



# **‘Why Should We Have to Prove We’re Alright?’: Counter-terrorism, Risk and Partial Securities**

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## **Abstract**

Under the auspices of the ‘war against terrorism’, New Labour’s period of political governance in the UK was characterized by an activist, pre-emptive approach to (inter)national security. This approach was domestically embedded in specific counter-terrorism measures such as extensions to detention without charge, the expansion of stop and search measures and the deployment of control orders. Situated in this context, this article analyses the reflections of a group of young British Pakistani Muslims living in the north-west of England. First, we detail the process of *risk subjectification* through which institutional labelling narrowly defines Muslims as threatening and dangerous. Second, we consider the consolidation of practices of *self-surveillance* through which young Muslims seek to protect themselves and deflect stigmatization. In conclusion, we suggest that counter-terrorism policies have succeeded in reproducing a *state of partial securities* in and through which certain groups are protected and ‘others’ exposed to scrutiny and hostility.

## **Keywords**

counter-terrorism, Muslim minority groups, risk, security

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## Introduction

The bulk of sociological research undertaken since 9/11 suggests that Muslim minority groups have been subjected to a decade of hostility which has manifested itself in diffuse ways, from a rise in Islamophobic attitudes (Allen, 2010; Meer et al., 2010; Poynting and Mason, 2007) to media stereotyping (Moore et al., 2008; Whitaker, 2002), racially motivated violence (Allen and Nielsen, 2002; Frost, 2008) and indiscriminate counter-terrorism policing (Lambert, 2008; Mythen, 2011). Although ethnic minorities in Britain have long lived with the consequences of institutional racism, after 9/11, Muslim minority groups were pervasively constructed by sections of the media, the judiciary and senior politicians as problematic and risky 'others'. Following the 7/7 bombings, this process of stigmatization accelerated still further, impacting heavily on young Muslims. As four of the men that committed the 7/7 attacks were British-born Pakistanis,<sup>1</sup> this demographic group in particular has been regarded in media and intelligence circles as the 'enemy within' (see Chalk, 2004; Evans, 2007). Despite the present legislative interregnum that has followed a change in government, 'home-grown' terrorism remains a political priority: 'the biggest threat that we face comes from terrorist attacks, some of which are, sadly, carried out by our own citizens' (Cameron, 2011). In statements such as these, a great deal remains assumed about the scale of the terrorist risk and the extent of violent extremism. Although a considerable amount of attention has been devoted to exploring the issue of identity amongst British Muslims in recent years (see Hussain and Bagguley, 2005; Modood, 2002; Ramji, 2007), there remains a paucity of empirical research that has engaged with the perspectives of young British Muslims in the specific areas of government security policies and counter-terrorism policing (see Thiel, 2009: 53). Responding to such a lacuna, this article draws upon the findings of a qualitative research inquiry which sought to elicit the views of young British Pakistani Muslims living in the north-west of England.<sup>2</sup> In this article, our prime objective is to shed light on some of the micro-social effects of the introduction of counter-terrorism policies and the extension of pre-emptive policing practices on the outlooks, values and behaviour of participants in the study. Driven by data gathered in focus group discussions, we outline two significant processes that have emerged for participants during a period of unparalleled securitization around terrorism. First, we detail the process of risk subjectification through which young Muslims are labelled as dangerous and exposed to intensified modes of regulation. Second, we account for the development of modes of self surveillance and expressive restriction amongst this group. While the formal ambition of state counter-terrorism policies is to enhance the collective safety of citizens, it will be demonstrated that, in practice, a climate of insecurity has emerged for law-abiding individuals from communities defined as risky (see also Valverde, 2011). Insofar as we would acknowledge that the UK remains at threat from a terrorist attack – and that it is the duty of government to develop proportionate measures in the light of this threat – our findings indicate a positional shift in security management from universal guarantees of safety to the sectoral defence of rights and freedoms. Fully worked through, this shift is suggestive of a state of partial security in and through which certain ethnic groups are kept safe and 'others' are treated as objects of suspicion who can lawfully be subjected to intensified surveillance. Before

presenting our findings, and by way of contextualizing the data, we discuss the salience of the discourse of 'new terrorism' which has been reproduced in both media and political debates post 9/11.

### **'New Terrorism': Discourse, Regulation and Pre-emption**

Whilst there has been a tendency in the political realm to overplay the historical significance of the terrorist attacks in the United States, 9/11 has undoubtedly served as an inflection point so far as the governance of national security in western nations is concerned. The idea that the sheer scale of the 9/11 attacks necessitated a 'radical transformation' of security practices has assumed common currency in political circles (see National Security Strategy, 2010: 3). In the UK, Tony Blair's post 7/7 assertion that 'the rules of the game are changing'<sup>3</sup> served as the harbinger for an extensive programme of domestic securitization coupled to international military interventions, mobilized under the banner of the 'war against terrorism'. Fighting this 'new type of war'<sup>4</sup> involved championing an activist approach to security and instigating a palette of policies of pre-emption (McCulloch and Pickering, 2010; Zedner, 2009). To this end, the 'failure of imagination' within US security and intelligence services reported by the 9/11 Commission (United States Government, 2004) undoubtedly acted as a catalyst for a shifting calculus of risk which favours early intervention to prevent potential harms (Mythen and Walklate, 2008). As the UK Government's National Security Strategy (2010: 5) declares:

... we are going to place much more emphasis on spotting emerging risks and dealing with them before they become crises ... our intelligence agencies have their crucial part to play in detecting threats and preventing them from turning into carnage on our streets.

Insofar as this statement might be interpreted as a signal of future intent, western governments have already been heavily bound up with developing horizon-scanning practices toward possible security risks through large-scale programmes of surveillance, critical incident planning and emergency simulation exercises (Amoore and De Goede, 2008: 11; Mythen and Walklate, 2010b). Although the 'pre-emptive turn' has materialized in various forms in the UK, it is most palpably embedded in specific counter-terrorism measures such as control orders, detention without charge and the expansion of stop and search powers.

Before we turn to examine some of the consequences of government security policies, it is worth excavating the latent understandings of terrorism that have underscored these pre-emptive interventions. Underpinning the raft of counter-terrorism strategies implemented by New Labour lay the firm conviction that the nature and the scale of the terrorist threat had fundamentally changed. Shadowing and informing this belief, the attacks of 9/11 and the suicide bombings committed on transport networks in Madrid and London have been defined in the security studies literature as manifestations of a new type of 'high-lethality' terrorism that seeks to cause mass casualties and deliberately targets civilians (Lesser et al., 2002).<sup>5</sup> The 'new terrorism' associated with radical Islamist groups charged with such attacks is said to differ in substance from

'traditional' forms of terrorism (Laquer, 2000; Neumann, 2009). While traditional terrorist organizations including ETA and the IRA are characterized as being exercised by conflicts within specific nations, the battleground for new terrorist groups is global, with networks such as Al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah presenting a generalized threat. Although radical Islamist groups may have diffuse political aims, they are united in their demands for western governments to desist in political and economic involvement in predominantly Muslim nations. Post 9/11 the idea of 'new terrorism' became omnipresent in the language of political leaders such as George W. Bush and Tony Blair, serving as a rationale for broader geopolitical and strategic international objectives. Most notably, the invasion of Afghanistan was sanctioned on the grounds that the Taliban may provide a 'safe haven' for Al Qaeda, and the war against Iraq was operationalized under the mistaken assumption that Saddam Hussein had developed weapons of mass destruction and had formed strategic connections with Osama bin Laden. As a consequence of the ruinous military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, the 'war against terrorism' has now been scrubbed from the British party political lexicon. However, a sustained commitment to the idea of 'new terrorism' remains embedded in governmental understandings of political violence and influences the kinds of things that are sayable and doable about terrorism (Spencer, 2010). As Jackson (2005: 9) rightly observes, 'the language of counter-terrorism incorporates a series of assumptions, beliefs and knowledge about the nature of terrorism and terrorists. These beliefs then determine what kinds of counter-terrorism practices are reasonable or unreasonable.' As we illustrate, the domestic interventions of the British state have reproduced largely deleterious consequences for young British Pakistanis and led to a deterioration in trust relations between the police and Muslim communities. Setting aside what are otherwise important questions about the legitimacy and the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures introduced by New Labour, we focus on the social ramifications of discourses and practices that have generically defined Muslims as risky subjects.

The study detailed here involved young British Pakistani Muslims aged between 18 and 26, living in the north-west of England. The project comprised four focus groups followed by subsequent in-depth interviews. The participants were divided equally by sex and accessed through extant contacts within local communities.<sup>6</sup> The research design was oriented toward three interconnecting strands of inquiry, around media representations of Muslims, notions of self-identity and national security policies. Here we concentrate our attention on the latter strand, primarily relating findings regarding the impacts and effects of counter-terrorism legislation. The research questions within this strand of the inquiry were broken down into subset questions designed to facilitate free discussion within focus groups. Post-completion, digitally recorded information was transcribed and imported using NVivo software. While the small scale of the study and the specific age and ethnicity of participants mean that the findings cannot be either generalized across the British Muslim Pakistani population or extrapolated to Muslim minority groups more broadly, they serve to highlight underlying problems with the state's approach to counter-terrorism regulation (see also Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009; Spalek, 2010; Vertigans, 2010) and raise wider questions about the constitution and social distribution of 'security'.

### Risk Subjectification: Feeling Suspected, Being Surveyed

In order to explore the ways in which counter-terrorism legislation may have affected perceptions of government and individual behaviours we asked participants in the study a series of open questions. During the course of conversations, feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about counter-terrorism measures were relayed:

- Facilitator: What knowledge do you have of counter-terrorism legislation?
- Aafreen: They can stop and search you whenever they want. When I heard about Forest Gate ... I mean it feels like they can bully us and we've got no rights, do you know what I mean? I mean if we get stopped and searched for nothing what can we do about it? If we get held for 28 days who is going to compensate us? We are being put into a really tight spot, without any kind of laws to protect us.
- Asad: The 28-day law is being changed to 90 days. Imagine that. They'll be able to take us in for three months without any reason. Imagine if it was me and the intelligence was as good as the information for the Forest Gate raid? That's it. Three months for nothing. For bad information. Muslims have got it bad.<sup>7</sup>
- Zaf: As far as policy goes, it's supposed to be pre-emptive. Basically means they can pretend they've got information to do what they want. So at home they can lock you up for three months and in the Middle East you can have pre-emptive strikes because there are imaginary weapons of mass destruction. Muslims just can't win. It's a complete attack on so many levels; you may as well give in. Pre-emptive means that they don't have to prove that you are guilty. So it's guilty until proven innocent for Muslims. Now if you think of it like that, it shows that we don't even have the same rights as anyone else. Everyone else is innocent until proven guilty.

This discursive snapshot reflects the debates that took place across the focus groups, with a widespread perception being articulated that Muslims were being unfairly targeted by counter-terrorism legislation. The Forest Gate<sup>8</sup> incident referred to by Aafreen and Asad was frequently used as a sign that the common liberties promised by the justice system had effectively been suspended for Muslims. Whereas Aafreen flags up the troubling implications of pre-emptive modes of counter-terrorism for the civil rights of British Muslims, Zaf's assertion that pre-emptive measures mean 'they don't have to prove that you are guilty' is an observation which has been taken up by critical legal scholars and human rights organizations. In effect, measures such as detention without charge undermine the ancient right of *habeus corpus* through which the freedom of the individual is protected against the arbitrary actions of the State (Zedner, 2008).

In as much as the pre-emptive security agenda being pursued by the British government was highlighted as a cause for concern, this led to debates about the way in which negative assumptions were being made about the general behaviour of Muslims without recourse to evidence. To this end, many participants believed that Muslims were being over-surveyed and unjustly defined in the media as a threat to national security. Of course, prior to the contemporary trend of associating Islam with terrorism, Muslims have long been constructed as a 'folk devil' in the media, being connected to problems of domestic violence, urban unrest, immigration and social welfare (see Mirza, 2007; Poole and Richardson, 2006; Saeed, 2007). In addition to articulating feelings of

frustration about media stereotypes of Muslims, participants such as Qasim and Mansoor expressed irritation about perpetually being expected to account for the actions of an extreme minority motivated to use violence:

They ignore any of the positive things that Muslims contribute and always focus on the negatives that, at the end of the day, only a small minority of Muslims are involved with. So why hold all Muslims responsible? In any religion there are fringe elements who hold extreme views; those who distort its teachings to justify whatever they want it to. No one blamed Catholics for what happened with the IRA, so why are we made responsible for what's happened? (Qasim)

What's it got to do with me? I didn't detonate any bombs. I've not told anyone to do such things. What happened had nothing to do with Islam, so why are all Muslims expected to prove their innocence? (Mansoor)

The general consensus amongst participants was that Muslims had been generically defined as 'risky' in the media and political circles. Furthermore, the predominantly negative image of Muslims was seen to connect to increased scrutiny in the public sphere, with respondents feeling as though their actions were being constantly observed for signs of dangerousness. Several participants offered testimonies of being closely monitored by private security guards and being challenged about their religious views by members of the public, while others recounted particular sites where the surveillant gaze was concentrated:

- Zain: When I'm travelling on public transport I feel there's been a lot of discrimination which possibly might not have taken place on such a level prior to 7/7 and 9/11. Because I like to identify myself by dressing in a traditional Muslim manner I feel I'm more likely to be targeted. So the government and the police could do more to protect Muslims if they wanted, they just don't want to.
- Shazia: We see it at the airports. It's the people with the long beards, wearing the traditional Asian or Middle Eastern clothing that get the 'random' search.
- Saif: That's right. If I were to go to an airport now I could almost guarantee I'd be stopped. It's like my older brother who dresses similar to me, he works in television so he's in and out the country all the time and he gets stopped a lot and they are allegedly random searches. I mean eight out of ten is not random.

Although it might be argued that bolstering security procedures at sites vulnerable to terrorist attacks is a logical and reasonable strategy, the extent of screening procedures and the frequency with which people of Asian heritage have been targeted is worrisome (Mythen and Walklate, 2010a: 54; Salter, 2008: 245). Stretching beyond the issue of airport security, measures initially initiated in potentially vulnerable locations appear to have become dispersed. As Zedner (2009: 149) posits: 'the exceptional security measures once thought necessary only in zones of highest risk (like airports and borders) have spilled over into ordinary life and ordinary places'. Insofar as the sites in which the surveillant gaze settles on Muslims are manifold, for the young Pakistani males in the study, the experience of direct intervention by the police was a further hindrance:



Can I just give a personal experience, yeah? Going into college I was stopped and searched. That was for no reason whatsoever other than that I'm a Muslim. It makes you... uhm ... obviously I've nothing to hide, I've nothing to fear. I answered all the questions they asked me because there was no reason for me not to. But it does kind of make you feel a little bit, you know ... even though I'm not scared of the police, every time you see them now you think: 'shit'. You just try and put your head down and walk on because you know that they're looking at you. And nine times out of ten they are looking. When they stop you they look through your bag and ask what you've got. People are walking by and watching it and then you're standing at the bus stop with that person or getting on the train with them. (Ameen)

I got stopped in Manchester once. It was around that whole 9/11 thing. My brother got stopped three times in one day. In one day. Just for random stop and search. In the end he completely lost the plot with the coppers and they threatened to put him in a cell so he had to calm down. Three times in one day! (Abid)

As Abid's comments illustrate, the targeted application of stop and search measures has serious implications for young Pakistani males, affecting their freedom of movement and leading to annoyance amongst those subjected to them. Indeed, the Metropolitan Police Service (2009) have publically acknowledged that stop searches conducted without grounds for suspicion have caused apprehension amongst Muslim minority groups and impacted detrimentally on levels of trust in the police. Ameen's personal recollections flesh this point out, demonstrating that negative encounters with the police can engender troubling ontological effects, promoting feelings of discomfort, guilt and anxiety. Although the scale and composition of the sample negates the possibility of generalizing the findings, statistics published since 9/11 have consistently shown that British Asians are disproportionately subjected to stop and search powers in comparison to White British individuals (Atwhal, 2005; Frost, 2008: 554). In principle, stop and search powers permitted under Section 60 of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act allow police officers to search any person in a designated area if they have suspicion that the person may be carrying a weapon or if there is evidence that serious violence has or will take place. In practice, the implementation of Section 60 measures has succeeded in broadening the spectre of surveillance that hovers over Black and Asian individuals. A joint inquiry undertaken by criminologists at the London School of Economics and the Open Society Justice Initiative analysed Ministry of Justice figures for 2008–9 and reported that Asians were 6.3 times more likely to be stopped than Whites (Townsend, 2010). Unsurprisingly, similar disparities emerge in relation to the deployment of stop and search legislation introduced under Section 44 of the 2000 Terrorism Act (Verkaik, 2009). Notwithstanding such differential application, the policy of ramping up the use of stop and search in the years subsequent to the 7/7 bombings does not appear to have resulted in successful apprehension of individuals involved in terrorism.<sup>9</sup> Home Office statistics show that over 100,000 people were stopped and searched under Section 44 counter-terrorism powers in 2009–10 without a single arrest resultantly being made for terrorism-related offences (Cobain, 2010). Although some participants in the study acknowledged that the police had a difficult job to do in managing national security, the majority opined that counter-terrorism measures had unfairly focused on Muslims and were being applied in an indiscriminate rather than an evidential manner.<sup>10</sup> In effect, the

young people we talked to felt that they were living the everyday consequences of being socially constructed or 'made-up' as risky subjects.

- Aqeel: Like we've all been saying, you have to accept there's an important role for the police to protect us all, Muslims and non-Muslims. We all want to feel safe, so you have to accept the police need the tools to do their job.
- Qasim: Although I can accept that they have to focus attention on Muslims they can't do it in a way that criminalizes us all. You can't victimize a whole community for the actions of a few misguided people. There's no justification for that sort of discrimination. They're trying to impose some sort of collective guilt on us all that will keep us all in check.
- Salahuddin: They [the police] have to treat everyone the same, with respect, and that's the problem. The new legislation is being used against moderate-thinking Muslims like us who don't represent any sort of threat. So how can that be right?
- Qasim: And that's what they're doing, profiling anyone who fits the Muslim stereotype and persecuting them. So if you're Asian-looking, you've had it.

We can glimpse in this exchange how, in the eyes of participants, the construction of a 'suspect population' renders Muslims risky with recourse to racial, religious and/or ethnic traits, rather than on the basis of dubious or questionable behaviour. In this way, respectful and law-abiding people are put through a process of *risk subjectification* through which they become defined as dangerous by virtue of sharing some or other of the characteristics of the 'typical' terrorist. The cultural commentator Sarfraz Manzoor (2009) puts it more bluntly, 'anyone who is male and Muslim – and, even worse, happens to have Pakistani heritage – can get mistaken for a potential terrorist'. The question that springs from Manzoor's stark assessment is whether these 'mistakes' arise out of systematic evidence-based policing, or if they are the consequence of a blanket policy which specifically targets individuals from suspected populations.

In addition to questions of legitimacy and proportionality, Qasim and Salahuddin's comments indicate that the cumulative effects of pre-emptive counter-terrorism legislation on young Muslims are as disconcerting as the immediate feelings of injustice at being reprimanded without just cause. Echoing this concern, Vertigans (2010: 32) has observed that 'individuals within communities under surveillance consider their values and behaviour to be under threat, or even attack, creating feelings of uncertainty, alienation, vulnerability, persecution and victimization'. The depth of these feelings amongst Muslim minority groups and their effects on self-identities, political values and religious beliefs remain matters for empirical elaboration. Nevertheless, the tangible short-term consequence of pre-emptive securitization around terrorism has been an undoubted deterioration in the relationship between Muslim communities and the police (see also Lambert, 2008; Thiel, 2009). The young people we spoke to were of the opinion that their experiences were not being taken into account and their views effectively designed out:

Take the Forest Gate thing, intelligence can be faulty. That's not going to beat terrorism. They need us, but they won't work with us or get our opinion to move forwards, they just want to scare us into submission. No, our views are not reflected ... never will be ... our feelings are not part of the game you see. (Kahlil)



As Kahlil implies, mutual cooperation between minority communities and the police can only be founded on relationships of trust (Spalek, 2010). In acute contrast, the widespread use of stop and search powers as an institutional mechanism for data gathering and surveillance has been harmful to associations between the police and minority communities. As Ryder (2009) avers:

...however tempting it may be to gather information in this way, it is a flawed strategy. The figures reveal that only a small percentage of stops glean meaningful information. At the same time, each unjustified stop exacts a price in good community relations. It creates a cycle of distrust that makes it even harder to obtain information in the future.

Effective counter-terrorism activities can only be advanced in a context in which they have cross-community support. If the narratives we were party to are an indication of more widely held views, it would appear that the police have lost support from sections of the community they are supposed to serve. Besides eroding relations between Muslim minority groups and the police in the short term, the anger and resentment produced by 'early interventions' and 'target hardening measures' have fuelled feelings of injustice and social marginalization. In this sense the implementation of pre-emptive counter-terrorism measures may have more severe long-term ramifications, 'impeding effective intelligence and contributing to a general drift towards, rather than away from, support for violent Islamism' (Thiel, 2009: 2). While the wider consequences of a decade of securitization remain open to debate, the conviction that pre-emptive counter-terrorism powers were being unjustly enforced is not limited to participants in the study. The legality of specific pre-emptive policies has been challenged in the law courts, with the European Court of Human Rights determining that Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 is unlawful. In its ruling, the court criticized the powers as 'neither sufficiently circumscribed, nor subject to adequate legal safeguards against abuse' (Travis, 2010). Prior to the publication of a comprehensive counter-terrorism review by the coalition government, the period of detention without charge in Britain has been reversed from 28 to 14 days. Meanwhile, the much maligned system of control orders, aspects of which were also declared illegal, is to be disbanded and replaced by alternative methods of regulation (Curtis, 2010).

### Checking and Hushing: Practices of Self-surveillance

Thus far we have conveyed the ideational and practical mechanisms through which participants found themselves institutionally categorized as dangerous. In this section we delineate some of the practices of self-surveillance that are invoked by risk subjectification. In response to the risky status that had been projected onto them, some participants had adopted practices of 'checking' and 'hushing' to demonstrate their 'safeness' and/or to reduce the possibility of experiencing racially motivated victimization. We define 'checking' behaviours as those where self-inspection leads to the conscious performance of self-restraint. Checking behaviours materialized in assorted forms, including the selective use of dialect, alterations to physical and sartorial displays and the curbing of outward behaviour in the public sphere.

At night times especially, if I'm going anywhere I don't know, especially if it is late on at night, I sometimes cover my beard up a bit or maybe take my hat off. Generally I wouldn't during the day time, but if I'm walking in an area I don't know I may cover up a bit just out of fear of attack. (Zain)

Just going back to whether people feel comfortable or not wearing the burka, or even just the hijab. Many of the women I know, among my family and within my circle of friends, are concerned how people might react to them, some of them are even scared having read about attacks on women. So I think it has to change how you are in some way. Just the fact we talk about it means it's an issue we are all conscious of now. (Sakina)

Zain's comments regarding the concealment of the beard were echoed by several other participants, one of whom humorously related his attempts to trim his beard to an 'acceptable European Regulation length'. For the women in the study who chose to wear traditional clothing, scrutiny of their apparel had led to reflection on the ramifications of displaying outward markers of faith. Episodes such as the former Home Secretary Jack Straw asserting that the wearing of the veil constituted a 'visible statement of separation and difference' were cited as emblematic of disapproving political attitudes toward Islam and Muslims (see also Meer et. al., 2010). It should be noted, however, that responses to stigmatization were not uniform and varied from individual to individual. While many participants had become inured to monitoring and modifying sartorial styles, others argued that their choice of clothing was an important statement of identity and an active marker of resistance:

Yasmin: It's a symbol of who we are; a statement of pride almost. Why should we be ashamed of being Muslims? I'm proud of who I am and I want to show people that. I like western style clothes, but I also like a lot of traditional dress. So why can't we wear what we feel comfortable in? It's not as though it hurts anyone. I can't understand why it offends so many people. It is just used as an excuse for deeper feelings.

Aqeel: I agree with you. Nothing will stop me wearing a prayer cap. Even though I wear western clothes most of the time, I'll still wear a *jubba* [robe] to and from the Mosque. It's good to show brotherhood and sisterhood.

Yasmin and Aqeel articulate here an unwillingness to adhere to a singular dress code and a refusal to conform to the demands of those that misinterpreted traditional clothing as a sign of segregation. Despite signs of defiance, it would be erroneous to claim that risk subjectification had predominantly invoked confidence in outwardly affirming faith through symbolic display. In contrast, fear of being attacked, combined with a desire to shrug off negative labelling, had stimulated the general development of defensive practices of self-surveillance and protective modes of display.

In addition to the 'checking' activities outlined earlier, attendant practices of 'hushing' were utilized in order to deflect unwanted attention and to discourage the ascription of risk. Hushing activities included the moderation of religious viewpoints and the concealment of political perspectives. Demonstrating frustration about the collective attribution of risk toward Muslims, Taj and Yasmin describe how social stigmatization can promote self-inspection and subsequent censorship of political views:

- Taj: There are radical elements in all religions, so why persecute us all? Most – nearly all – Muslims stand against the use of violence, but that's not to say we don't understand the reasons why. They've succeeded in shutting us up; people are too scared of the consequences that might happen. All it takes is saying the wrong thing in front of the wrong person, where it's taken as encouraging terrorism, then who knows what might happen and that's the thing that scares me, not just what might happen to me but those I care about.
- Yasmin: You're right; you have to be so careful now ... anything can be understood as glorifying terrorism. Remember what happened to the guy demonstrating against the blasphemous cartoon, he said the wrong thing and then he's in prison for supposedly encouraging other people to commit violence. So now there is two types of free speech, one for Muslims and one for everyone else.

This interchange between Taj and Yasmin aptly describes the process of hushing in which voices are silenced for fear of retribution and incrimination. What is striking is the extent to which uncertainty around the boundaries of counter-terrorism law has interrupted their freedom of speech. In Yasmin's view there are effectively 'two types of free speech', with the 'one for Muslims' disallowing the articulation of personal beliefs and opinions. As Hina and Anita elaborate, fear of being incriminated for expressing an otherwise legitimate viewpoint has led to political views being outwardly silenced for fear of falling foul of the law:

- Hina: You do have to be careful now about what and where you say things in case you get arrested. Although I don't think it's right to do anything that encourages people to injure someone else, you have to be able to protest against things you don't agree with.
- Anita: You've got to be careful, just in case. You never know who's listening to you, in case they misinterpret what you're saying. It's not right, but that's the way things are now.

One of the central problems with introducing pre-emptive counter-terrorism offences such as 'glorification of terrorism' and 'indirect encouragement' is that their inexact boundaries can lead to confusion. This definitional imprecision has rendered such laws difficult to categorize and open to interpretation in a court of law (Zedner, 2009: 132). Over and above the legal complications, one of the social outcomes of oblique counter-terrorism law has been uncertainty about what is a legitimate political perspective and what might constitute an incitement to terrorism and result in committing a criminal offence. In the light of not knowing for sure what was safely sayable, most participants had made the decision to err on the side of caution and to restrict their views. Both Rehana and Rabiya imply that such a policy of forced political agnosticism in the public sphere is at odds with inner feelings and deeply held values:

- Rehana: You can't talk about what you actually want to talk about in case they think you are an extremist. You can't say that you think that they did 9/11 due to Palestine and Muslim oppression; you can't say that they did 7/7 because of Iraq.
- Rabiya: I think we are restricted when it comes to saying what we think. If you're Muslim people don't let you get away with challenging what this country is doing any more. If you do, you're seen as a fanatic.

These practices of self-censorship extend well beyond what might be considered routine practices of reflexivity common to patterns of identity building in modern life and are troubling for at least two reasons. First, checking responses are coerced and restrictive in that they are born out of concern about victimization, criminalization and retribution. Second, hushing practices infer that, for some young Muslims, freedom of speech is being impeded. The conversation between Rehana and Shams succinctly encapsulates some of the personal dilemmas and frustrations generated by checking and hushing:

- Rehana: It makes me feel like I have to watch what I say and work harder to show I'm not like that. I resent that.  
 Shams: But why should we have to prove we're alright?

It is this requirement to present an outwardly safe identity that reveals the coercive social pressures that a pervasive climate of suspicion has engendered. It is disconcerting that individuals in formally democratic liberal nations are inhibited to articulate legitimate political perspectives and feel obliged to censor their opinions. Regrettably, practices of checking and hushing are manifestations of a latent view that both freedom of speech and protection from persecution were not principles that participants either experienced in practice, nor felt they could rely on.

### Conclusion: A State of Partial Securities?

In this article we have conveyed the reflections of a group of young British Pakistanis in order to highlight some of the problems that have emerged out of a period of securitization around counter-terrorism in the UK in the last decade. To maintain analytical clarity, we have focused on the way in which the institutional construction of risky groups permits the implementation of otherwise exceptional pre-emptive policies and encourages acts of self-surveillance on behalf of those rendered risky to deflect stigma and reduce the probability of victimization. Our discussion has been oriented toward documenting the micro impacts of macro discourses and processes. However, it should be pointed out that the unjust treatment detailed here, chiefly around institutional surveillance and the indiscriminate application of terrorism laws, needs to be understood in the broader context of multiple forms of inequality and exclusion experienced by British Pakistanis in contemporary Britain (Mythen et al., 2009; Palmer and Kenway, 2007; Peach, 2005; Platt, 2007). Whilst the thoughts and experiences of participants cannot be generalized, the injustices and objections expressed by participants are by no means anomalous (Abbas, 2005; Allen, 2010). On the basis of the evidence presented here, there appears to be a distinct dualism at play around the construction of dangerousness that we dub the *risk/security contradiction*. Made-up as a threat to national security, participants had developed an assortment of strategies to reject and deflect risk labelling. Yet the young people we spoke to genuinely felt their own security to be *at risk*. At the heart of this contradiction lies a misattribution of risk in which law-abiding 'safe' citizens institutionally rendered risky feel *themselves* to be at risk. The primary threats identified by the young people we spoke to came not from global terrorist

networks. Rather, the risks to their security came from more local sources including the state through excessive legislation, the police via disproportionate surveillance and target-hardening interventions, and racist members of the public through violence, hostility and verbal abuse. In response to being located in this ambiguous position – at once defined as ‘risky’ and feeling at risk – ‘checking’ and ‘hushing’ behaviours can be interpreted as attempts to deflect the tag of dangerousness and to achieve relative safety in the light of tangible threats to personal security.

Insofar as neo-liberal states have been bound up in a phase in which they have encouraged citizens to ‘think security’ (De Lint and Virta, 2004), both the concept of security and its application remain elastic. It is this very elasticity which enables security powers to be extended and, in some instances, distorted. As such, we would suggest that both the *range* and the *variability* of security are crucial issues which are worthy of further empirical and conceptual exploration. As we have detailed, ‘advances’ in law around security can serve to open up new human rights cleavages and exacerbate divisions between forms of justice open to distinct citizen groups (see also Nash, 2009). Rather than a narrow notion of ‘security’ understood as prevention from terrorist attack, we would advance a critical, expansive notion of security. In the findings presented here, it becomes clear that the ‘security’ offered by the state to its citizens must be understood as partial rather than absolute, conditional rather than granted. Unfortunately, security for some may well come at the expense of the security of ‘others’. It is with some vindication then that we can refer to the configuration of a *state of partial securities* in contemporary Britain, both in terms of characterizing governance and in terms of describing the outcomes of state policy for suspect(ed) groups. For the fortunate ‘us’ that match the profile of the ‘safe identity’, security is granted. For ‘them’, the ‘others’ whose identities are designated as risky, the possibility of safety and protection diminishes. Recast in this way, the state’s historical promise of universal security appears now to be laid on shifting sands. As the National Security Strategy Report (2010) explicitly states: ‘to protect the security and freedom of many, the state sometimes has to encroach on the liberties of a few: those who threaten us’. The findings of this study reveal three significant problems with such a partial approach to security. First, in the context of counter-terrorism, ‘those that threaten us’ are not a readily distinguishable group, as the cases of Forest Gate and Stockwell graphically illustrate. Second, the moral basis of policing comes under question when ‘those that threaten us’ are discursively imagined and operationally transformed from a scattered minority of individuals to a concentrated ‘suspect population’. In this article we have elucidated the channels through which negative labels are attached and discussed some of the experiential consequences of social stigma for suspect(ed) individuals. We maintain that the idea that a proliferation of pre-emptive security measures might render ‘us’ safe is misguided, so long as ‘us’ acts as a coda for the White majority and is exclusive rather than inclusive. Third, when, by the state’s own definition, the ‘us’ – those that uphold their social rights and responsibilities and behave lawfully – are classified as suspect on the basis of racial and ethnic characteristics and erroneously categorized as ‘them’, we might ask what ‘security’ and ‘justice’ have come to mean in the modern age. For the young people that we listened to these questions are not theoretical or academic. Rather, they have tangible consequences and effects.

## Notes

1. The fifth man, Lindsay Jamal, was a naturalized Briton born in Jamaica.
2. Figures from the last census indicated that there were 1.6 Muslims living in Britain, 42 per cent of whom were Pakistani, 16 per cent Bangladeshi and 8 per cent Indian (Peach, 2005). British Pakistani populations are principally concentrated in and around urban centres in the North-West, the West Midlands and West Yorkshire (Thiel, 2009: 20).
3. See 'How new bill will change the rules of the game', *The Guardian*, 16 February 2006.
4. See 'Tony Blair's speech to Sedgefield Constituency', *The Guardian*, 5 March 2004.
5. It should be noted that debates about 'new terrorism' in academic and intelligence circles predate the 9/11 attacks.
6. In this article we draw exclusively on data extracted from focus groups as opposed to in-depth interviews. The names of all participants in the study have been altered to ensure anonymity.
7. Tony Blair's proposal in 2005 to extend the period of detention without charge from 14 to 90 days was eventually defeated in the House of Commons and reduced to a 28-day detention limit.
8. In the Forest Gate incident over 200 police officers were involved in the arrests of Mohammed Abdul Kahar and his brother Abul Koyair. Mohammed Abdul Kahar was shot in the shoulder during the raid. Both men were released without charge after a week of questioning. No charges were made against the police after the operation was found to be based on faulty intelligence and the shooting was judged by the IPCC to have been 'an accident'.
9. Police officers in England and Wales deployed powers under the Terrorism Act (2000) to search 124,687 people in 2007–8, up from 41,924 in 2006–7. Just 1 per cent of these searches resulted in arrests, none for terrorist-related offences (see Verkaik, 2009).
10. To cite one example, using funds from the counter-terrorism budget, the British government funded a sizeable surveillance programme in Birmingham in the predominantly Muslim suburbs of Washwood Heath and Sparkbrook, installing over 200 CCTV cameras, many of which were hidden from public view.

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