(De)Constructing Difference: A Qualitative Review of the 'Othering' of UK Muslim communities, Extremism, Soft Harms, and Twitter Analytics

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Abstract

There is some evidence that, in the UK, current counter terrorism initiatives reproduce and amplify both real and imagined differences between Muslim and anti-Muslim groups, leading in turn to social and community polarisation and isolation. It is far from clear whether these changing perceptions always lead to increased ethnic and religious violence or increased radicalisation. However, more worrying is the potential for the development of 'soft harms' among those 'suspect communities; for example reduced social integration, withdrawal from British cultural life, hate crime, forced marriage and domestic violence. There has to date been little interrogation of the scale of 'soft harm' among Muslim communities. Within this paper, the author offers a qualitative review of how the Muslim 'other' has become an ascribed category reproduced through an endemic 'Mulsim common sense'. Following that the author suggests that Twitter analytics may be harnessed to analyse the attitudes, current condition, and reactions of suspect other communities through the tweeting of everyday events. The aim in doing so is to develop a series of proposals to counter the ideological underpinnings of difference and contribute to current debates on counter terrorism policy in the UK.

Keywords: Twitter, 'Othering', Terrorism, Soft harm, Demographics, community, Radicalisation

The main problem

Taking an anthropological stance this paper suggests new ways of overlaying neighbourhood knowledge (e.g. crime statistics) with Twitter analytics in order to develop accurate representations of suspect communities and individuals. First the author examines some of the ways in which identity and community are constructed through everyday common sense understandings of 'Muslim' and 'Muslim community'. Following this analysis the author looks at new ways of overlaying neighbourhood knowledge with Twitter analytics in order to develop accurate representations of suspect communities and individuals. The author suggests that the 'othering' of British Muslims is a key mechanism in dividing communities. Furthermore, it is a mechanism that can be uncovered by a more holistic UK counter extremism policy that brings together neighbourhood knowledge and Twitter analytics to focus on responding to more community based harms. Significantly, the practice of 'othering' is already recognised as a key component in understanding terrorism and counter-terrorist activity (Talbot 2008).

Knowledge about 'other' and 'Muslim' and 'suspect community' and other issues are further situated within oppositional binaries that define us/other. As an identity

discourse, the practice of 'othering' is neither original nor a single, simple outcome of Muslim versus West relationships. Indeed othering has been a popular topic for anthropologists studying how Western Cultural assumptions privilege and reinforce the West as civilised, democratic and safe, while at the same time representing others as uncivilised, undemocratic and threatening (Said 1979). In effect 'othering' is a dehumanising exercise, as Dalby observes:

> Specifying difference is a linguistic, epistemological and, most importantly, a political act; it constructs a space for the other distanced and inferior from the vantage point of the person specifying the difference (1997: 19)

This paper proposes that the process of othering ultimately leads to what the author calls a stigmatising 'Muslim common sense' through which our everyday knowledge about I/we and other is played out and performed on many levels, including political (as in UK counter terrorism policy); cultural (as in social and community polarisation and Islamaphobia); economic (as in poverty, welfare and employment); media – particularly Twitter (as in reproduction of popular discourses of Muslim). Most importantly the act of othering is an important manifestation of power relations and knowledge. Those power relations are exposed when 'we' define ourselves as part of a group, and construct the 'other' as fundamentally different and as 'not belonging' (Clifford 1986, Foucault 1986). Thus the process of othering is a social process that (re)produces inequalities. For Leach (1973: 772) the process of othering starts by emphasising how different the others are, and ends by making them 'remote and inferior'. The author suggests that for British Muslims the process of othering ultimately causes stigmatization resulting in real harms both hard (e.g. violence) and soft (polarization).

At the heart of this stigmatising process is a common sense definition of Muslim that is a fluid and subjective rather than objective category. It is important to recognise how this common sense definition of Muslim operates to reconstruct and perpetuate social difference. In other words as Morgan observed 'in the global west the racialised muslim other has become the pre eminent folk devil of our time' (2015:1). Where Morgan used moral panic theory (Cohen 2002) to explain how 'Muslims equal terrorists', this paper instead offers a qualitative review of the ways in which 'othering' leads to a stigmatising 'Muslim common sense' that in turn structures understanding of and response to extremism.

The political dimensions of othering

Social identity constructions are intricately connected to, and reproduced by political systems governing societies. It is a complex relationship in which the political apparatus identifies certain ideals and practices that inform its citizens how to live together and how to treat others (Hughes 2004). These ideological processes impact on, and help convey specific ideas and values that define the moral health of a nation and our understandings of us/the other (Larner 2010). This does not always have a positive effect, but can include negative feelings of fear, and dread as well as justifying inequalities between individuals and communities by constructing difference. Thus ascribed qualities such as ethnic, cultural or religious variation or difference become an accepted understanding of both our notions of 'Britishness' and 'Muslim common sense'.

This accepted understanding is further exacerbated by the current political climate that has seen right wing parties such as UKIP becoming more popular across Europe. The UKIP leader, Nigel Farage is seen increasingly to be speaking to people's worries about immigration, low wages, NHS cuts and unemployment. In a recent debate on Brexit he warned that migrant rapists from Germany could be given the right to travel to Britain. And blamed the EUs open borders for allowing Jihadi terrorists the freedom to 'roam around Europe' and to target Britain. In January Zeronian (2016) reported the 'German UKIP' the Alternative for Germany (AfD) as rising in popularity on the back of the ongoing migrant crisis. In France Marine Le Pen leader of the National Front has also blamed the EUs open borders for jihadist migrants freely entering France to commit acts of terror.

All of these things feed into an alarmingly us /them polarity, suggesting to people on the street that right wing anti Muslim views are acceptable. This positioning and othering of Muslim has been further normalised by the recent Brexit campaign and subsequent vote to leave the EU. In the weeks of uncertainty following the referendum, and consequential political upheaval we may see even more social and cultural polarisation and recognition that as a nation, the UK contains a number of communities with radically different values systems. Research appears to support this, with a recent YouGov poll (2016) finding 51% agreeing there is a fundamental clash between Islam and the values of British society, and only 25% suggesting the two are generally compatible.

The media coverage of the recent Orlando gay club massacre in June (Lyons 2016) by a self-professed Islamist terrorist reconfirms Muslim homophobic views to an already convinced UK British population. This reconfirmation is enabled by the framing of the message. According to Goffman (1974), messages are produced, reproduced and understood through the frames created for us. Media (both mass and new) distribute

ideological messages using framing (Gitlin 1980) i.e. it is organised and presented in a particular way and that framing of the message impacts on the audience perception. Although the message may be fundamentally true, the truth may be somewhat different. For example, a YouGov poll by Ozanne (2016) showed that evangelical Christians (70%) are more liable than Muslims (47%) to be against same-sex marriages.

Extremism is not a new problem. However, extremism has become something that increasingly occurs 'here' in the West rather than 'out there'. Furthermore it is executed by the 'other' against 'us'. The political dimension of terrorism in the UK is one context in which discourses of othering inform and define British Muslim and national identity. This is played out at state, popular and party political level in actions that redefine forms of solidarity and division in the UK through constant positioning of distrust of the Muslim other as terrorist or extremist. For example following a number of terrorist attacks in France and Germany in July 2016, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, the Metropolitan police commissioner has warned:

> Our threat level has been at severe for two years – it remains there. It means an attack is highly likely. You could say it is a case of when, not if (BBC News 31st July 2016)

In short, this has led to an acute awareness of danger or 'public hyper vigilance' (Jones and Smith 2002). The frequency and scale of terrorist attacks in the Western world by groups such as Islamic State (IS) has now become a constant worry for the individual in the street, whether travelling to work, shopping, watching sport, or going on holiday. We are encouraged to be a nation who constantly look over our shoulders and are suspicious of the person standing next to us. We have become hyper aware of the 'other' who might also be identified as the 'enemy within'. Brown (2009: 103) among others (see also Earle 2015) comments that states often use this particular rhetoric to frame Muslims as 'other' in a liberal discourse of tolerance; saying that citizens are called to support the state by a twofold argument: first encouraging a strong 'us' and second to be 'hyper alert' to the 'dangers in their midst'.

This particular rhetoric is employed by a number of official bodies in the UK to encourage hyper vigilance. For example the Metropolitan Police Anti-Terrorist Hotline poster states: 'It's probably nothing but… if you see or hear anything that could be terrorist-related trust your instincts and call the Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321'. The British Transport Police poster states: 'don't rely on others. If you suspect it, report it'. At the same time

suspicion is crystallised around particular others. As a result of this, there is some evidence that current counter terrorism initiatives not only nourish and magnify what Robert Eatwell (2006) called 'cumulative extremism'; they also reproduce and amplify both real and imagined differences between Muslim and anti-Muslim groups, leading in turn to othering and social and community polarisation and isolation (Lean 2014, Mahamdallie 2007).

The cultural dimensions of othering

We must also acknowledge the wider cultural, social and political environment as meaning making (Berger & Luckmann 1991). There is a link between individual and societal knowledge, particularly everyday perceptions and common sense knowledge i.e. what individuals or societies take for granted as real. This is because common sense knowledge as a way of thinking does not require evidence and is rarely contested (Asad 1986). This is often played out in the media, and the lack of contestation is seen as inevitable by theorists and researchers like Gamston et al:

> The lens through which we receive these images is not neutral but evinces the power and point of view of the political and economic elites who operate and focus it. And the special genius of this system is to make the whole process seem so normal and natural that the very art of social construction is invisible (Gamston et al 1992: 374).

In contrast Mills (1959) suggests that we use our 'sociological imagination' to question our everyday perceptions and common sense beliefs in order to change society for the better. The fundamental question for this paper is to ask how we can challenge the discourses of othering that inform and define British Muslim and national identity through constant framing and positioning of distrust of the Muslim other as terrorist or extremist.

One problem is that our everyday perceptions and common sense beliefs are not only underpinned by evidence from the current UK counter terrorism strategy. With the increasingly mediatised nature of society this evidence is also produced and reproduced in many forms, continually perpetuating the flawed myth of 'Muslim' as other. Two recent reports looking at negative media coverage uncovered a 'thematic pattern of linking Muslims and Islam with terrorism, violence, and orthodox ideals' (Ahmed and Matthes 2016:17); and that Islamophobia is advancing across the 'political environment, media outlets, on streets and in business life' of most European nations (European Islamophobia Report 2016: 1). These forms vary from print newspapers to online news sources and social

networking sites such as Twitter. Most days of the week a media story can be found that ascribes particular characteristics to Muslim, Muslim men and masculinity, Muslim culture and the treatment of women etc.

At the same time a very powerful Jihadist narrative is being perpetuated by organisations such as IS. Corman et al identified three different frames of operation in the Jihadist narrative: legitimation, propagation and intimidation, and their increasing expertise in new communications media:

> Jihadis have an explicit communication and public relations strategy [...] they are rapidly assimilating new media into their repertoire in hopes of establishing a worldwide virtual jihad movement (2006: 3)

To date, a great deal of effort has been spent investigating this narrative by using predetermined search algorithms in order to identify jihadi messages on Twitter, Omer (2015) being a recent example. Consequently for us to succeed in promoting community cohesion and understanding, and to reverse the polarisation trend that is currently problematic for current counter terrorism strategy makers we need to evaluate the impact and meaning making around 'Muslim' and the othering of British Muslims. One way is to look at 'Muslim' as a floating signifier (Hall 1996).

Identity construction refers to the mechanism by which the social identities of individuals and groups are maintained and (re)produced. Social identities can be both ascribed i.e. assumed at birth, or achieved. The latter is important here because it is an identity that is earned or chosen, and indicates both group membership and social and cultural identity. Because of these common sense beliefs and understandings we expect certain groups in society to act in certain ways, and these expectations guide our actions and reactions to individuals and groups. Omi and Winant (1995) discussed the notion of collective identity in terms of 'racial common sense' to describe the process by which individuals ascribe social meaning to both real and perceived differences, for example skin colour. Where Hall (1996) described race as a 'floating signifier' that is a category with cultural meaning, it might be a useful concept for examining how 'Muslim' is also a 'floating signifier'. Deconstructing the meaning of "Muslim' both within, and without the category itself could uncover some previously unknown assumptions that underpin the ideological construction of difference.

In addition social identity is by no means a fixed phenomenon. It is a highly complicated and fluid process in which social identities are not always ascribed or achieved. The

signifying aspects of identity, for example 'Muslim' are both ambiguous and diverse AND are socially constructed and negotiated between social actors. Thus social identity is the result of a complex dynamic between the self and other, the self and community, the self and the nation etcetera (Bourdieu 1984, McDonald 2015). In part this ascribed social meaning is achieved by an ideological shift that allows individuals to disregard their own everyday knowledge and experiences in favour of those in 'authority'. The big question then is who or what is that authority, and to interrogate that we need to deconstruct the individual and local world of meaning that informs our 'Muslim common sense' and constructs Muslim as 'other' and equates that with 'terror'. As was stated earlier, many official bodies in the UK encourage this suspicion and hyperawareness. As a result, British Muslims have emerged as a perceived racialised threat. Worryingly this narrative also feeds into popular concerns about culture and Britishness, immigration, religion and terrorism (Ahmed and Matthes 2016, Brown 2009, Morgan 2015).

The economic dimensions of othering

Economic othering is nothing new. For example, anti-Semitic rhetoric during the Nazi regime framed the economic conditions of the Weimar Republic as the result of the nation's minority Jewish population (Monhollen 2015: 71). Migration, refugees and immigration are perhaps some of the most contentious contemporary issues of recent years, and are a high priority of the continuing Brexit debate. Discussion around Britishness, employment, social welfare, the NHS, cultural differences and crime also figure highly. We can see from this Twitter example how anti muslim rhetoric is employed to frame the economic conditions of the UK as the result of the Muslim other:

> Muslims taking over UK: 'Immigrants stealing our jobs http://linkis.com/rt.com/uk/260213-uk-/Mksym Amnesty & open door to immigration helps poor? #anon (Tweet anonymised)

According to Atran (2015) Muslim immigrants in Europe are failing to achieve the levels of social, cultural and economic status they would like. As a result they are more likely to be poor and/or less educated. The charity Muslim Aid has suggested that these are 'key factors' driving crime in the UK. Figures from the Statistical Unit at the Ministry of Justice suggest the UK has about 5% Muslims yet they make up 20% of high-security prisoners, an increase of 24% from 2011 (Ministry of Justice 2015). This can lead to deep frustration among us/the other. Stern (2003) argues that in these situations religion can create links between a personal cause and the social and political goals of militant groups.

This in turn leads to soft harms that see increased radicalisation among those who become deeply frustrated. A number of theorists agree that these impressionable and frustrated individuals may be driven to join religious activists in order to 'provide themselves with a sense of power' (Juergensmeyer 2003: 187); that issues like these are 'primary motivating factors in driving insecure, alienated and marginalised young men to join religious terrorist groups' (Gunning and Jackson 2011: 373); and that these are groups vulnerable to being influenced by recruiters, radicalisers or Internet material (Hoffman 2006: 288).

'Dangerous groups': The othering of Muslim communities

The author is reluctant to frame the whole discussion of community polarisation in terms of simple opposing groups. Individuals do not have to be either vocal or to hold extreme views either as anti-Muslim protest groups or Islamic extremist groups in order to feed into and (re)produce our understandings of 'Muslim' and 'suspect community'. In fact, it is important to understand how every individuals' cultural, social and political environment' frames their everyday understandings of 'the self', 'Muslim' and 'suspect community' and their relationships with others. Only then can we begin to comprehend both the 'other' and the enemy within, and develop strategies to both identify and counter both terrorism and extremism.

Pantazis and Pemberton (2009: 649) suggested a definition of suspect community relevant to Muslim experiences in the context of the 'war on terror':

> […] a sub-group of the population that is singled out for state attention as being 'problematic'. Specifically in terms of policing, individuals may be targeted, not necessarily as a result of suspected wrong doing, but simply because of their presumed membership to that sub-group. Race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, language, accent, dress, political ideology or any combination of these factors may serve to delineate the sub-group.

There is a long history of studying the effects of anti terrorist measures in the UK and the development of suspect communities. Those suspect communities that have become the main focus of the government's security agenda. Beginning with Hillyards (2009) notion as applied to the 'irish' terrorist, and more recently to Muslims as the new suspect community (Awan 2012, Pantazis and Pemberton 2009, Cherney and Murphy 2016). In effect Muslims come to be seen as not quite British.

Fears that 'the ordinary person in the street' do not know how to measure or see or be aware of terrorists are further concentrated by a powerful political discourse of fear of terrorism and counter terrorist protection methods. As individuals are called upon to be more suspicious and more untrusting of the Muslim 'other' the development of suspect communities solidifies. As more and more individuals are encouraged to be suspicious, so the Muslim community lose trust in education, the government, their neighbours etc. What is needed is a stronger research evidence base that helps us understand the effects of this 'othering' on British Muslims. We already know that this 'othering' is achieved in a number of ways: beginning with the creation of 'suspect communities' where Islamic fanaticism and jihadi terrorism are increasingly seen as originating from particular communities. However, the perceived threat does not only come from communities but individuals and families in short – Muslim men.

An investigation of 'Muslim common sense' reveals a flawed (and demonising) list of ascribed characteristics that often point to Muslim men as violent, dominant, patriarchal and oppressive. As such they embody Connell's (2005) theory of 'hegemonic masculinity' subordinating and controlling their families. At the same time, a Western myth of the Islamic world as somehow backwardly religious and anti-scientific feeds into, and strengthens that 'Muslim common sense'. In a very real sense Muslim men are increasingly demonised and sensationalised as 'other'. Examples of this are easy to find in the media, where any Muslim narrative or news story is presented as an example of otherness. For example, Hopkins (2016) states authoritatively in the Daily Mail:

> 'White women are nothing to some Islamic and Arabic men. It's the reason our girls were abused in Rochdale and Oxford and the reason white German women were raped in Cologne'

Of course the qualifier in this piece is that only 'some' Islamic and Arabic men do not like white women. 'Muslim common sense' allows readers to ignore the word 'some' and to ascribe common characteristics to all Muslim men. In contrast researchers like Inhorn (2012) have found very different truths, saying most Muslim men want to find love in marriage and also want to experience the joys of parenthood.

Unfortunately examples of this are also easy to find in academic literature, particularly in education where teaching non English speakers is often seen as problematic. For example,

when talking about cultural dissonance, one of Sato and Hodge's (2016: 274) respondents states:

> 'Sometimes with the Muslim students, I have seen that Muslim boys do not respect female PE teachers [...]. In their culture, they don't respect women, I have seen it [...].'

So we have a situation where this 'othering' and 'demonising' of Muslim men boys is widespread. As Muslim men are increasingly demonised and sensationalised as 'other', their masculinity and family values are more often called into question. Muslim immigration is identified as a threat, as for example by the English Defence League (EDL) who have a message that 'identifies a new and supposedly existential threat to Europe: Islam and Muslim immigration' (Meleagrou-Hitchens and Brun 2013).

'Dangerous masculinities': The othering of Muslim men and their families

Sensationalist media reporting about Muslim women's rights, child sex and exploitation, honour killings, rape, forced marriage, family dynamics, freedom, control and segregation fuel the rhetoric of othering that reproduces Muslim as a racialised threat. More particularly Muslim masculinity is perceived as dangerous. This feeds in to more common sense understandings about masculinity generally, and the perceived innate aggression of young men. Tuffail (2015) argues that the development of the British Muslim as a racialised threat is a current and on-going process resulting in their marginalization. We can track much of this using Twitter hashtags.

Twitter is an online social networking site that enables users to send and read short 150 character messages called 'tweets'. In excess of 310 million people worldwide use Twitter although many more are registered but do not use it. Tweets are organized using the hashtag (#), a clickable link that is often attached to a word or phrase. Twitter, and hashtags in particular can be very useful for analysing social reactions and information flows in many instances. For example, Twitter's use for the organising of (inter)national discussions on politics (Heverin and Zach 2010); the voicing of political dissent (Storck 2011); the study of terrorism informatics (Chatfield et al 2015; Cheong and Lee 2011; Omer 2015).

In effect Twitter has become the soapbox for the masses in which popular discourses and disproportionate representations of Muslim are reproduced. One such example is the hashtag #rapejihad. Whilst social media improves the power to share news and events and

makes the world more open and connected, the incidence of racialised reporting appears to outweigh the non-racialised reporting. The very overt lexicon of the #Rapejihad hashtag screams at us about the dangerous Muslim men who prey on western women and girls, resulting in what Horsti (2016) calls 'digital Islamophobia'.

Hence an investigation of the message domain around #rapejihad reveals the 'truth' about Muslim masculinity as dangerous through discussion of the paedophile rings in Rochdale and Rotherham, the auctioning of women sex slaves in Syria, honour killings etc. As well as positioning Muslim men as dangerous it also allows the dominant discourses to position Muslim women as powerless.

British Muslim women are not powerless. Often highly educated, 25% of Muslim women aged 21-24 now have degrees, compared with 22% of Muslim men of the same age (Khattab 2016). The political climate in which Cameron reproduced political ideologies earlier this year whilst reaching out to help integrate British Muslim women earned a fierce backlash using the Twitter hashtag #TraditionallySubmissive. Many women listed their achievements such as spearheading community, peace and inter faith initiatives. In fact Muslim women often keep their original surnames after marriage and one said 'If I want to buy a burkini from M&S, I bloody well will'.

'Dangerous mothers': Muslim women as terrorists

In Islam terrorism is not only an act of men but also of women. Generally western audiences are in denial about the violent and military capacity of women. This includes all women, not only Muslim women who are often stereotyped as downtrodden victims, 'we assume women are second class citizens and rely on the men to run the organisation' (Ali 2006: 21). Conventional western thinking about gender and violence makes the involvement of women in suicide bombings seem unbelievable.

Women typically attract less security notice than men and achieve higher media coverage than men by a ratio of 8:1 according to Bloom (2007). It is thought that women now constitute at least 50% of all suicide bombers (Laster and Erez 2015: 84). This feeds into individual and societal unrest and fuels UK society's hyperawareness of both the 'other' and the enemy within. No one is safe because they can be attacked at any time anywhere even by innocent looking women (Laster and Erez 2015: 89). Muslim again becomes synonymous with terror and the suspect community.

One outcome of an increasingly angry and disengaged Muslim community can apparently be seen in the recent ICM (2016) poll, carried out for Channel 4 news which alarmingly claimed only 34% of Muslims in Britain would inform the police about a terror plot. However, Miqdaad Versi, of the Muslim Council of Britain was less positive saying the poll was 'skewed' and 'divisive'.

Suspect communities cannot be defined or measured by terrorist acts alone. Muslim men, women and children from all walks of life populate suspect communities, most often innocently. The everyday common sense that informs us socially and culturally that they are not really British and as such will never be properly integrated is not the starting point for acceptance. Instead another approach is needed, one that looks deep into community and investigates 'soft harms' that may be perpetrated through this uneven racial narrative. Everyday life itself is a measure of extremism and this belief should be the starting point for integration and understanding. Muslim communities are not self-exiling, non-British enclaves. The Muslim Council of Britain's own research suggests there are far more serious concerns that relate to poverty, gender, criminality and Islamophobia. HM Government's Prevent Strategy states (2011):

> 6.22 But it is important not to overstate the relationship between radicalisation and community or individual isolation. We have also seen classified evidence that indicates very clearly that apparently well-integrated people have committed terrorist attacks.

Terrorism informatics: tracking soft harms

Where Twitter mining has previously been useful in terrorism response informatics this paper suggests a more fundamental use: to monitor the ongoing health of a community through aspects of Twitter informatics such as geographic profile, user demography and the broadcasting of everyday occurrences. In other words rather than studying the message domain we should be investigating the community domain. Using Twitter to track, locate, and assess the reaction to terrorist activities is nothing new. Indeed much time, effort and research has gone into the intelligence sharing and textual analysis techniques of this particular microblogging site (Ashcroft et al 2-15, Cheong & Vincent 2010, Gupta et al 2015 and many more). Tweets or Twitter messages have been shown to be a useful indicator of "sentiment and behaviour of the user base contributing to a

particular topic" (Cheong & Vincent 2010: 45). The author proposes that it is also possible to track soft harms in the same way.

Soft harms are subjective in that they cause distress to some but not all, for example reduced social integration, withdrawal from British cultural life, hate crime, forced marriage and domestic violence. Clancy (2011) describes soft harms as involving the infliction of ' some type of injury to morality affectivity or a systemic concern with the safety of individuals and the integrity of property'. They are distinct from hard harms that relate to offenses such as terrorist attacks, rape, murder and other serious offences. Hard harms affect all individuals in the same way. Using Twitter analytics overlaid onto local offline community knowledge should uncover the strength of the relationship between children and young people not prepared for life in the UK, and the soft harm of decreased social integration. Interventions could be developed to prevent soft harms morphing into hard ones and resulting in increased polarization, othering of suspect communities and increased acts of terrorism.

Studying the community domain will provide new opportunities to assess the mood of communities and to augment more traditional terrorist monitoring. Existing monitoring of the jihadist and terrorist narrative will only uncover particular 'problem' individuals and feeds in to our othering of Muslim communities. In contrast the author suggests these do little to represent the community as a whole, and obscure more profound problems of soft harms that the UK Government should address. Shifting investigations to encompass the disenfranchised unheard Muslim voice will enable us to challenge current constructions of social and cultural problems and lead to new solutions.

The user domain reveals aspects of individuals' user identity, including details of who the user follows, and their profile. This can be ascertained by studying follower/following relationships, targeted replies, hashtags to group tweets, re-tweeting etc. As mentioned earlier, hashtags have been adopted by users as a way of categorising messages. Tweets are said to be 'trending' when they become popular on Twitter, being retweeted and quoted in large numbers. This usually indicates a spike in a discussion about a person or an event. Terrorism informatics often study these trends following a person or an event like #rapejihad and #TraditionallySubmissive mentioned earlier.

In an increasingly mediatised world, digital media have become central to the construction of the identity and visibility of the self. Individual identity consists of several fragments constantly in a state of fluidity, a life-long developing and conceptualised

patchwork. How users actually use Twitter has brought about some changes resulting in more complex social interactions and networking structures.

Twitter serves as one platform for individuals to express and refine their sense of identity, a key stage in adolescent development. This sense of identity unfolds both online and offline co-dependently. It is thought that children and young people see Twitter as a space to cope with everyday stresses and challenges in their offline lives. As such, addressing Twitter use as well as more mundane neighbourhood information gathering processes may help us identify those stresses and challenges. This is particularly useful in developing strategies to depolarise or reintegrate those suspect communities that we already know.

Knowledge about neighbourhoods and communities are generally easily found within local government, education, hospitals, social workers, and community policing offices. Digital technologies such as Twitter may be just as important a contributor to local knowledge, particularly in identifying incidences of soft harm. There has already been some recognition of this by the UK police. The National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA 2010) report suggested using digital media as a way of supporting and improving neighbourhood policing. However, according to Crump (2011: 23) police use of social media in the UK has been fairly limited so far. Although intended to communicate and engage with the public, actual two-way communication had been largely non-existent and "non-transformational". This changed following the August 2011 riots in the UK when digital media were used more widely to gather evidence.

This paper proposes that Twitter analytics, combined with traditional datasets will facilitate a number of outcomes: first, to engage with 'other' communities more explicitly; second, using digital media to identify and monitor the extent of soft harms; third, to allow direct targeting of resources in order to address soft harms and the possible polarisation of communities; and last, to address the making of the 'Muslim other' and Islamaphobia at local, micro levels of society.

The Proposed framework: Merging traditional data and Twitter analytics

A major and long running criticism regarding the use of Twitter analytics in social science research is the lack of demographic information explicitly attached to the message domain. Traditionally search algorithms are predicated upon particular words and phrases with little or no context. Searches are made, parameters are drawn and outliers or 'noise'

are discounted. However, Sloan et al (2013) maintain that demographics and community information is very much present. As well as analysing message texts using sentiment analysis, the computational treatment of opinion, sentiment, and subjectivity in text (see Dodds & Danforth 2010) they suggested various techniques for establishing or estimating demographic data from message samples that incorporated sentiment analysis.

By assigning sentiment scores to messages, Sloan *et al* (2013, 1.2) were able to cross reference "with other variables of interest, e.g. geo-location, types of event and gender". Especially interesting to this author is the ability to collect and cross tabulate geographical information, and this was done in three ways: from the user profile, from geo-tagged tweets and from the content of the Tweets themselves.

The profiles of users were successfully mined for geographical data for over 50% of Tweets. Impressively Sloan *et al* were able to locate the country for 52% of users, the state for 43% of users, the county for 36% of users, the city for 40% of users and the postcode for 10% of users. Using a small subset (n=100) from a larger data set of Tweets (n=500) following a keyword search for "muslim, mayor, London" I was successful in identifying the country for 49% of the Twitter users that I sampled from their profiles.

The second method, comes from the Tweets themselves, geo-location and geo-tagging with latitude and longitude information is performed when Tweets are sent using mobile digital devices. Unfortunately due to increasing knowledge about privacy and surveillance (see for example Coleman & McCahill 2010) this selection is often switched off, and less than 1% of Sloan *et al*'s sample presented with geo tagging enabled.

It has been proven possible to overcome this problem by inferring unknown users locations by examining their friend's locations. This is based on the notion that online social ties are formed and produced across fairly short geographical distances. While individuals tend to worry about geo tagging themselves they do not worry about retweeting, sharing and messaging friends. As a result it was recently possibly to correctly geotag over 80% of public Tweets from a sample size of 101,846,236 (Compton *et al* 2014). This was achieved using a sophisticated global optimization algorithm that is outside of the purview of this paper or the author's expertise.

Following the breadcrumbs

Instead the author made use of simple, readily available tools on the Internet to collect, collate and analyse found data (Hine 2011). Examples of these include Followthehashtag, a geo content analysis tool and TouchGraph, a graph visualization and social network analysis tool. As a qualitative researcher collecting rich contextual data I took as my starting point a single Twitter user identified by simply searching message content for a particular subject, in this case 'birmingham and muslim'. By following the trail of breadcrumbs beginning by investigating user profile, I was able to establish the gender, geographic profile, user demography and friend network in a this case. Looking at the broadcasting of everyday occurrences I began to build up an in depth picture of what is happening in that particular location.

My proposal is that overlaying this information with more mundane neighbourhood information gathering processes including local schools, crime statistics and others will help us identify those stresses and challenges that lead to polarised, disenfranchised and stressed communities. This knowledge is paramount in developing strategies to depolarise or reintegrate communities.

There are a 'clear set of concerns' (Sloan *et al* 2013, 6.1) for the collection and use of unobtrusive (Hine 2011) online and digital data. One concern is that without actual contact with those individuals and communities under study, how can we appreciate the meaning making behind their Tweets, retweets, likes, followers, and messaging etc. A second concern is of causing harm to individuals. The author argues that as part of a strategy (rather than a stand-alone method) to summarise findings across a particular community this method will uncover voices not generally heard, and allow us to both monitor the ongoing health of a community, challenge current constructions of social and cultural problems and develop new strategies for change. As Hine (2011: 3) quite rightly reminds us:

> Often these unobtrusive uses of Internet-derived data allow researchers to access something much closer to the experience of everyday life than we ever encounter in interview settings.

Conclusion

In this paper, I explored how identity and community are constructed through everyday understandings of 'Muslim' and 'suspect community'. As an identity discourse, the practice of 'othering' privilege and reinforce the West as civilised, democratic and safe,

while at the same time representing 'Muslim' as uncivilised, undemocratic and threatening. Following this analysis the author looks at new ways of overlaying neighbourhood knowledge with Twitter analytics in order to develop accurate representations of suspect communities and individuals.

The development of these methodologies and techniques in studying the community domain will provide new opportunities to assess the mood of communities and to expose more profound problems of soft harms that the UK Government should address. Of particular importance is overlaying this information with more mundane neighbourhood information. For example, identifying Tweets that use language related to soft harms such as for example reduced social integration, withdrawal from British cultural life, hate crime, forced marriage and domestic violence. The ability to link these tweets to a particular community allows us to not only ask new research questions but also to understand the mechanics of meaning making and othering that produce suspect communities.

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Twitter Analytics

Followthehashtag
http://www.followthehashtag.com
Premium Twitter Intelligence and Analytics. Influence, geo content analysis tool, 30 charts, dozens of KPI´s, historical data, export to excel, PDF reports.

TouchGraph
http://www.touchgraph.com/navigator
Graph visualization and social network analysis allows for the creation and navigation of interactive graphs. Ideal for organising links, or mind mapping.