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Risk and resilience in British Muslim communities

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ABSTRACT
This article presents findings from a survey of British Muslims communities. It employs the research frameworks of risk, hate crime and grounded theory to examine ‘everyday’ experiences of victimization and discrimination and the perceived complicity of the British media in creating adverse social conditions for Muslim communities. The article also examines the rather surprising descriptions of agency, personal strength and coping offered by the research participants when discussing their reactions to experiences of hate crime and prejudice. An examination of these reactions was informed by emerging psychological and sociological literatures concerning the concept of resilience.

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Introduction

Graphic images of ripped headscarves and vandalized mosques are used in the social sciences to capture our attention, pique our interest and fuel our concerns about the nature and extent of discrimination against British Muslims (cf. Runnymede Trust 1997; CBMI 2004; Lambert and Githens-Mazer 2010). However, findings from a recently completed study shed light on more subtle forms of risk that are capable of pervading British Muslim communities. This article presents the analysis of qualitative data collected from focus groups conducted with Muslim people living in England and Scotland. The participants were asked questions concerning community well-being, personal safety and relationships with the police. The conversations that followed included accounts of the risks related to ‘everyday’ forms of hate crime and discrimination and the perceived harmful side effects of British media portrayals of Muslims. The participants also revealed accounts of their resilience to these adverse social conditions. The first half of this article examines the concept of risk and its application to the types of hate crime and discrimination experienced by the participants; the second half examines resilience.
among the participants as conveyed in their accounts of agency, personal strength and coping.

Theoretical and empirical background to the study of British Muslim communities

Arguably, studies of Islamophobia from the mid-nineties onwards generated scholarly and policy literature dominated by theoretical and political perspectives (cf. Runnymede Trust 1997; CBMI 2004; Esposito and Kalin 2011). Recent empirical studies have, however, established a stronger evidence base for debates around British Muslim communities, hate crime and Islamophobia (Sheridan 2006; Lambert and Githens-Mazer 2010; Bleich 2011; Helbling 2012; Chakraborti, Garland, and Hardy 2014; Iganski and Lagou 2014; Zempi and Chakraborti 2014). This article aims to contribute towards these evidence-based criminological studies of British Muslim communities using research frameworks provided by prominent hate crime scholars (cf. Iganski 1999; McDevitt, Levin, and Bennett 2002; Chakraborti and Garland 2015) and as used within the studies listed above.

Use of the hate crime framework allows researchers to consider issues of legislation and administration, alongside empirical, political and critical perspectives, thus providing an effective bridge between theory and practice (cf. Chakraborti and Garland 2014). Further, it allows for the cross-pollination of theory and practice related to other forms of hate crime (cf. Chakraborti and Garland 2015). Previous studies of Islamophobia have contained conceptual uncertainty (the concept being both ill-defined and broadly applied), although more recent studies have defined and operationalized the term to better effect (cf. Bleich 2011; Bleich and Maxwell 2012). Researchers are now more able to measure the extent and practical consequences of indiscriminate negative attitudes towards Muslims and Islam (Bleich 2011).

Several research participants in the present study perceived the British media to be complicit in stirring up anti-Muslim sentiment and increasing the risks of Muslim victimization. This article examines the perceived interactions of negative media depictions of Muslims within the ecology of ‘everyday’ experiences of anti-Muslim hostility. In doing so, the research develops compelling studies that have revealed anti-Muslim biases running through mainstream British media (Abbas 2001; Poole 2002; Richardson 2004, 2009; Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery 2013). Other studies have attempted to establish a stronger causal link between media coverage of terrorism and the discrimination of British Muslims (Hickman et al. 2011). The findings reported in this article sought to determine the perceived role of the media in reinforcing the types of stereotypes relied on by perpetrators of criminal and non-criminal forms of ‘everyday’ hatred and discrimination.
Methods

The research was guided by a primary research question: To what extent does ‘everyday’ hate crime inform the daily lives of British Muslim communities? To answer this question, the author adopted grounded theory and its principles of iteration. Consequently, research questions were added as theory emerged: To what extent do the theories of risk help aid our understanding of the types of hate crime and discrimination experienced by the research participants going about their everyday lives? What role do the narrative constructions of resilience play in the wider narratives of victimization and discrimination shared by the research participants?

Thirteen focus groups were conducted in seven locations across England and Scotland. Focus groups were held in two Scottish cities (Scot City 1 and Scot City 2, with Muslims populations estimated in the 2011 Census (ONS 2011) as 32,000 and 14,000, respectively), and in five English cities: two in the north (North City 1 and North City 2, with estimated Muslim populations of 79,000 and 129,000, respectively); two in the midlands (Mid City 1 and Mid City 2, with estimated Muslim populations of 61,000 and 234,000, respectively,) and one in the south (with an estimated Muslim population of 1,700). Sixty-three female and thirty-five male participants (ninety eight in total) agreed to attend one focus group each. Groups were either all male or all female. Research participants were selected using a non-random sample (Moser and Kalton 1985), a recruitment strategy derived from convenience and snowball sampling (Bryman 2012), and with assistance from a number of key informants (Tremblay 1957): individuals working within local community organizations connected to mosques or Islamic centres, or engaged in the provision of services for a local Muslim community. Given the extreme sensitivities around the research topic, care was taken to ensure that ethical principles were upheld and transgressions avoided. Participants were not subjected to harm, to a lack of informed consent, to any invasion of privacy nor to any deception (Diener and Crandall 1978). The research was conducted in strict accordance with the University of Cambridge’s and the British Sociological Association’s ethical codes of practice.

Two focus groups were organized with assistance from a national organization involved in research and advocacy within British Muslim communities. The focus groups were conducted in English except one in which an interpreter spoke Somali. None of the research participants was invited to participate on the sole basis of previous victimization or discrimination experiences. This approach offered local representativeness and differing perspectives in that each group comprised of victims and non-victims. Discussion began with a brief introduction followed by a simple question that encouraged discussion of issues deemed important by the participants:
What is life like for Muslim people here?

Topics raised and discussed included local, national and international issues although conversation centred invariably on the localized risks of hate crime and discrimination. Further open-ended questions explored issues of victimization and discrimination among the participants’ families and friends, and local attitudes towards the police.

A strict dichotomy of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ researcher positions (Dwyer and Buckle 2009) was blurred during the research processes. Although the researcher identifies as non-Muslim, the institutional home of the research is recognizable as one promoting the study of Islam. Indications from key informants and participants were that their participation had been agreed due to the presence of a research institution accredited, evidently, with ‘insider’ status. Despite the welcoming attitudes of the participants, the focus groups were made possible only after negotiations with key informants. Understandably perhaps, some of the participants felt uncomfortable offering personal information to a stranger and a strategic decision was taken not to survey the participants in this way. All participants and locations were strictly anonymized, only sex and religion were recorded. All names reported below are pseudonyms.

Analysis of the data was undertaken using principles and methods drawn from grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2010). Grounded theory is an iterative approach to qualitative analysis that encourages researchers to induce theory from data, rather than test hypotheses (Bryman 2012). Accordingly, the data were transcribed, visited and revisited, coded and recoded as theory emerged (Charmaz 2010; Bryman 2012). These iterative processes were informed by theoretical sampling (Charmaz 2010): here, that meant focus groups data revealing narratives around risk, hate crime and resilience were used to guide subsequent focus group discussion and data analysis. Coding was used to label, separate, compile and organize data. Whilst limited resources negated ‘theoretical saturation’, the point at which data no longer reveal new theories and concepts (Charmaz 2010), the collected data and the emergent conceptualizations of risk and resilience were subjected to constant comparison and reflection (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Bryman 2012). Thus, grounded theory aided the capture of concepts, categories, hypotheses and theory relating to risk and resilience among the participants.

Risk among British Muslim communities

As might be expected with an abstracted noun, and as demonstrated by the participants, risk is capable of being constructed widely. Several conceptualizations of risk presented themselves as potential frameworks through
which to analyse the data. First, risk in its common sense meaning. Here, risk is the hazardous force present in a multitude of daily settings and negotiated through experience, knowledge and intuition (Lupton 1999). Examples include the potential harms related to certain locations (for example, certain neighbourhoods were described as ‘risky’). Second, we may consider the statistical models of risk, as applied to medical conditions and their treatment, and familiar to readers of popular science (cf. Gigerenzer 2003). These statistical techniques are applied elsewhere within the natural and social sciences to predict future events by observing those from the present or past. Third, we may consider theoretical models such as the risk society thesis (Beck 1992): a popular analytical framework used by sociologists and criminologists. Beck’s central thesis was that late-modernity (i.e. the shift from industrial to post-industrial society) has witnessed novel forms of manufactured risks: by-products of technological and economic ‘advancements’ (risks such as global warming and mass unemployment). These risks are capable of causing social, economic and environmental adversity, and require the adoption of new strategies and burdens of avoidance (processes described collectively as ‘reflexive modernity’). For Beck:

Risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself. Risks, as opposed to older dangers, are consequences which relate to the threatening force of modernization and to its globalization of doubt. (1992, 21)

Beck was concerned chiefly with the ways in which the optimism of nineteenth-century industrial wealth production gave way to the pessimism of twentieth-century post-industrial risk production and did not apply his theory to the specifics of crime or the criminal justice system. Others have developed the risk society thesis in more criminological directions (Mythen and Walklate 2006). Elsewhere, risk theory has been applied to the notion of ‘Otherness’ (Lupton 1999), to the ideas and strategies formed in response to symbolic notions of risk, self and ‘Other’, and to the ‘hazards’ represented by stigmatized or marginalized social groups. In a later iteration of the risk thesis, Beck described the emergence of global public spheres and global ‘subpolitics’; defined as the decoupling of politics from government (2009, 95). Beck cited terrorism as an example of global subpolitics: conflict between cultures rather than sovereign states. Like others (cf. Fekete 2009), Beck argued that ‘anticipated intentional catastrophes’ (such as terrorist acts) have transformed a society in which state agencies identify and attempt to disrupt suspected ‘aliens’ (Beck 2009, 106). The perception of a generalized terrorist risk and the anticipation of intentional catastrophes have underpinned state and public discrimination against Muslim communities: in Beck’s words, ‘waves of aggravated imputation’ (2009, 107). In short, Beck asserted that the risks of terrorism have been perceived, asserted,
and even maintained, by those who would conflate being different and being dangerous, and who would seek to cleave a non-Muslim ‘us’ and a Muslim ‘them’ with the use of labels such as ‘dangerous’ and ‘not dangerous’. In this model, the numerous ‘everyday’ incidents of Muslim victimization and discrimination recounted by the research participants would appear to be practical consequences of this attempted cleavage: individuals and communities stigmatized, victimized and marginalized as a dangerous and alien ‘Other’.

Previous research by the present author examined the probabilistic nature of anti-Muslim crime in England and Wales (Hargreaves 2015). The analysis reported in the present article draws from common understandings of risk, as described by the research participants, and from elements of the risk society thesis. The confluence of perceived discrimination factors was a common thread through the interview and focus group data. Many participants reflected on their own social disadvantages as by-products of negative media depictions of Muslims and a bias towards the reporting of violence, terrorism and war (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery 2013). Risk thesis scholars have focused on social transformation and have identified the broadcast media as a crucial mediating technology of risk (Tulloch 1999; van Loon 2000). This article develops these models of mediated risk by offering analysis of the practical consequences for those to whom risk is attributed. Several research participants perceived a sense of double victimization by the media’s portrayals of Muslims and terrorism. First, the emotional hurt caused by the media biases against a perceived in-group. Second, the psychological and physical harms caused by discriminatory actions by an out-group perceived as having been informed, encouraged or justified by such biases. Just as climate change narratives precede open hostility towards energy companies, so terrorism and radicalization narratives were perceived by the participants as preceding open hostility towards Muslims.

**Risk among British Muslim communities**

The findings around ‘everyday’ victimization and discrimination will be instantly recognizable to those familiar with published research in this field (Lambert and Githens-Mazer 2010; Iganski and Lagou 2014; Zempi and Chakraborti 2014). Within this familiar landscape, this article attempts to provide the following original contributions. First, the article offers empirical evidence for the prevalence of non-criminal forms of victimization and discrimination (adverse social conditions informed by verbal abuse and acts of discourtesy rather than physical violence). Second, given that only two participants wore face veils during the focus groups, the present study extends research around visibly Muslim women to include those
who wear only headscarves (cf. Chakraborti and Zempi 2012). Third, empirical evidence is adduced to support previous studies of systematic negative media biases against Muslims and Islam and to give a voice to victims of victimization and discrimination who consider the media to be culpable of increasing their risks of being targeted. Fourth, media depictions, adverse social conditions, and the anticipation of risk are considered in concert to promote an ecological understanding of anti-Muslim discrimination.

Previous criminological literature has asserted the disproportionate risks of physical violence suffered by British Muslim communities (cf. Lambert and Githens-Mazer 2010). Notwithstanding these assertions, participants in the present study rarely recounted experiences of physical abuse. Instead, they described verbal abuse and other non-criminal forms of victimization and discrimination (such as stares or being ignored). Further, and in accordance with the later iterations of risk theory (Lupton 1999), many participants perceived these incidents as creating adverse social conditions, perceived as generalized risk in public places. These conditions were felt intuitively and for some remained indefinable, almost elusive. Abdul (North City 1) summarized the social conditions to which Muslims are exposed:

… there’s an atmosphere, there’s definitely an atmosphere…

Participants described adverse social conditions in a variety of public spaces. These accounts remained relatively stable across the fieldwork sites. There were no apparent regional differences, and little variance between participants from different ethnic or national backgrounds. Variance was evident between female and male participants however. Female participants were far more likely to share accounts of discrimination. This could reflect higher levels of victimization or a greater readiness to share such accounts; or, more likely perhaps, both. In North City 1, a female respondent recounted the ostracization of a Muslim female student wearing a face veil. In South Town, participants experienced criminal verbal abuse alongside discrimination that was equally exclusionary but less obviously criminal: a lollipop lady [school safety patrol or crossing guard] referring to the participants as ‘you people’. Participants shared accounts of the anticipated and realized risks of non-criminal discrimination. Bahir explained how explicit expressions of racism have been replaced by a form that is ‘much more subtle’. Aaliyah (Scots City 1) described ‘subtle’ discrimination related to her visible Muslim identity. Choosing to wear a headscarf elicited ‘strange looks … especially on public transport’ replete with unwelcoming gestures and the distinct perception of exclusion. Pessimistically, she stated:

Aaliyah: … they want to keep at arm’s length from you.
Basira and Chandra (South Town) recounted the ‘everyday’, mundane nature of anti-Muslim discrimination:

Basira: My sister recently moved to [South Town] and she said she had people behind her in a queue putting on Indian accents and laughing …

Chandra: Oh we get that all the time …

Dania in Scots City 1 described ‘subtle’ discrimination as an ‘everyday’ occurrence for visibly Muslim women. She recounted experiences of being ignored by supermarket staff whilst recognizing the nature of such discrimination:

Dania: Yeah, it is subtle, but it’s there …

Being ignored was a phenomenon evoked frequently by participants. Following comments concerning verbal abuse, Eliza in North City 1 recounted an experience at a pedestrian crossing (street crossing):

Eliza: … she just like literally just moved away from me and gave me a very dirty look […] that made me feel really uncomfortable.

**Media complicity**

The complicity of the media in generating these adverse social conditions was a common discursive thread among the participants. Previous studies of media discourse have provided compelling evidence for systematic negative bias running throughout the printed and broadcast media using textual and corpora analysis. However, these studies rarely include Muslim voices or descriptions of how these negative media portrayals impact upon daily lives (cf. Abbas 2001; Poole 2002; Richardson 2009; Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery 2013). The findings presented here aim to give a voice to those within British Muslim communities who have suffered the practical consequences of widespread media prejudices. Fatima (South Town) described her feelings:

Fatima: Yeah […] Muslims are always looked upon and reported in a negative way, I mean they never report any of the good stuff that any of the Muslims, in the community or the mosques or even individuals (sic); but anything that’s negative is straight there on the news …

Other focus groups perceived causal links between media portrayals of Muslims and adverse social conditions. Gabriella (North City 1) stated:

Gabriella: … there’s a lot of comments (sic), dirty looks, you can tell when there’s been a particular thing on the news, people react to you differently …
Participants constructed the notion of a causal link between media depictions and the heightened anticipation of risks around further discrimination. Hakima and Ibtihal (Scots City 1) described how these risks affect their strategic approaches to parenting and child safety:

Hakima: ... but nowadays I'm just scared myself ...
Julian: And what makes you more scared, more anxious?
Hakima: The media.
Julian: The media?
Ibtihal: Yes.
Hakima: And the public’s reaction to it, reading the newspaper, reading stories, we're on Facebook, Twitter, we see stories, we see live videos and stuff, and the feedback we're getting, you know to the media is so bad ...
Ibtihal: And it stops us from letting our kids go out to socialize.

Participants in Scots City 2 perceived a causal link between the prevalence of subtle, ‘everyday’ forms of discrimination and events such as the daytime murder of British soldier Lee Rigby on a busy London street (captured on a mobile phone, broadcast via social media, and committed by two Muslim men who were described at trial as holding extremist views):

Jada: I found that after the Lee Rigby incident, I found that people were very, very bitter, and you could feel that people were bitter, there was even when you went up to customer services in certain stores you didn't get a smile, you didn't get any feedback, nothing, just like if you took something, if you wanted to return something, they would just return it and do their job and that's it, nothing more.

Eliza (North City 1) reproduced the symbolism of violence to describe attitudes towards Islam as having been ‘hijacked by the media’:

Eliza: People are being brainwashed into believe that these Muslims are nothing but barbaric, they can’t be peaceful loving people, they can’t be part of the human race, like you [another participant] said, dehumanizing ... we’re dehumanized ...

There were, as expected, many descriptions of incidents involving dehumanizing criminal abuse: ‘fucking Muslims’ in Mid City 1; ‘terrorist’ in North City 2 (and other locations: North City 1, Mid City 1, Mid City 2, Scots City 1, Scots City 2); ‘raghead’ in South Town. However, participants relied more often on constructions of personal risk devoid of identifiable criminal activity: to use the lexicon of British police recorded crime, ‘hate incidents’ rather than ‘hate crimes’. Instead, risk was perceived as pervading a media-shaped social environment in which physical manifestations of anti-Muslim violence were frequently anticipated (although less frequently experienced). Within the current schema of British Muslim communities, the findings described
above may appear uncontroversial, even conventional. It is anticipated that
the following findings will be perceived as being rather less conventional.

Resilience among British Muslim communities

The study of resilience following exposure to crime victimization is still in its
infancy and thus without a unifying conceptual framework (Dutton and
Greene 2010). Notwithstanding the subject’s novelty, there is a small but
growing psychological literature from which has emerged the following de-

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity
of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and
physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually
and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally
meaningful ways.

Resilience has been conceptualized as a multidimensional phenomenon,
comprised of: protective factors (existing prior to crime victimization); a
series or cascade of adaptive processes (in response to victimization); and
positive outcomes (or the absence of symptoms) following adversity
(Dutton and Greene 2010). Elsewhere, studies have identified dynamic pro-
cesses and outcome variance (cf. Rutter 2013). Risk creates a standard baseline
against which the heterogeneity of responses may be measured. Within this
paradigm, resilience may be considered as resistance to ‘environmental risk
experiences’ (34). For the purposes of this study, such an approach assumes
acceptance of the accounts of an adverse social climate shared by the
research participants. This is unproblematic if a victim-centred view of hate
crime is adopted and the perceptions of racial or religious motivation held
as prima facie evidence (Macpherson 1999; Chakraborti and Garland 2015).

Other models of resilience have focused on collective rather than individual
processes. Resilience has been defined as adaptive community capacities
(Hobfoll et al. 2007; Norris and Stevens 2007). Within this context resilience
is improved by well-functioning social systems and structures. These pro-
cesses have been related to the concept of ‘steeling’: the effects of strength-
ening an individual through exposure to bad experiences (Rutter 2013).

Three empirical studies of resilience offer comparable findings. A study of
Salvadorian families in Canada (Carranza 2007) revealed the role played by
ethnic pride in protecting individuals from the harms of prejudice and
racism during acculturation processes (analogous perhaps with the concept
of ‘steeling’). A qualitative study of African American males (Teti et al. 2012)
revealed manifestations of resilience that included declarations of persever-
ance, the value placed on local support networks, and the use of religion
and spirituality as a resource from which to draw individual and communal
strength. Another, more quantitative, study of African American male youths (Burt, Simons, and Gibbons 2012) used strain theory to describe the relationships between being subjected to interpersonal racial discrimination and the increased risks of the victim’s subsequent offending. Findings revealed the statistically significant effects of ethnic-racial socialization (defined as the promotion of pride and esteem) and ‘preparation for bias’ (defined as the processes through which parents prepare children for anticipated discrimination experiences). Both processes were found to generate resilience against the criminogenic effects of racist victimization. Participants in the present study described examples of resilience in which, as in the qualitative African American study, religion and religious identity were central. Kaleema (Mid City 1) described resilience and the role of her faith within the context of workplace discrimination:

Kaleema: … the more you practise, really, the more you are, the better to (sic) dealing with others …

Mariam (North City 1) described resilience, religious practice and non-retaliation following victimization by abuse online (Facebook pages encouraging Islamophobia) and offline (‘paki’, ‘terrorist’):

Julian: What if there were other avenues to report these instead of the police, have you ever used a Muslim helpline?
Lana: Yeah
Julian: Or Tell MAMA?
Lana: Tell MAMA yeah.
Julian: Have you ever used any of those services, are you aware of them?
Gabriella: I’m not aware of them.
Mariam: There is one that I know call MEND. So, they react to the media and they’ve got a way of interacting with their website […] but like myself and the other sisters I just think you know it isn’t that often […] it’s not that often that it occurs I when it does I just feel that it’s verbal, just ignore it, because if we complain or say something about it, it’s giving them power who’ve said it, where if I say it doesn’t affect me, walk past it but …
Julian: So, sometimes is it better to ignore it?
Mariam: Personally, and I think it’s part of our religion as well to a certain extent, not to react, so I’m all for not reacting.

Nadiya and Orza (Scots City 1) described experiences of verbal abuse (‘paki’), mixed attitudes towards reporting incidents to the police, and resilience also drawn from the participants’ Islamic faith:

Julian: Do you think more Muslim women should be encouraged to report?
Nadiya: Yeah, yes, absolutely
Orza: But then it’s up to the police to do something, could you imagine if every Muslim reported, ‘Somebody called me a “paki”’. What would
the police response be? ‘Oh och those Asians they’re always complaining’

Nadiya: … Muslim women think, ‘Why bother the police?’

Orza: Forgive and forget.

Other participants described resilience that relied less on religion, but demonstrated comparable levels of coping, agency and meaning-making within the victimization process. Parsa (Mid City 1) described her reaction to an incident of verbal abuse in a public place (‘fucking terrorist’):

Parsa: … I didn’t care and I didn’t say anything to them … such people, I think they are ill … for that reason I am okay …

Lana (North City 1) expressed resilience as a strategy to manage anticipated risks and adverse social conditions embodied within potentially hostile public encounters:

Lana: … since I started wearing the scarf I am kind of aware that people might perceive me negatively so I make an effort to sit next to someone on the bus and say ‘how are you?’ or smile at people […] if I do catch someone looking at me I would just smile at them.

These findings lend empirical support to the ‘anticipated risks’ of Beck’s thesis and the ‘preparations for bias’ concept from the quantitative study of African American male youths (Burt, Simons, and Gibbons 2012). Preparation for bias was also implied in the following account from Scots City 2:

Jada: … we actually grew up working in my dad’s shop and we’ve grown up accepting verbal abuse, we’ve accepted that, so someone across the road calls, ‘Oi! You paki!’ I’m not going to report that […] I’ve been brought up with that and I’m like immune to it …

Several focus groups were held on the premises of community organizations offering support to Muslim victims of hate crime and discrimination. Raani (Scots City 2) shared a positive outcome following an incident at a school involving her son and another pupil’s parent:

Raani: … it was the Racial Equality [Council] I went to, I went into Racial Equality, and I said [to the school] I’m not coming in on my own, I said I gave you three times opportunity to discuss the matter with me, you gave that parent all the time, and you’ve taken on board what she’s said but you haven’t listened to me. So I took them [an REC representative] and honestly, what a change …

This expression of resilience would appear to echo previous resilience studies around ‘steeling’ (Rutter 2013) and the pivotal role of local support networks in promoting resilience and well-being (Teti et al. 2012). However, resilience was not always described in such obviously positive terms. Having described
an experience of racism in a coffee shop (‘go back to where you come from’), Sajida (Scot City 2) described resilience and agency in terms of reprisal:

Sajida: … I thought, I’m not going to entertain it, but then I couldn’t control myself and so I thought, ‘Let me just go and talk to him’, so I approached him … I said ‘I come from here … this is my home’ …

Eliza (North City 1) expressed resilience (and undoubted bravery) in her account of confronting ‘everyday’ discrimination:

Eliza: … he was just like looking at me […] and just really it was it was quite scary at the time but because of my, well I think it would be scary for me now but at the time I was very, erm, the type of person who was like, yeah fearless. I didn’t really care so, erm, I just looked at him and was like, ‘What are you looking at?’

An example of a more physical manifestation of preparing for bias and reprisal was offered in Scots City 1. Having described an incident in which her son fought back after being physically attacked on public transport, Tasneem said:

Tasneem: … my son knew how to fight back, he knew how to hold him down […] I was just thankful that my son has the […] tactics that he has and he’s taught his younger brother and […] his three sisters …

Within this context of not reporting incidents of verbal abuse or other hate incidents, Fatima (South Town) stated:

Fatima: I think everyone brushes it off unless it’s physical violence.

These examples are not presented as simple good news stories. Rather, they highlight the readiness with which participants shared narratives around personal victimization that included identifiable components of resilience; expressed here as downplaying the seriousness of the risks described: attributes of agentic, pro-active victimization (rather than more passive states of being). Other, more serious risks were subjected to these processes of being downplayed by participants. Contributors to the criminological literature have often relied on cases involving criminal acts around mosques to highlight the nature and extent of Islamophobia. Female participants in South Town gave a surprising account of an incident in which perpetrators left pig bones by their mosque (also the location of the focus group). Resilience here was expressed as the downgrading of a risk from ‘dangerous’ to ‘pathetic’. It would appear, in this context at least, that resilience is capable of being constructed through undermining the character and motivations of a perpetrator. As elsewhere, this process of communal sense-making following exposure to risk appeared to strengthen or ‘steel’ the participants:

Fatima: With the bones, I don’t think, I think it’s just pathetic …
Basira: Yeah.
Fatima: It’s like a schoolboy thing …
The discussion continued:

Julian: Your attitude here seems to be that that act of leaving the bones was pathetic rather than dangerous …

Fatima: Yeah, obviously.

Basira: It was pathetic.

Fatima: Compared to an arson attack, arson attack is really … life threatening … it’s with an intent (sic) to destroy, isn’t it? Whereas with like pig bones …

Basira: With the bones …

Fatima: It’s something your child would do …

Basira: Childish really …

Fatima: Yeah …

Basira: Teenagers isn’t it?

This downgrading of risk appeared numerous times. Below, this final example revealed a resilience narrative downplaying the risks posed by a local group of the English Defence League (a far-right group):

Fatima: There’s, there’s a lot of the like EDL sort of people, I don’t know if that sounds …

Julian: No, I get it …

Chandra: But, erm, but they’re not like going forward with anything like, they’re just … it’s in their minds sort of …

Fatima: They never do anything more than words …

Discussion

Interpersonal Muslim victimization may be conceptualized crudely as a continuum that begins unhappily with acts of discourtesy, develops onwards through verbal abuse, physical attack and murder, and terminates with mass murder. Although this continuum may appear to develop exponentially (in terms of victims and harms) this article argues that non-criminal discrimination appears capable of affecting more British Muslim lives than physical interpersonal violence. Furthermore, what we might label cautiously as ‘low level’ incidents play a significant role in creating the adverse social conditions perceived by British Muslims. The findings presented in this article develop previous conceptualizations of risk by applying them to ‘everyday’ lives within British Muslim communities. It is evident that post-industrial processes such as migration and anti-migration sentiment, increased transnationalism, and the mass media coverage of national and international news events appear capable of interacting at the individual and community level, and particularly in public spaces, to produce criminal, and more likely it seems, non-criminal risks of anti-Muslim discrimination. However, and despite these risks, this article argues for the consideration of resilience within British Muslim communities. Although initially appearing quasi-paradoxical, the practice
and performance of Muslim and Islamic identity may be both a risk factor, in terms of creating a target for anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination, and an adaptive process generating resilience through agency, coping, and the personal strength derived from self-efficacy. In short, and within the context of British Muslim identities, that which increases risk for Muslims may also provide resilience. For some of the participants, as for those in previous studies, resilience appeared to be reinforced by spirituality and religious practice, and by the types of social networks found commonly throughout British Muslim communities.

Three previous studies provided comparable examples of resilience research (Carranza 2007; Burt, Simons, and Gibbons 2012; Teti et al. 2012). Although the author assumed the position of ‘outsider’ (qualified by the ‘insider’ status afforded to his home institution), the adopted research methods generated similar findings to studies conducted in a non-English language shared by the researcher and participants (Carranza 2007), and qualitative research of African American communities undertaken by interviewers from the same ethnic background (Teti et al. 2012). It would appear, therefore, that the relative ‘outsider’ status of the present author did not affect the stability of findings across the previous and present studies. In summary, the present study revealed forms of resilience in the processes following Muslim victimization that are broadly similar in nature to those found previously within migrant and minority communities. The question may remain however: Why should we consider resilience at all? Doubters may raise the following challenges:

• Are the resilience narratives found in the data evidence for a lack of symptoms following adversity or merely a discursive strategy contingent on the research setting itself? Do they represent anything more than the kinds of stories people tell researchers? Are they rooted in a sense of denial?
• Are the findings generalizable across British Muslim communities or limited to the types of people who might agree to participate in a focus group, or neither?
• Can studies of resilience among British Muslim communities offer opportunities for the design and implementation of effective interventions? Or, are they merely good news stories offering a comforting but fictional happy ending and little else in terms of practical utility?

This article proposes three reasons why resilience is an appropriate and required topic within hate crime research. First, and regardless of any scepticism around the veracity or honesty of these particular accounts, consideration of resilience narratives broadens our understanding of victimization and deployed coping strategies (whether effective or otherwise). Further, it is clear that resilience is a commonly found discursive topic (albeit with a
variance contingent on ethnic and cultural identity). Given the variety of research methods and settings that have generated comparable findings, and even for those participants engaged in processes of denial, pride, or even bravado, there would appear to be sufficient unifying assertions of coping, agency and meaning-making to suggest resilience has an ontological reality worthy of further criminological examination. Second, comparison with previous research studies revealed repeated patterns of resilience across migrant and minority groups that have been identified elsewhere using the examination of large-scale data. Regardless of whether the particular findings here are as generalizable, consideration of resilience among British Muslim communities is useful in that it extends the victims’ stories beyond descriptive crime statistics and the moment of victimization. Hate crime scholars have debated whether ‘hate crimes hurt more’ (Iganski 2001; Hurd and Moore 2004); others have noted the psychological effects of racist hate crime (Craig-Henderson and Sloan 2003). But even when the psychological effects of hate crime are accepted, we might still inquire: how many victims of hate crime hurt more? (cf. Iganski and Lagou 2015). If a disturbing number of hate crime victims suffer psychologically, those that suffer less may provide the basis for studies such as those carried out on victims of child abuse who in adulthood do not suffer from depression, drug addiction, alcohol abuse, or problems with trust (Davis, Lurigio, and Herman 2013). Further, recognising the variation within victims’ harm raises important questions concerning the culpability and punishment of offenders (Iganski and Lagou 2015). Further still, consideration of resilience removes the dangers of reinforcing stereotypes of British Muslim communities as excluded and disenfranchised through well-meaning although potentially damaging research conclusions. This might be especially relevant for ‘outsiders’ seeking insight (such as the author). The avoidance of these dangers enables researchers to safeguard themselves from appearing to parade the suffering of participants as mere research trophies. Third, a compelling case has been made for the use of practical measures for Muslim victims of Islamophobia that accommodate distinct cultural and religious needs (Zempi 2014). Findings around resilience support this view by suggesting that whilst it is Muslim identity that has been targeted, religious belief and practice might act as an appropriate starting point for victim support strategies (especially those involving therapy or counselling). Consideration of resilience requires us to assume the heterogeneity of reactions to risk and adversity. Doing so may pave the way for more effective interventions, or more valuable assessments of existing measures. Scholars have argued that resilience is best understood as a cascade of adaptive processes. Inspection of these cascades in certain loci (e.g. positive outcomes for individuals supported by good practice among non-governmental organizations in a particular city) may benefit Muslim victims living elsewhere. In this undying age of austerity, harnessing the resilience of some British
Muslim victims of hatred and discrimination might assist other victims without large-scale recourse to public funds.

Resilience as a concept, especially when applied by social psychologists, induces divergences of opinion and approach that signpost future research opportunities. Tummala-Narra (2007) argued that the prevailing views of resilience are shaped by middle class and Western values of individual autonomy and achievement that may not resonate across cultures or reflect culturally salient views on positive responses to adversity. This suggests the need for comparative hate crime research across minority groups that is sensitive to cultural difference. In places, the resilience literature offers vague conclusions concerning potentially successful interventions: described as those which augment and enhance existing community resources (Harvey 2007, 23). But how may we best identify and harness these resources? Again, further research is needed. Most accounts of resilience described in this article were offered by female participants; further research of Muslim men and research undertaken by ‘insiders’ would undoubtedly unlock more nuanced findings.

Conclusion

This article argued for a continued focus on ‘everyday’ hate crime and discrimination and a renewed focus on the types of non-criminal behaviour that were so often the subject of the research participants’ experiences. Further, this article argued that an ecological perspective provides a useful framework through which to analyse the interactions between British Muslim identities, negative media portrayals of Muslims and Islam and anticipated risks. Within this ecological perspective, and based on the findings, this article contested that the social sciences need to more often consider issues around resilience to victimization and discrimination, and to portray less often British Muslims as passive victims of risk and crime. These findings provide the basis for a counter-narrative to assertions that depict anti-Muslim hate crime victims only as helpless individuals within powerless communities. This fresh approach recognizes the agency of the victim (particularly important when considering the study of minority communities from a majority perspective) and recognizes that victimization and discrimination do not necessarily create passive states of being. Consideration of resilience assumes and accepts the presence of a victim’s agency, personal strength, choice and meaning-making through adversity rather than the implied absence of such factors.

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