as descent and then now it's, well it's...Afro Caribbean. But then I always put British at the side (laughs).' Thus the way in which she described her ethnic identity used to be that of a colonial category 'West Indies', became a more cultural and diasporic designation with 'Afro-Caribbean' and more recently had become more hybridized with a national attachment to Britain. She recognizes how for her and the world around her these have been in constant flux, constantly being re-defined, but also rooted in the colonial history of the 'West Indies', and how this intersects with her own personal history and that of her parents.

5.2 In a rather different but still meta-reflexive manner Trevor makes a distinction between what he feels is his ethnic identity and his formal citizenship. Drawing on Lash (1994) this would be a contrast between hermeneutic reflexivity and cognitive reflection on citizenship. Trevor reflects on the complexity of his situation that has arisen from his personal history as a migrant, about being 'over here' and being a British citizen. He seems to be proud of this marker of acceptance in British society. Yet he speaks of being a 'West Indian at heart'. He goes on to make a distinction between his West Indian ethnic identity and his identity as a British citizen. They clearly mean quite different things to him and the emotions associated with them are quite different. He describes how his West Indian identity is something which cannot be taken away from him because he was born there. In contrast he talks about his identity as a British citizen in more provisional terms. He was thus hermeneutically reflexive about his ethnicity, but cognitively reflexive about his being a 'British citizen'. He speaks

of Britain being his country, as somewhere he 'supports' and speaks of with pride, but implied is the notion that it is not as permanent as his West Indian ethnic identity:

And having that, been over here, living here, well I am a British citizen, but yet I am a West Indian at heart. Not to say that I am back biting two ways, I was born and bred in West Indies, that's my identity, you can't take that away from me, I am living in England, I still support my country the best I can to my ability, and at the same time support here...

In contrast, those who have migrated more recently from Africa had a more direct view of themselves as African. They used a continent wide designation rather than an ethno-national one. For example, Nuru Rashidi replied: 'I am an African and will always be one no matter what.' Like those originally from the Caribbean there was a strong sense of the permanence of their African identity. As Enzi Jabari told us: 'I am an African and will always be one.' The implication was that although they might seek British citizenship this would not change who they really are. Again we see a division between being cognitively reflexive about citizenship, but hermeneutically reflexive about being 'from somewhere else' that has an emotional meaning and significance. Ethnicity, as conceptualised in terms of origins, is fixed and unchanging in a stronger way than those from the Caribbean who have lived in the UK for some decades. It is not origins or destinations, ethnicity or Britishness that matter, but history and biography and how they inter-twine, and how people meta-reflexively dwell upon these entanglements.

5.3 Neema had been in the UK for fourteen years. Unlike the most recent migrants from Africa she did not refer to herself as African, but as 'Black British'. She explicitly relates this to the length of her residence in the UK. Whilst this is a racialised ethnic identity that she is articulating by reference to beliefs around corporeal features, she is also conscious of the fact that she does not feel fully accepted in Britain. She speaks of embracing British society and of living like a British person. However, this sense of being British is at least in part negated in her view by not having many white British friends. It is in this specific sense that she says: 'I am not accepted'. Neema's positioning of herself, then, lies somewhere between African-Caribbean migrants who think of themselves as West Indian or Afro-Caribbean and British and the more recent African migrants who do not mention Britishness or see it in terms of the formal possession of a passport: 'I am black I would consider myself black British in the sense that I have been in this country for over fourteen years. And I embrace the British society I do live like a British person but I am not accepted in the sense that most of my friends, I have got a handful of just white friends.' What emerges from this analysis of those interviewees who might from some perspectives be 'classified' as 'Black' or 'African-Caribbean' is a remarkable diversity of both ethnic, citizenship and national identifications that are related not so much to origins or the substantive 'content' of ethnicity as the intersections between individual biographies, concerns, contexts and stage of the migrant's life-cycle. Recent arrivals assert autonomously their ethnicity based on origin, whereas those who have been in the UK for a longer period of time appear more like meta-reflexives consciously evaluating their ethnic identifications and how they have changed over time.

5.4 However, Neema goes on to describe how the meaning and boundaries of Britishness are monitored and policed in everyday life by the White population. Here she reflects upon how they use an aesthetic, cultural understanding of Britishness through practices of clothing and food consumption to exclude and alteriorise the 'Black British' such as herself. Such experiences entail exercises of power that re-inscribe and reproduce relations of domination and subordination at the level of everyday life. Thus what Neema describes is a situation of being a relatively powerless meta-reflexive. As Neema explained to us wearing 'colourful clothing' makes you 'not British':

bein' British in the sense that you dress like a British it is not like you cover yourself up or you can see the African women now the society has embraced a large African community you will see the way they're traditional you know. So they will be told 'oh you are foreign'. They are not been told you are British you are foreign. And some of the children are born here so they will insist I am British and they are told 'you are not British look at the way you are dressed you are dressed in all the colourful clothing' and that is how they see you.

5.5 Only amongst South Asian interviewees did religion spontaneously emerge as a source of identity in our interviews. For example, Sikhs referred to themselves variably as British-Asian, British-Indian or British-Sikh, and those who defined themselves as British-Asian or British-Indian added that they were Sikh as well. For example Sarbjit replied: 'A British Asian but Sikh in religion', Pritpal said 'I'm an Indian Sikh', and Rajinder described himself as a 'British Sikh'. In terms of the meanings of Britishness to them, they immediately in a cognitively reflexive fashion invoke notions of rights and duties associated with a discourse of citizenship. For example Sarbjit explained the meaning of being British for him as follows:

I think bein' British for me means that been part of society I have been, I mean I have travelled quite a bit and you realise the benefits of bein' somewhere like this, bein' born here and having your British passport as well. You know your education your house facilities and jobs wise. Bein' British to me is bein' part of this country part of this society and the benefits that you get as been part of it but then putting something back into that whether that be with your education or your job or work with the community and things like that. (Sarbjit)

In contrast to this rights and duties conception of Britishness is one that gives more salience to the geography of birth, as Bhupinder Kaur told us: 'It just means that I am British and this is where I was born and it is kind of my home I suppose'. However, for others this geographical imagination of Britishness is contrasted with ethnic and religious sources of identity that are seen as rooted in the cultural background of the family. For example Pritpal said: 'I was born here, brought up here, that's about it really. My culture and background is how my parents have brought me up.' Here we see again the significance of the distinction between cognitively reflexively – knowledge of where one was born – in contrast to the hermeneutic reflexivity in relation to 'my culture'.

- 5.6 Amongst non-Muslim ethnic minority interviewees we see a variety of forms of reflexivity displayed that cut across more categorically defined ethnic boundaries. People reflected meta-reflexively when they had experiences of migration, a form of contextual discontinuity. This enabled them to articulate different aspects of hybridised identities either cognitively, for example British citizenship, hermeneutically, for example the meaning of their origins to them, or aesthetically, in terms of self or British defined 'ethnic' cultural practices.

Meta-Reflexive Muslims

- 6.1 South Asian Muslim interviewees typically autonomously identified themselves as Muslims as well as making ethno-national identifications and identifications with Britishness. For example Shakira said: 'I am a Bengali Muslim living in Britain.' Describing herself as Bengali highlights one of the ways in which Bangladeshis often distinguish themselves in ethnic terms. In hermeneutically reflexive terms this relates to the distinctiveness of the Bengali language and the struggles around language against Pakistan prior to the independence of Bangladesh. The way she speaks of 'living in Britain' in an almost casual way suggests a weak sense of identification with Britishness - it just happens to be where she lives. She conveys a sense of permanence and immutability of ethno-national origins as opposed to the 'temporaryness' of living in the UK. Also evident is a meta-reflexive handling of a 'triadic identification' of Bengali, Muslim and British of variable intensities and emotional connotations arising from contextual discontinuities and incongruities.
- 6.2 Many of the Bangladeshi respondents experienced migration as children, generating an intertwining of biographies and the history of migration. Their reflections on ethnicity and how migration had influenced and continues to influence it are rather different from those who migrated as adults. They often made immediate assertions that they were Bangladeshi because as Shabana put it: 'I was born in Bangladesh'. But this cognitively reflection is balanced by a certain reticence based on a hermeneutically reflexive sensibility of being between 'here' and not being 'there' as expressed through her having vague memories of Bangladesh. These imaginary geographies generate meta-reflexive thoughts and actions, and what comes to the fore for Shabana is meta-reflexive relationship to her sense of belonging to a local Bangladeshi community here in the UK: 'because we have a big community of Bangladeshis and I do belong in that Bangladesh community.'
- 6.3 Salina expressed similar emotional attachment to Bangladesh, but one marked by ambivalence. She described feeling Bangladeshi, but not feeling as though she belongs there as she said about Britain, but without any real enthusiasm: 'I don't know any other home'. But equally in relation to Bangladesh she said: 'I don't think there's a home for me when I go to Bangladesh'. Whilst reflecting further she clearly asserts that she is a 'British Muslim', but that the relationship between her Muslimness and her Britishness is contingent: 'I am a Muslim who happens to be British.' Salina sees herself as a British national but again we see this complex triadic relationship between collective identifications handled meta-reflexively expressing differentially her degrees of emotional intensity of attachment. Furthermore, she used the language of 'home' metaphorically to express where she feels she belongs in ethno-national terms:

I don't think there's a home for me when I go to Bangladesh. Definitely I'm a British Muslim; I would say a British Bangladesh Muslim, yeah. I'm a British national; let me get that in. I'm a Muslim who happens to be British...

This theme of a relatively fixed ethno-national identity combined with a mutable bureaucratic identity of British citizen was one way that many interviewees made sense of their positioning. For example Bana told us: 'I'd just call myself a British Bangladeshi'. However, when asked about what this meant to her she elaborated in a meta-

reflexive manner about the meaning of Bangladesh in terms of 'her roots' because her parents were born there. Meta-reflexively articulating the meaning, the hermeneutics, of belonging to an 'imagined' ethnic community, she also spoke of not feeling properly accepted in the UK. In contrast to some she suggested that she did feel that she was more accepted in Bangladesh than she did in the UK. Being Bangladeshi she saw as something 'inherent' as something immutable about her that would not change: 'because that's who you are isn't it, that's your identity'. Her attachment to Britain was more instrumental, more cognitively reflexive, although she says of living in Britain: '... because god has favoured you to be living in Britain, has blessed you.' When speaking of Britain she valued its safety for her children, the rights that citizenship provides, the education for her children, and the material and economic conditions compared to Bangladesh. There is a contrast between her emotional attachments to Bangladesh and her reflexively cognitive recognition of the advantages of being in Britain.

6.4 This relative fixity and attachment to national origins and religion compared to the changeable character of citizenship reflects their experiences of contextual discontinuity. It is the principal way in which ethnic minorities reflexively articulate their Britishness as in some sense 'conditional'. For example, Shakira came from Bangladesh when she was twenty years old, describing herself as a: 'Bengali Muslim who happen to become British'. For her, becoming a British citizen was a pragmatic decision, and she maintains her Bangladeshi passport through regular visits to the country. Being British meant 'nothing' to her. This might be a more dismissive response of not really identifying strongly with British citizenship, and this she makes quite clear is because she sees Britishness as an identity that is racialised as white, and thus it automatically excludes people like herself: 'Bein' British does not mean I am white.' She does not feel that being Bangladeshi means anything in Britain. Being Bengali is for her primarily a question of reproducing the cultural practices of being Bengali: 'Because bein' Bengali is speaking Bengali, eating Bengali food, you look like a Bengali, you are born in Bengali, so you know you cannot deny yourself as not Bengali'. Reflexively she sees her Bengali identity in aesthetic as well as hermeneutic terms. It is a community of cultural practices that are worked at not just express identity but attempt to reproduce its conditions of existence. For her being Bengali is something that cannot and should not be changed.

6.5 There is therefore no fixed essential way in which all Bangladeshi's related to their ethnicity. These variations in their feelings of emotional attachment to being Bangladeshi or Bengali, Britain and their Muslim identity seem to be related to the inter-twining of biography and the contextual discontinuity of migration. What we see here is a meta-reflexive attitude towards the aesthetics of culture, the meaning of belonging to a cultural diaspora and the knowledge of which country of which you are a citizen all of which have been in flux or threatened or not accepted in some way by others. For example, Shabana does not feel part of Bangladesh despite having a house there and visiting regularly for long periods of time. Like others she feels part of a Bangladeshi community in Britain, and feels that Britain is her home. The inter-twining of biography and the contextual discontinuity of migration then produces what appears to be a generational difference around ethnic and citizenship identifications. Those who migrated as adults having a more tenuous identification with British citizenship, but those who migrated to the UK as small children or who grew up here seem to have a stronger attachment to Britain. However, her Bangladeshi identity does seem fixed for her as she says: 'I am a Bangladeshi at the end of the day' indicating that ultimately that is who she is and how others see her. For example when Shabana emphatically argues that the UK is her home and that it is where she feels she belongs:

Yes I do this is my home that is what I am saying this is my home and that is where I belong I do not have any other homes to go to. I mean I do have house in Bangladesh but ... I would not be able to live there I do not see I am part of Bangladeshi, but I do feel part of the community.

6.6 The general way in which Pakistani interviewees talked about themselves was in terms of being British, Pakistani and Muslim or some combination thereof. For example Zara described herself as 'British Pakistani Muslim', and Salma, told us: 'Well I'm British first, I am born here and then I am a British born Pakistani'. However, some others highlighted their Islamic rather and Pakistani identity, such as Iqbal who said: 'I am British at the end of the day I am a Muslim but I am British'. They thus had a strongly cognitively reflexive relationship that meta-reflexively juggles British citizenship, Pakistani ethnicity and Islam.

6.7 Kaneez's account illustrates very clearly how she feels that external forces have shaped her identity by being asked who is. Previously she felt that being Pakistani was highlighted by people asking who she was, now she is increasingly asked what religion she is. These external forces are in part a product of the societal response to the 7/7 bombings securitizing certain South Asian and religious identities (Hussain and Bagguley 2012) that has produced 'contextual incongruity' for South Asian Muslims. This is significant for interviewees such as Kaneez because she now wears hijab and Islam has become more important to her, so that being Muslim is her primary identity, whilst her family background provides her with her ethnic identity. So here we see

articulated the interaction between personal religious development and expression and external social forces:

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. That comes first before everything, Islam and being a Muslim.

6.8 Kaneez's account can be related to the increasing salience of Islamic identity for British Muslims due to political processes dating back to the 1980s (Samad 1996), intensified since 9/11, the 7/7 bombings and the wider 'War on Terror' (Hussain and Bagguley 2012), and Islam as a universal identity providing guidelines for daily life (Jacobson 1997). 'Acceptance' was central to what it meant to be British frequently articulated by Muslim interviewees, as Zara put it being: 'accepted for my religion'. By which she means being accepted for her religion and not in spite of it. Indeed her religious identity seems to suffuse other aspects of herself such as the way she dresses, behaves and speaks: 'Being British means I can be who I want and still live in this country and be accepted for my religion, for the way I dress, for the way act, speak. Bein' accepted generally in society'. Thus Zara relates to her religion and ethnicity in an aesthetically reflexive manner, as for her the cultural questions of how she dresses are also important.

6.9 To use Lash's phrase Muslims might be characterised as 'reflexivity losers' (Lash 1994: 121) - circumstances mean that they have no choice but to be seen and treated as Muslims, and by implication potential terrorists and in the present context of their securitisation and rising Islamophobia (Abbas 2005; Bhattacharyya 2008; McGhee 2008; Meer 2010; Poynting and Mason 2006; Hussain and Bagguley 2012). Such processes specifically disempower ethnic or religious minorities to define their own identities. Migration and diaspora formation are instances of 'contextual incongruity' (Archer 2012) in the sense that individuals experience different social structural, political and cultural circumstances. However, instead of this being due to social change, it is due partly to the experience of migration, but also due to the sense of crisis that has emerged around the compatibility of Muslim identities with 'Britishness' (Abbas 2005; Bhattacharyya 2008; McGhee 2008; Meer 2010). These forces of identity crisis lie behind the concerns of many Muslim interviewees with their religious identity, feeling being asked about this, rather than their ethnicity, and their concern with acceptance within British society.

Conclusion

7.1 In this paper we have shown how there are various forms of reflexively articulating ethnic, national and citizenship identities, in the context of the 'crisis' of ethnic, national and religious identities after the 7/7 London bombings of 2005. We have drawn upon Archer's (2012) concepts of communicative reflexivity, autonomous reflexivity and meta-reflexivity as well as Lash's (1994) earlier distinctions between cognitive, aesthetic and hermeneutic reflexivity to criticise and move beyond earlier accounts of ethnic choosing. For those from a White background 'whiteness' is seen as relatively unproblematic that is discussed in an autonomously or communicatively reflexive manner. Britishness for them is seen in a cognitive manner as a geographical 'birthright'. However, we did find some white interviewees who were 'reclaiming the hyphen' of hybridised identities by referring to themselves as 'white-British'. Yet this was not some kind of recognition of the essentially multicultural nature of British identity, but rather an attempt to 'play the same game' as ethnic minorities. In other words it was a form of 'identity resistance' to the perceived threats to Britishness that had been heightened by the 7/7 bombings in broader societal response to them.

7.2 Amongst ethnic minority interviewees meta-reflexive orientations to identity tended to predominate whether these be cognitively in terms of where people were born or had migrated from or aesthetically and hermeneutically relating to culture or imaginary communities. Such meta-reflexivity, however, had different kinds of origins. For Sikhs or those from Africa, and the Caribbean the 'contextual discontinuity' arising from migration generated the critical reflections of meta-reflexivity on their changing positions in society and their identities. Yet for Muslims meta-reflexivity had been 'forced upon them' by the 'war on terror', increasingly finding they had to define themselves in religious rather than other terms.

7.3 Our central claim is that the differentiated conceptions of reflexivity found in the work of those such as Archer and Lash are conceptually superior and analytically more powerful than current accounts of 'negotiated identities', hyphenated identities, ethnic choosing and oversimplified and generalised assertions of the agency of ethnicised minorities. The approach taken here is conceptually more powerful by unpacking such vague assertions in a way that allow a new and more nuanced approach to the question of how people relate to wider

and very powerful forces of identity construction at times of social crisis. It is analytically superior in enabling us to examine in a rigorous fashion the diversity of reflexivities both within and across a range of ethnicity claims. Sociologists in the field of ethnicity and racism studies must increasingly look outside of their immediate field of conceptual resources if our theoretical approaches are to develop further.

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