

‘As a woman...’; ‘As a Muslim...’:

Subjects, positions and counter-terrorism powers in the United Kingdom

This article presents findings from original focus group research on the importance of identity claims within public understandings of counter-terrorism across the UK. Following a review of existing literature on the terrorism/counter-terrorism/identity nexus, the article introduces four prominent subject positions inhabited within public articulations of counter-terrorism powers: the ‘Muslim’, the ‘target’, the ‘woman’ and the ‘unaffected’. Positions such as these, we argue, both enable and inhibit particular normative, political and anecdotal claims about counter-terrorism frameworks and their impact upon the body politic. This, we suggest, is demonstrative of the co-constitutive role between counter-terrorism and identity claims. Thus, on the one hand, counter-terrorism initiatives work to position individuals socially, politically, and culturally: (re)producing various religious, ethnic and other identities. Yet, at the same time, specific subject positions are integral to the articulation of people’s attitudes toward developments in counter-terrorism. The article concludes by thinking through some of the implications of this, including for resistance toward securitising moves and for citizenship more generally.

Key words: counter-terrorism, terrorism, identity, subjectivity, religion, ethnicity, gender

Introduction

As noted in this issue’s introduction, the present counter-terrorism milieu is marked by an extensive blurring of the boundaries between social and security policy (Ragazzi, this issue); a blurring that is particularly noticeable with the stretching of concepts such as risk management, responsabilisation and community cohesion (Worley, 2005; Ratcliffe, 2012) across each of these domains. One significant consequence of this has been the emergence of a particular governance of difference, with that the “re-colonization” of social policy by the logic of security being particularly pronounced for racialized minorities (Ragazzi, this issue). In this article, we set out to explore the interrelationship of this dynamic with identity formation in the UK, drawing on findings from original focus research into public understandings and experiences of counter-terrorism. Following a review of relevant scholarship on the counter-terrorism/identity nexus, the article introduces our research methodology before exploring four types of identity claimed by contributors to our focus groups. These refer to the ‘Muslim’, the ‘target’, the ‘woman’, and the ‘unaffected’.

Through analysis of these four positions, the article makes three arguments. First, “ordinary” individuals claim a range of different subject positions in their efforts to make sense of counter-terrorism powers and the various effects thereof. Second, many individuals believe that counter-terrorism powers work to position or identify them as particular types of political, gendered, religious or other subject. And, third, the co-constitutive and complex nature of this relationship has implications for evaluations as well as understandings of counter-terrorism powers. One potential implication is that rather than aiding processes of cohesion, counter-terrorism measures may contribute to the very weakening thereof they purport to address.

(Counter-)terrorism powers and identity

The relationship between identity and (counter-)terrorism has been much discussed within the post-9/11 “boom” in terrorism research. One prominent strand of this work focuses on the importance of individual identities, moral convictions and personal experiences as triggers for an individual’s “radicalisation” (compare Sageman, 2008 and Kundnani, 2014; 2015). Despite this concept’s significant limitations (Schmid, 2013: 25; Baker-Beall *et al.*, 2015), understandings of terrorism as a product, in part, of personal identity crisis have proliferated across Western counter-radicalisation initiatives. The UK’s Channel Project, for instance, identifies transformations in friendship groups or social networks, personal upheaval, and the voicing of political grievances as indicators of vulnerability to radicalisation (Kundnani, 2014: 154).

A second literature comprises constructivist explorations of terrorism and/or Islamic extremisms as forms of ‘otherness’ or ‘negative ideographs’ (Winkler, 2006) sustaining western national identities (e.g. Jackson, 2005; Croft, 2006; Nayak, 2006). Richard Jackson (2010), for example, identifies two roles for national identity in the context of the ‘war on terror’. The first is as something to be appealed to in efforts to mobilise public support for the conflict (see also Holland, 2012). The second is in demonising or shaping the enemy as that “we” are not, (re)affirming a collective self of national identity. Croft (2012: 6), similarly, argues that in the post-7/7 period: ‘Britishness... has been constructed in contradistinction to a newly securitized identity: that of the Radical Other, the ‘jihadi’ British Muslim’. Such constructions are also, importantly, frequently gendered, with the Western “we” and non-Western “they”, often organised around differential treatments of women (Hunt and Rygiel, 2006; Shepherd, 2006; Brown, 2008; Steans, 2008).

The third way in which questions of counter-terrorism and identity have been debated concerns multiculturalism. In particular, attention has focussed on policymakers’ perceptions

that multiculturalism (or the failure thereof) is responsible for a lack of integration (amongst British Muslims especially) and social cohesion, providing an environment in which radicalisation might prosper. David Cameron's (2011) Munich speech offers a prominent example:

Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream... This hands-off tolerance has only served to reinforce the sense that not enough is shared. And this all leaves some young Muslims feeling rootless... Now for sure, they don't turn into terrorists overnight, but what we see... is a process of radicalisation.

As Meer and Modood (2009: 474) put it, 'multiculturalism is widely believed to have been responsible for domestic terrorism'. This sense – prominent post-7/7 – that, 'The problem stemmed from (warped) Islam' (Croft, 2012: 1) has, for critics, contributed to a 'wider project of reshaping the cultural identities of Muslims' (Kundnani, 2014: 163; also Brown 2008). Such attempts have been criticised for: (re)producing Muslim populations as a latent security threat (Heath-Kelly, 2013); creating troubling dichotomies between moderate and radical Islam, or "good" and "bad" Muslims (Maira, 2009; Brown and Saeed, 2014); and shaping new "suspect communities" (Hillyard, 1993; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009). The effects of this on "ordinary" people can be complex. As Mythen et al (2009: 748) put it, reflecting on their recent work with British Muslims:

Pakistani Britons are in the middle of an ideological tug-of-war, being pressured to declare their affiliations and loyalties and come to an accommodation somewhere between the enticements of radical Islamism at one extreme and government notions of multicultural British citizenship at the other. The young Muslims we spoke to are having to construct and maintain their sense of self and community in a physical and imagined environment in which they are *paradoxically cast as a threat to the security of the nation and are invited to align more readily with its 'core values'* (Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2009: 748, our emphasis)

As the above indicates, there exists a vital and diverse literature incorporating a variety of theoretical and normative positions on the relationship between identity and counter-terrorism policy. Despite this research, however, numerous questions remain as to how identity claims relate to counter-terrorism powers. Do certain groups feel directly targeted, for instance? Are such dynamics totalising, such that all Muslims or all (south) Asians, for example, relate to counter-terrorism measures similarly? What is the impact of counter-terrorism powers on

experiences of collective identities such as “Britishness”? And, what types of subject position do counter-terrorism powers and discourse facilitate? It is to these questions that this article is addressed.

Subjects, discourse and the construction of identity

In his well-known and important discussion, ‘What is an Author?’, Michel Foucault (1969a) famously sets out to overturn traditional understandings of the relationship between text and producer. Here, Foucault invites us to ask not how a pre-existing subject produces discourse and thus meaning for the world. Rather, to focus on how discourse constitutes or make possible the identified subject: ‘How, under what conditions, and in what forms can something like a subject appear in the order of discourse? What place can it occupy in each type of discourse, what functions can it assume, and by obeying what rules?’ (Foucault 1969a: 118).

Foucault’s words are an important reminder of the significance of discursive contexts – or, ‘a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment’ (Foucault 1984: 51) – in the formation of specific selves and others. His framing here – and in his discussion of ‘enunciative modalities’ in *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault 1969b: 55-61) – however, hints at a structuralism less apparent in his later, genealogical, writings.ⁱ For, the formation of identity involves a creative engagement with those possibilities afforded by discourses on (in our case) counter-terrorism policy and multiculturalism. Especially once we recognise that such discourses are incomplete, malleable and, often, overlapping. This is why Laclau’s distinction between subject positions and subjectivity is a useful one (see Howarth 2004: 264): the former referring to those places carved out within seemingly stable discourses (teacher, homosexual, terrorist), and the latter the capacity required to identify with, remake, or reimagine existing or new subject positions.

The interplay between, and contingent outcomes of, self-identification and (external) categorisation is a theme that characterises much contemporary work on identity (see Jenkins 2000). For Stuart Hall (2000: 19), identity therefore refers to:

the meeting point, the point of suture, between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us.

Such attachments are neither permanent nor singular (see Sen 2006), and one's ability to negotiate or identify with a particular subject position is of course variable; a product, in part, of 'hegemonic cultures and spatial orderings that define who can claim a particular identity, where and who cannot' (Valentine and Sporton 2009: 172).

In this article, we draw on these insights to explore how contemporary discourse around counter-terrorism powers has made possible the emergence and performance of particular identity claims. Such identity claims are seen as specific to, and situated within, the research contexts of their production, as well as broader discourses on (in)security that, 'tell us who we must be' and then 'how we might stay that way' (Walker, cited in Vaughan-Williams and Stevens 2015: 4). Who we might be is, of course, always intersectional; a product of diverse, overlapping and interrelated experiences (e.g. of oppression and discrimination) and identity claims (e.g. gender, class, ethnicity). (Crenshaw 1991; see also, *inter alia*, Yuval Davis, 2006; Collins and Chep, 2013). The concept's emergence from a demand for greater recognition of the 'distinct and frequently conflicting dynamics that shaped the lived experience of subjects in...social locations' (McCall 2005: 1780) points to the complex ways in which traditional identity categories (such as of gender, age, religion, class) may combine in situating individual and collective subjects within shifting complexes of relations of power and oppression. Although this article does not employ intersectionality as a specific research methodology (see Cho *et al* 2013), our discussion does set out to explore the ways in which participants in our research claimed, negotiated and resisted traditional identity categories in their sense-making efforts around counter-terrorism powers.

In doing this, the article adopts what McCall (2005) terms an intracategorical approach to intersectionality; one which does not seek 'to deny the importance – both material and discursive – of categories but to focus on the process by which they are produced, experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life' (McCall 2005: 1783). Following Wilson (2013:1), for whom, 'Individuals locate themselves, and are located, in relation to the intersections of various structural definitions of "identity" and the resulting experiences can engender diverse outcomes', our purpose here is to reflect upon the specific definitions of identity invoked in the context of counter-terrorism powers, and the variable understandings and implications this involves. Seemingly coherent subject positions – and the connections between them – are, therefore, approached here as contingent, variable and potentially unstable. At the same time, we are keen to show how such positionings and their intersections do significant social and political work - allowing participants in our research to make sense of their world, and the place of self and other therein. Thus:

What is important is to analyse how specific positionings and (not necessarily corresponding) identities and political values are constructed and interrelate and affect each other *in particular locations and contexts*. One cannot assume the same effect or constellation each time and, hence, the investigation of the specific social, political and economic processes involved in each historical instance is important (Yuval Davis, 2006: 200).

Methodology

The findings contained in this article draw on fourteen focus groups conducted with a range of UK-based communities in 2010. The focus groups concentrated on the impact of counter-terrorism on everyday life, citizenship and security. Eighty-one individuals participated in the research: 48 women and 33 men selected via a purposive sampling strategy and recruited through a combination of enumeration, snowballing and organisation sampling techniques. The groups were organised around two primary factors: geographical residence (metropolitan/non-metropolitan) and self-designated ethnicity (black/white/Asian), taking place in London and Birmingham (metropolitan), and Oldham, Swansea, Llanelli and Oxfordshire (non-metropolitan). Because these focus groups were conducted against a backdrop of suspicion and concern around security, policing and surveillance in the context of counter-terrorism, more detailed demographic information on our participants was not collected. This decision had both pragmatic and normative drivers: namely a desire to avoid discouraging participation, and a – more significant – desire to avoid contributing to potential anxieties of participants. This lack of more detailed demographic data which might, for instance, include detail on age, class or sexuality, limits aspects of our analysis, but enabled the research to proceed.ⁱⁱ

This research design means we make no claim to statistical representativeness, and there are, of course, potential selection and researcher biases to our ‘findings’. It may be, for instance, that individuals willing to participate in academic research on counter-terrorism measures are those with a particular interest in, or experience of, policy in this area. Similarly, the framing and order of focus group questions, as well as our presence in the room as moderators, almost certainly shaped discussion. The opinions – and identities – discussed in this article should therefore be seen as a product of collaboration between researchers and multiple participants within specific times and spaces, rather than an effort to capture ‘true’, much less representative, opinions on counter-terrorism powers rendered imperfect by a ‘researcher effect’. As Vaughan-Williams and Stevens (2015: 7) argue: ‘The assumption in critical focus-group research work is not that the subject and his/her views pre-exist the

situation in which the discussion takes place, but that it is via the interaction with others that this identity and knowledge are constituted'. Thus, with Jackson and Hall (2013), we approach our findings as situated in, and specific to, the context of their production.

The focus groups employed a range of deliberately open questions (see Morgan, 1996; Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999), inviting individuals to discuss contemporary counter-terrorism powers and their impact. Specifically, participants were asked to: evaluate the legitimacy of particular measures such as stop and search powers and pre-trial detention periods; outline alternative, more desirable, counter-terrorism strategies; and (at the start of each focus group) explore the meaning of security. Follow-up questions varied – and according to the development of the conversation within each group. Specific questions about identity were not asked; such information emerged spontaneously in the course of discussion.

The analysis in this article was generated using a 'framework' approach to qualitative discourse analysis (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002). This involves a systematic sifting and organising of qualitative material such that large volumes of data can be summarised in a manner grounded in participants' own accounts (Jones, 2000: 560). Following an 'immersive' reading of the transcript data, we generated a thematic framework of four broad identity positions: "the Muslim", "the target", "the woman" and "the unaffected". A second reading 'through' this framework then involved coding and redistributing our data under each of these positions, identifying specific sub-categories for each. These (sub-)categories were used to structure the following presentation and analysis of our findings, which reproduces the words of our participants as directly as possible.

Public understandings of the identity/counter-terrorism nexus

The remainder of this paper presents its empirical contribution via exploration of the ways in which individuals constitute self and other in their telling of stories around counter-terrorism. The four positions it explores - the Muslim, the target, the woman, and the unaffected – all come out of the focus group discussions, and span those perceived (often by others) to be impacted, often adversely, by counter-terrorism powers. And, those identities claimed by the self in evaluations of this policy domain. They are, in other words, both self-identifications, and subject positions (Jenkins, 2000).

"Muslim"

The identity "Muslim" has become an increasingly complex category in recent years, perhaps moving for some from a singularly religious designation to what Olivier Roy (2002) refers to

as a form of “neo-ethnicity”. Under the latter, Muslim is not simply a category of religious believer; rather, it approaches a cultural and ethnic designation. As demonstrated below, although identifications of self or others as ‘Muslim’ were a common feature across our focus groups, such identifications were not employed consistently. In some examples, an unspoken racialised dualism emerges between white/British people, on the one hand; and, Muslims on the other. In other uses, such understandings are either absent or resisted. Although all of those self-identifying as Muslim in our groups also identified as “Asian”, this should not be taken as our endorsement of any Muslim/white binary.

Numerous individuals spoke in our focus groups of being singled out by the state and its counter-terrorism measures for especial treatment *because* they were Muslim, with several arguing that such measures contribute directly to a climate of fear. In some cases, individuals referred to specific, personal experiences of counter-terrorism policies (stop and search, for example). In others, it was a broader sense of social dislocation and stigmatisation: what Blackwood et al. (2013: 1098) refer to as the ‘shadow of the collective experience’, for instance:

government drives the way security categorises people... So when you're talking about security, the government pushing policies that are very, you know, racially or religiously based, but doing it in the sort of blanket nice sort of... we're only guarding you against extremism, it's all for your own good... *you're doing it in a way that allows others to see that, yes, they need to be watched and yes, they need to be kept an eye on.* And I think there's an irresponsibility there that comes with government. (Oldham, Asian, Female)

Thus, for one individual, counter-terrorism powers ‘victimise the Muslim community’, creating ‘an air of Islamophobia’ (London, Asian, Male). For a female participant in a separate group, similarly: ‘you are securing the majority of the population, the majority of the white population, from this minority Muslim population that you have to regard with suspicion for your own safety’ (Oldham, Asian, Female). This belief that after 9/11 *all* Muslims were viewed with new forms of suspicion is well illustrated by the following focus group in Oldham:

- A: I get that from, you know, when a white person is looking at me, you know, they do.
B: You feel it, yeah
A: They have this fear, they actually look at you and say, right, what connection can she have with the terrorists.
B: I remember being asked where I was going to bomb next.

[...]

A: After 9/11 things changed, overnight, I think for us. It really did.

C: Because I was at secondary school ... and I remember people saying, oh, your lot, your lot did this. And I'm like what do you mean, my lot, I don't understand what you mean by my lot. (Oldham, Asian, Female)

The experience of riskiness was an outcome, for one participant, of the widespread view of Muslim communities as unknown and other to majority (ethnic, national and religious) groups in the UK. Having asked: 'How would you as English people, how would you... *on the other side*, deal with terrorism?' one participant concludes this is difficult as: 'We all look the same, we all, we grow a beard and we wear a uniform... This is alien to them' (Birmingham, Asian, Male, *our emphasis*). As he continued, the "unexceptional" lives of many actual terrorists create additional policy challenges whereby because no specific Muslims are exceptionally suspicious, no Muslims can be fully trustworthy either:

Every terrorist that's ever been, ever died blowing something up, the local community talk about how lovely and normal the guy was. He didn't have horns growing out of his ass... You know, and so what effect does that have? That has had even more effect on people that watch the news and they see these people saying that they were perfectly normal guys. He was a teacher, he was a this, that and the other, or they were doctors, they did this and that, they were normal people. They were fine. They came home for tea... our kids played together and all this kind of stuff, so then I think that's going to instil a sense of paranoia in the community, because people will think, well we can't...all these Muslims, they might seem fine, but tomorrow are they going to blow us up? (Birmingham, Asian, Male)

This discussion emerged in a debate about the extent to which "Muslims" are viewed as a homogenous bloc. Where the above participant flattens differences between Muslims, others argued, in contrast, that specific ways of presenting as Muslim increase suspicion:

A: If you've got a headscarf or you've got a long beard, or you dress in a... you are again going to be targeted a lot more.

B: Not necessarily, because I went for job interviews, harking back three years, and at the door, the lady goes, oh, have you got any ID?... The parting comment, she said, as long as you're not a terrorist I'll let you in, and I found that quite offensive... Even though I wasn't wearing a headscarf. She did say it humorously but I found it offensive. (Birmingham, Asian, Female)ⁱⁱⁱ

These excerpts indicate the fluidity of religious, ethnic, national and cultural identifications within the UK. Just as our first participant imagines a border between Englishness and the

(Muslim) group of participants, another female participant – discussing attacks on women wearing the headscarf – argued this happens: ‘Because somebody says that’s them, we are us, and we are British, and they are weird. We are British and they are weird, and they are them and we are us’ (London, Asian, Female). This distinction between an English “them” and a Muslim “us” was contested by some of our participants (see also [Author], [Date]). It was, however, widely shared, including amongst those who believed their “Britishness” now contested by others:

I’ve been here for 40 years. I wasn’t born here but I was very small when I came here, and I’m still a foreigner, I’m still an alien and my children are going to be treated like that as well... Until they lose their identity and start wearing mini skirts or having blonde hair or whatever, they start looking white, they’re still going to be foreigners. And I can’t go back to Pakistan. Part of me is Pakistan [but] I’ve hardly got anything... to go back to... or take my children back to... Nobody thinks of me as British. I’m a Paki middle-aged woman. That’s how they see me, Paki. They don’t know I’ve got a British passport and I’ve had it for such a long time, for 37, 38 years or something. That still does not make me British. (Oldham, Asian, Female).

This woman’s attachment to Britain had been eroded by a post-9/11 narrowing of access to British identity. After discussing a ‘humiliating’ search at an airport^{iv}, this respondent claimed not to ‘feel... British as much’, noting: ‘I should be allowed to be accepted in this country. But after that last ten years of things like that happening, the way I’m looked at, I don’t feel as part of the British society, as accepted.’ (Oldham, Asian, Female). Others pointed to the temporal sedimentation of these subject positions, and the implications of this for ‘second generation’ migrants:

The moment you’re tanned, you know, you’re in this country, that’s it, you are part of that Asian group or you’re part of that terrorist group over there and you’re already labelled, you’re already stereotyped as well... My mum’s been here a long time... my mum’s been here for about 30 years. My dad’s been here for a long time, my granddad’s have been here for a long time, *how far down the line from a generation point of view do I have to go in order for me to be valued in my own country because I was born here?* My dad keeps talking about back home; you know, *back home’s not me. This is back home.* (Oldham, Asian, Male, our emphasis)

The above, we argue, indicates the extent to which the post-9/11 environment has impacted upon UK-based individuals identifying as Muslim (e.g. Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2009; O’Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012). For many of our participants, this environment’s contribution

to the (re)production of particular subject positions directly influenced their own self-identification (see Jenkins, 2000). Counter-terrorism practices, in our findings, add further complexity to this by inflecting certain categories with meaning (Muslim as “other” or threatening), which in turn shapes self-identifications (the extent to which individuals see themselves, and/or the extent to which they can attach themselves to different categories such as “British”). Yet such dynamics are themselves subject to intersections, including markers of gendered identity such as beards or burqas, and ethnic or national identifications which may be seen as collocated with – or entirely disconnected from – the Muslim subject position. Whilst some individuals do resist any ‘them’/‘us’ interpretation of counter-terrorism policy in such starkly identified terms ([Author], [Date]), the difficulty of many in attaching themselves (and being seen to be attached) or being denied access to (Blackwood et al., 2013) national cultures suggests that there are deeper, longer-term issues related to the (social) impacts of counter-terrorism, beyond incursions on formal rights and statuses.

“Target”

The above section focused on how those self-identified as Muslim felt singled out by contemporary counter-terrorism powers *because* they were Muslim. This perception of targeting, however, was far from limited to those individuals, with a number of participants in our research identifying as black expressing similar concerns. Frequently, such views were related to prior experiences of discrimination. The legacies of older policing controversies such as the “Sus” laws of the 1970s and 1980s (Gilroy, 1982; see also CT4, this issue), for instance, were invoked in critical evaluations of the ethnic profiling widely-associated with contemporary counter-terrorist powers. As one participant put it in relation to discriminatory policing: ‘when you select a few, and target a few, and then only use those laws because you think they’re not from, shall I say indigenous people, and you use these laws on them... that’s the major problem for me’ (Swansea, Black, Male). Another, reviewing recent developments in this area, suggested:

Maybe if I were, if I weren’t black, I’d feel safer... but I feel that I’m the victim in this, when I see all these things because everything is aimed at a group of people, so I don’t feel safe with these laws... But having at the back of my mind that I’m being watched, I’m being searched, I’m a target group, I’m not safe. I don’t feel safe, or safer’ (Swansea, Black, Female).

Many of our participants argued not only that they might become the target of counter-terrorism powers because of racial profiling, but also that the existence of such powers would exacerbate problems of racism in the wider body politic. Some recounted experiences of abuse and harassment (see also [Author], [Date]), whilst others argued that measures like stop and search increased inter-communal tension:

Yes, I'm aware of them... particularly... stop and search, and the fact that it's increased the number of stop and search overall and, you know, there has been some complaints. You know, people have been very vocal and there have been organisations... who have been very vocal in saying that it's creating racism. (Swansea, Black, Female)

Others still echoed discussions explored in the above section - arguing that counter-terrorism powers complicated their relationship to experiences of “Britishness”. In a conversation about the 2001 Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act’s provision for indefinite detention for foreign nationals suspected of terrorism, for instance, one participant asked:

Where it says about foreign nationals, problem there again is for people like Jeremy^v who were born here, are they going to be treated as foreign nationals, because when you're stopped and searched you're not asked if you're British or not. The only thing is the colour of your skin, so will they ask you where you're born, and being born in England and having a British citizenship, does that exclude him, and I doubt that very much. (Swansea, Black, Female)

As this suggests, the perceived focus of counter-terrorism policing on specific subjects (whether “foreign nationals” or “black” individuals) increases wariness of being targeted. Important, though, is the distinction here with Muslim identities discussed above, where participants believed themselves targeted *because of* their Muslim identity. Whilst some non-white participants in our research did position themselves as unfairly targeted by counter-terrorism powers, this largely stemmed from a sense that such powers ‘exacerbated’ *existing* racial tensions, rather than constituted their direct, intended focus.

It is important to note that this experience of targeting was – again – far from universal amongst individuals identifying as members of minority ethnic communities. One Asian (non-Muslim) participant, for example, recounted being frequently stopped by border police when travelling for employment yet stated he ‘didn’t really mind... it is what it is’ (London, Asian, Male). The same participant elsewhere similarly positioned themselves as untargeted by counter-terrorism measures because: ‘if you’re a good citizen going about your day-to-day life,

it doesn't necessarily affect your day-to-day life'. This invocation of the figure of the "good citizen" signifies a far stronger attachment to a (British) citizenship than that of some of the participants above who believed themselves denied access to such a category. Quite what being a "good citizen" refers to is unclear. At a minimum, it perhaps implies "law abiding", but may refer to being employed and may also be gendered (Shepherd, 2006). The participant above – a lawyer – may have benefited from a class-based ability to claim the labels of "good citizen" and "British" in a way unavailable to individuals living more (economically) precarious lives. This raises the question as to whether intersections of ethnicity, race, class (as well as other factors such as gender, below) contribute to the production of a racial hierarchy (compare Bonilla Silva, 2004 and Song, 2004) around counter-terrorism, with certain ethnic minority groups (e.g. higher socio-economic, non-Muslim) being perceived (and perceiving themselves) beyond the scope of such measures, where others might not. This in turn, spotlights the complexity of ethnic labels such as "black" and "white" which 'cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and... therefore [have] no guarantees in nature' (Hall, 1996: 444). What is important here, however, is the extent to which counterterrorism powers shape the extent to which individuals claim (or are able to claim), or reject (or are rejected from) specific identity markers, such as "black", "white", "Muslim", and "British".

"Woman"

In the above discussion we noted debate over the significance of particular identity markers (such as facial hair, headscarves or veils) in a counter-terrorism context. An important aspect of this is the impact of gender on expectations of stigmatisation and targeting. One mother, for instance, worried about her son, as 'he'll have a stubble and sometimes he lets it grow quite long... and you do worry up all night, thinking, when is he going to get home?' (Birmingham, Asian, Female), suggesting that, for her, male identities were particularly at risk "of being [seen as] risky" (Heath-Kelly, 2013). Another female participant seemed to agree, suggesting she was less likely to be viewed with suspicion because, 'as a woman I don't have a lot more pressures than my [male] colleague' (London, Asian, Female). In other discussions, however, performances of gendered identities by (some) women, especially with regard to religious dress were seen to increase one's risk of suspicion from other citizens or the state. As one female put it: 'With the burqa, I stand out and I'm conspicuous... And you get the looks and the sly nudges and the comments behind your back' (Oldham, Asian, Female). Another participant in the same group, discussing being stopped at an airport, stated 'whatever I do it's always going to come

back to the way I dress and the way I look, so there's no point in fighting it' (Oldham, Asian, Female). Thus, there may be a distinction here between those risks of social stigma to which women may feel more vulnerable because of, for instance, the veil (see Dwyer, 1999; Werbner, 2007); and, on the other hand being targeted by official security processes (which may disproportionately affect men).

Discussions around gender such as the above also took place within focus groups of individuals not identifying as Muslim. One black female participant, for instance, suggested that ethnic minorities were more likely to be hostile to discriminatory counter-terrorism powers, before noting, 'With the stop and search, I'm not largely affected by it, but maybe a young black male would be, so... although I'm concerned with that, I'm not so concerned because I'm not ultimately being directly affected' (London, Black, Female). This echoes the point above that black participants in our research were less likely to base their negative evaluations of counter-terrorism powers upon direct (negative) experiences. Such questions around the intersection of gendered and ethnic identities were also found amongst white participants. For example, one participant addressed another's (white, female) comment that she didn't feel concerned by stop and search by saying 'no, but then [you] might do if you were a working class black male... police stop and search targets will massively affect black young males compared to white females' (Oxford, White, Female). Another participant in the same group, who knew one of the victims of the 7/7 attacks personally, stated: 'I didn't feel that these had a personal effect on me in London either, or here; but then that might be because I'm a white female' (Oxford, White, Female).

The above reinforces the importance of recognising intersectionalities between ethnic, gendered and other subject positions in the context of counter-terrorism powers. Some of our female Muslim participants felt that counter-terrorism powers contributed to a climate where they were less secure and subject to social abuse and stigma, as well, in some instances, to negative experiences with state security apparatuses. In such instances, their gendered identity increased perceptions of vulnerability. Other women, and, indeed, other ethnic minority women, felt protected because their gender positioned them at a greater distance from security practices and social stigma. Given the limitations of our data (and its lack of wider socio-demographic information) we are not able to specify precise factors which determine whether, and why, women might feel exposed or protected by their gendered identity in this context; something that might be probed in further research. Yet, this suggests a complex, variable relation such that, for our participants, gender could both increase and decrease perceived exposure to security practices and associated experiences of discrimination, pointing to

variable processes of what Mythen et al. (2013) refer to as ‘risk subjectification’ – how individuals come to be seen as dangerous by virtue of shared characteristics with the archetypal terrorist.

“Unaffected”

In our research we also spoke with a number of individuals who felt that their identity and lifestyle rendered them distant from, and unaffected by, the workings of counter-terrorism powers. As we have already seen, for some participants, variously being female, a “good citizen”, or of higher socio-economic class could reduce concerns about such powers. Beyond these, a number of white individuals in particular saw themselves as beyond the interest of those responsible for countering terrorism. Some of these – although not directly affected – did express concerns about contemporary counter-terrorism powers *in an abstract sense*, as well as engaging in efforts to empathise with those likely targeted ([Author], [Date]). One female, for instance, expressed her distaste for ‘a Big Brother state, where every single move is being watched’ (Oxford, White, Female). Others expressed related concerns about intrusions on civil liberties:

A: I almost feel like my liberty is threatened by most of them.

B: Yes, but I don’t think your liberty is really going to be threatened, because you ... you haven’t done anything wrong. (London, White, Female and Male)

Here “not doing anything wrong” (which might be aligned with the “good citizen”) means such concerns are not directly experienced or expected by the speaking self. For some of these individuals, however, this negligibility did not stop them from imagining themselves into the situation of others. As one participant imagined the impact of the (now repealed) Control Order regime:

If Sarah had a control order, as a foreign national, and was subjected to house arrest, and you weren’t allowed to move and associate and communicate... If people saw your house under house arrest, they will start to view you differently, even if you’re entirely innocent, and it starts to make people feel suspicious of their community and of the people that they’re around... that’s quite a negative consequence of these powers. (Oxford, White, Female)

This act of empathy reveals two things. First, expectations of remaining personally unaffected by counter-terrorism powers do not necessarily lead to a lack of concern about their impacts or

excesses, at least in an abstract, hypothetical sense. Second, although well-intentioned, these efforts are themselves revealing of quite how distant such measures are seen to be. There are no actual cases for these participants to reflect on and it is only by constructing imaginary situations or a change of identity (“Sarah” was another participant in the group and not a “foreign national”) that one could think through the implications of being subject to counter-terrorism powers. To expect not to be subject to a control order or similar, is arguably not unreasonable, given that only around 50 people experienced these during the time they were in effect, (Casciani, 2011). Yet, such assurance was not widespread amongst many of our Asian, Muslim and black participants, where the ‘shadow of the collective experience’ (Blackwood et al. 2013: 1098) loomed large.

A second grouping of white individuals reported a similar sense of distance from the workings of counter-terrorism powers. These people viewed counter-terrorism as a remote set of processes, with very limited (if any) direct impact upon themselves, as illustrated here:

- Moderator: What do you think of the effect of these sorts of measures on... you and those close to you. Do these have an effect, an impact, on your lives?
- A: No.
- B: No.
- C: No.
- D: No.
- B: None at all.
- Moderator Do they make you feel any safer?
- C: No.
- A: No.
- B: No.
- Moderator Is that because you don't think they're effective or some other reason?
- A: All this is happening on a level that never touches us. I mean, they don't just go and pick somebody up and put them in indefinite confinement because somebody's, you know, had a chat in a pub and this guy looks a bit dodgy. It's all happening at a level that just doesn't affect us. You know, it's phone tapping and it's email snooping and stuff like this, by the Secret Services. How's that going to affect us? It's going to affect us at the bottom line where a bomb doesn't go off in London, but at this level, no. (Oldham, White, Male (A), Female (B, C & D)).

It is perhaps worth noting that this discussion took place in Oldham, a town that gained some attention in the riots of 2001, and is widely seen as a place where the Cantle report's (2001) conception of communities leading “parallel lives” has considerable purchase. This sense of

distance, in this instance, correlated with support for extensive counter-terrorism powers, with participant A above advocating significant and intrusive counter-terrorism powers. In a discussion about extremist preachers, for instance, he argued for swift treatment – ‘just get them out, next plane’ – stating that those who incite, or support terrorism should ‘lose any rights’ (Oldham, Male, White). Such support was echoed by another who argued of stop and search: ‘personally, I won’t care being stopped as... well I have nothing to hide, it wouldn’t affect me that much’ (Oxford, White, Female). Another example can be drawn from a focus group in London, where a black woman voiced her opposition to stop and search before saying: ‘But the rest, I guess because it hasn’t directly affected me, I’m indifferent to them’ (London, Black, Female). The sense of distance, then, leads to significant variations with Muslim and “target” subjects, who point to personal experience and collective narratives of counter-terrorism as immanent and pressing. For others, it seems to matter very little, if at all. Indeed, we might suggest that such differences point to the ways in which counter-terrorism powers may contribute to the living of “parallel lives”.

This sense that counter-terrorism is ‘happening on a level that never touches us’ (Oldham, White, Male) was, in some instances, further buttressed by a nonchalance toward the threat of terrorism. As one participant put it: ‘They say terrorism is the big threat, but you’ve got to think where that would be in Britain. It wouldn’t be in Swansea, it wouldn’t be where I live anyway’ (Swansea, White, Male). Later, expressing reservations about some of the counter-terrorism powers under discussion, this same person argued that his scepticism: ‘might just be me personally feeling quite safe here, in a middle class part of Swansea... I think that’s why I frown upon this’ (Swansea, White, Male). In these cases, counter-terrorism categorisations (where “white” populations are rarely deemed to be “risky”) intersect with individuals’ self-identifications (being middle class “good citizens”) to produce a sense of distance from counter-terrorism. This distance can thus function in at least two ways. The first, as in the Oldham focus group cited at length above, is to generate support for extensive counter-terrorism powers. As one Muslim respondent in Birmingham argued, support for increasing pre-charge detention periods was more likely from: ‘someone who would never be subjugated to it, or never know anyone that was going to be subjugated to it’ (Birmingham, Asian, Male). The second, as with the respondent from Swansea, leads instead to a critical questioning, whereby feeling unthreatened by terrorism might lead to a questioning of the necessity of counter-terrorism powers.

Conclusions

This article has assessed the relationship between identity claims and subject positions, and attitudes toward counter-terrorism powers within the UK. By exploring four different types of identity claim that emerged in focus group discussions, it adds “bottom up” empirical richness to existing scholarship on this nexus. Through analysis of four articulated categories – “the Muslim”, “the target”, “the woman” and “the unaffected” – the article illustrates what appears to be a co-constitutive relationship between identity and counter-terrorism powers. Thus, on the one hand, how people make sense of their own sense of self (and the identity of others) impacts upon how counter-terrorism powers are understood and evaluated (as necessary, discriminatory, acceptable and so forth). At the same time, (understandings of) counter-terrorism powers appear to create specific identity positions (‘the unaffected’ or ‘the target’), which are subsequently negotiated and inhabited by individuals. Such subject positions variously draw upon or resist traditional identity categories (relating to ethnicity and gender, in particular), while other types of (class, sexual, cultural, and other) identity less-explored in our discussion no doubt also play into these dynamics in complex ways.

Although our findings are suggestive of the importance of different identity claims in relation to counter-terrorism, they also indicate the need for further research. For instance, as detailed above, we encountered troubling findings with regard to attachment to (or the openness of) notions of “Britishness”, with many individuals identifying as Muslim no longer feeling (able to be) British (see also Croft 2012), because of racialised readings of either, or both, of these categories. At the same time, our research also showed the pertinence of other non-religious identities for public attempts to make sense of this policy context. As detailed above, for instance, being gendered female translates, for some of our participants, to a greater vulnerability to targeting and stigma, whilst for others, it may mitigate such processes. Similarly, while many white participants in our research felt personally distanced from the workings of counter-terrorism, a number of those identifying as black felt vulnerable to singling out by the state, often approaching such powers as an intensification of an already racist body politic. In short, our research indicates the need for greater attention to the multiplicity and intersectionality of identity claims (Crenshaw 1991) that are clearly important in this context, and how combinations of gendered, racial and other subjectivities might be experienced or appropriated by diverse citizens.

Finally, our research also suggests that if creating a more cohesive society is considered a goal of counter-terrorism – if, as David Cameron (2011) suggested, the creation and sustaining of very different lived, social experiences is a barrier to security – then counter-terrorism powers, as experienced by many of our respondents, may complicate such cohesion.

For some, counter-terrorism measures impacted on their lives in fundamental ways, in some cases making them feel less able to consider themselves British. For other individuals, the effects of these powers were minimal, with counter-terrorism making very little difference to their lives. Such divergent experiences, suggestive of a different kind of “parallel lives”, do not seem to point towards cohesion, but rather may risk undermining it (see also Thomas, 2010).

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ⁱ Our framing of this sentence itself demonstrates the problem charted by Foucault in his work on authorship.

ⁱⁱ The likely reading of our own subject positions as white, male, middle class academics by participants in our focus groups, of course, furthered our sensitivity here.

ⁱⁱⁱ We return to the relationship between gender and counter-terrorism powers below.

^{iv} It was unclear whether this search was a Schedule 7 search, under the 2000 Terrorism Act, or a "routine" search by airport security staff. But following Blackwood et al. (2013), we focus on the subjective interpretations of our respondent(s), who in this case, saw the experience as representing "officialdom"

^v Participants' names have been changed.