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Community cohesion and spatial-cultural trajectories: influences on youth identification in Northern English Towns

Abstract

The recent assertion by European political leaders that multi-culturalism has 'utterly failed' is reviewed in the light of research conducted in two British towns. This paper posits a different relationship between the historical configuration of social space and the trajectory of inter-group relations. It argues that an analysis of the symbolic ordering of intergroup relations, and processes of ethnic identification and categorization needs to grounded in an understanding of a range of complex and interacting factors: the very specific structuring of the local urban environments ; the impact of globalization, and competition for public goods in inculcating a sense of dispossession; the way in which economic and social spaces experience a form of 'negative branding' that may be both internalised by members of different groups, and responsibility for which may be attributed to other groups; and the distinct cultural trajectories of differing social groups The paper uses data to illustrate the relationship between economic marginalisation and the racialisation of space, and to demonstrate that whereas young Muslim people identify the positive role of multi-culturalism in encouraging contact, good relations and equality, this is neglected or rejected by the young white respondents.

Key Words: Multiculturalism;Ethnicity;Space;Identity;Muslim;White;Class

The speech given by the UK Prime Minister David Cameron to the Munich Security Conference on 5 February 2011 was characterised by many news outlets and commentators as representing a 'sea change' in government's policy stance towards cultural diversity[i]. It attracted rare global publicity for a speech by a British politician, being greeted with approval by the elements of the media from Canada and Australia[ii] to Jerusalem[iii]. Other commentators were quick to point out that, in fact, the speech represented rather a reprise of themes that had become familiar elements in the discourse following 2001[iv], which elided the concepts of ethnicity, community cohesion and the prevention of terrorism (Meer and Modood, 2009: Authors,). This paper seeks to contribute to the critique of this discourse and argues for a more nuanced and broadly theoretically informed perspective on the enactment of British ethnic relations ., taking

into account the socio-economic and spatial context. This perspective is worked through
in an analysis of data from research which was carried out in two neighbouring towns in
the North-West of England, one of which was affected by the disturbances of 2001 that
generated widespread public comment and a series of analytical reports centred around-
notions of community cohesion (Cantle, 2001; Oldham Independent Review Panel,
2001) .

As a result, these events of 2001 have been regarded as the spur for reshaping the
discourse of 'race' policy in UK, for a sustained process of reflection on multiculturalism
and the perception of a new politics of identity. One dimension of this discursive
reformulation was the revival of an interest in the spatial and locational dimension of
racial and ethnic relations which had experienced an eclipse (alongside a more general
decline in interest in urban sociology) since the work of Rex and Moore in the 1960s and
Rex and Tomlinson in the 1970s (Rex and Moore, 1967; Rex & Tomlinson, 1979;
Ratcliffe, 1996; Phillips 1998; Beider, 2009). However, at the level of policy, this revival
of concern with the spatial took distinct form in which the role of structural elements such
as State and Market in shaping the socio-spatial environment was occluded. The
perceived lack of community cohesion has been persistently attributed by politicians and
moral entrepreneurs (Goodhart, 2004) principally to the attributes and agency of ethnic
minority groups themselves : this formulation depended in particular, as Alexander has
argued forcefully, on a fixed and homogenized version of 'Asian' culture where age,
class and locality were erased as significant determinants of structural position and
social choices (2004, p. 538), and, echoing Dahya (1974), commentators have portrayed
'Asian' or 'Muslim' communities as particularly prone to centripetal forces.

The articulation of the 'parallel lives'/'sleepwalking to segregation' argument in a range of
academic, policy related, and political publications and speeches has been the subject of
successful critique by authors who have identified the over-determined version of
Asian/Muslim culture (Alexander, 2004; Meer and Modood, 2009), as well as
commentators who have pointed out weaknesses in the allegations that 'Asian'
communities are characterised by self-determined spatial segregation (Phillips, 2006,
2007; Simpson, 2006). The flaws lie, firstly, in a limited and one-dimensional
characterisation of 'segregation' (Sui and Wu, 2006), which as Simpson points out, fails
to take account of intricate patterns of migration between areas or the significance of

area definition (2006) or the problematic nature of official 'ethnic' categorizations (Ratcliffe, 2009, p 438), and secondly in a failure to identify the underlying dynamics which might impact on group movement, a lacuna which Simpson et al (2008)l attempted to remedy with an empirical study that identified a complex range of factors underpinning motivation to move to different residential locations (Mcgarrigle and Kearns, 2009).

Furthermore, the 'parallel lives' argument under-emphasises the complex and nuanced interaction between residential clustering and the range of actual and potential interactions between community clusters and environmental factors. Social clustering has been identified as a trans-cultural and trans-historical phenomenon in urban environments, generated by a wide range of macro-structural, national and local state, and bottom-up processes and amongst the bottom-up processes often assumed to be the product of 'choice', are those, like individual preference, and the capacity of a local community to offer mutual support (York et al, 2011, p 2406), which are actively promoted as public goods by social conservatives. Since the era of the Chicago School, it has been noted that such forms of mutuality, particularly developed amongst migrant populations, interact with relative land rental values, public policy and access to finance to generate spatial and social differentiation (Park and Burgess, 1925; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1996) . So while 'voluntary association' in the form of social clustering can be seen as an almost ubiquitous property of urban living, specific forms of clustering have therefore to be understood in the context of the specificities of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991) and of historical conjunctures such as the impact of globalization on the destiny of the UK textile industry.

So, as Amin has argued, it may be more appropriate to see that 'excluded localities' take the form they do, not because of disconnection, 'but because of particular forms of connection that work to their disadvantage' (2005, p. 619). Certain aspects of the spatial dimension of disadvantage and exclusion are well understood and reported on a European level: for example the tendency of urban settlements with a history of dependence on manufacturing industry to be at risk of higher levels of residual unemployment, resulting in part from skills and employment mismatches (Murie and Musterd, 2004). It has additionally been noted that the presence of populations of migrant workers may accentuate these mismatches. Another example of the complex

relationship between clustering and disadvantage is the impact the consumption of public services, as in the case of school choice, on residential segregation (Vincent, 1992; Burgess et al, 2005; Harris, 2010).

So while the issue of whether community 'clusters' constitute excluded ghettos or self-selected enclaves (Gans, 2008; Wacquant, 1993), or both, is clearly still a live one, it is difficult to resolve using established demographic measures. This narrow debate underplays, however, the complex cultural dynamics and trajectories of urban life, and the way they produce collisions of contrasting and contradictory images and narratives. In addition to the realities of where people live and why, perceptions of spatial relationships, the nature of identifications with localities and urban centres, and the patterning of contact and interaction between self-identified groups is highly significant in shaping relationships between 'communities'. In the next section we explore in more detail some of the theoretical issues which entangle the concepts of ethnicity and space.

Rethinking culture and space

By contrast with the 'parallel lives' commentators, Jenkins, in his discussion of the contexts in which the processes of ethnic categorization take place, lists a range of contexts, from the informal (primary socialization) to the most formal (science), without once mentioning the spatial dimension (2008, p 66). While the borders with which his Barthian approach is concerned have physical elements, they primarily evidence themselves at a level of social interaction which is conceptually remote from spatial boundaries. One of the achievements of the Chicago School's analysis of urban spaces was to identify spatial differentiation in the city as a complex process in which the dynamics of urban land values were articulated with choices and constraints on the residential choices of individuals and groups, as well as the interplay between these factors and the nature of the urban environment. Parallel to the development of their famous ecological model of urban transformation, members of the Chicago School were also concerned with the relationship between migration and social organization. Thomas and Znaniecki identified the way in which rural-urban migration produced a sequence of social disorganization and re-organization, profoundly influenced by the new environment in which groups found themselves, which could accentuate for migrant communities the significance of the cultural and religious forms they brought with them

from their place of origin (1996): a point reiterated by Dahya in his discussion of housing preferences (1972). The processes of migration and clustering can therefore be seen as independent of any particular form of migrant culture: for example, Vrychea and Golemis trace the history of a neighbourhood in the port of Piraeus and identify the way in which migrants from the Peloponnese following the Greek Civil War recreated a form of village social life 'a closely knit social group whose members support each other in all fields of social and economic life' (1998, p 161). Whilst acknowledging how processes of migration can have effects that transcend national context, we need also to acknowledge the particularity of the social and spatial contexts in which these effects manifest themselves.

'Northern Towns': spatial and cultural trajectories

Savage and Warde argue, apropos of a recognition of the often repeated critique of generic theories of urban culture and acknowledging the debt to Lefebvre, that a city can be thought of as a text, with 'certain authors, constructed in a particular way by various procedures and techniques' and with 'a series of meanings embedded within it' and 'subject to forms of reading' (1993, p 122). We would argue that the arc of northern towns stretching across the North of England from Oldham and Rochdale west of the Pennines, through Burnley and Nelson and Colne to Keighley, Bradford and the conurbation in the Spen Valley centred on Dewsbury in West Yorkshire, can be, by the same analysis, seen as a specialised text, or genre, of urban life. The shared characteristics of the genre have been noted by commentators before and since the 2001 events, but it is worth fully reiterating them as a preface to our subsequent discussion.

The spatial configuration of these Northern Towns has common elements which interact closely with their socio-cultural trajectories. As noted by Amin (2002), they share a common economic dependence on textiles dating from the time of Defoe's Tour of Britain, when he noted of Rochdale that as a manufacturing town it was *'very considerable, for a sort of coarse goods, called half-thicks and kerseys'* for which *'the market was very great, though otherwise the town is situated so remote, so out of the way, and so at the very foot of the mountains, that we would suppose it would be but*

little frequented' (Defoe, 2006, p 320). Engels similarly noted that the towns surrounding Manchester, like Oldham and Rochdale 'are purely industrial and conduct their business purely through Manchester upon which they are in every sense dependent', contrasting their exclusively working class population with the more cosmopolitan and bourgeois character of Manchester (1969, p 76). Their growth as the satellite industrial centres, which attracted large scale internal migration and speculative building booms to provide housing for the factory classes, coincided with the development of transport arteries like canals and railway routes that have been by-passed in the latter half of the last century by the motorway system linking the major metropolitan centres: the result has been to leave them partially eclipsed by their larger neighbours Leeds and Manchester. Oldham has even been absent from the national rail network for several years.

Another author of this urban genre is the decline of the textile industry, characterised by low wages and family working since its inception, in the 20th century this resulted in a parallel decline in population in Oldham, for example, through outward migration, from a peak of 147,000 in 1911 to a low point of 103,000 in 2001. The subsequent rise in population has resulted from the way in which the final years of the textile industries were sustained through their inter-twined relationship with migrant labour, and the positive incline of the migrant population, based on differential birth-rate (Oldham Metropolitan Borough, 2006).

The characteristics of this urban genre are defined by what Byrne identifies as a dual dynamic: the close association between poverty, exclusion and spatial concentration on the one hand, and the transformation of spaces themselves in the post-industrial order (Byrne, 2005, p 118). The situation of the white working class in Northern towns may be seen as essentially residual, representing a sedimented form of inequality. This was historically represented in spatial form through concentrations of public housing, often on the margins of towns which already represent satellites of larger conurbations – the policy of council house sales from the 1980s accentuated this to an even greater degree. The collective experience of disadvantage and lack of opportunity takes spatial form as a landscape that is stigmatized, and whose residents are 'constructed as marginal or alien' (Mohan, 2002, p. 72).

The social reorganization of immigrant populations in these towns following the arrival of families was (as was the case with the Polish migrants studied by Thomas and Znaniecki, 1996), focused on religion and the cheap and accessible housing in inner city areas Therefore, as has been noted by others (for example, Amin, 2002), the text of Northern towns is inscribed with the Manichean metaphor of twin populations equally spatially defined and separated, where the names of areas become homonyms for assumed populations with equally assumed characteristics: Glodwick and Fitton Hill in Oldham, Deeplish and Syke in Rochdale as respective examples of 'Asian' and 'White' territories. This identifiably polarised clustering can be seen as distinct from the pattern in metropolitan centres, where diversity does not apparently take on such a perceptible binary or ternary form. The cultural bricolage amongst young people described by Back (1996) in London becomes, as a result, a less viable option.

In the empirical investigation aspects of which we report here, we were particularly concerned to explore the reciprocal relationship between the production of space in two 'Northern Towns', and the perceptions and identifications of young people from two sides of what has been perceived a such a pronounced divide, utilising social action perspectives such as Weber and to an extent Bourdieu, as understandings which can embrace the local and the historical. The significance of the spatial realisation of inequality and stratified opportunities is difficult to overstate, and large areas of industry and housing in northern England in particular experience a sense of abandonment. One of the issues we wish to explore is the extent to which the different trajectories and cultural assumptions of white and 'Asian' young people in these towns shapes inter-group relations, and distinct views about multiculturalism.

Methodology

Hopkins notes the multiplicity of issues that confront white researchers attempting to work with participants who neither belong to the same ethnic group, nor are co-religionists (2007), and Bowler provided an interesting example of the issues that can arise from the culturally contested form of the interview (1997). In order to mitigate some of these drawbacks in the research process, we adopted a form of delegated research design, which involved collaborating with youth workers in the Oldham and

Rochdale boroughs to develop a range of methods of data collection which would be consistent with the normal experience that participants had of youth work in the participating settings. These included focus groups, 3-point scale questionnaires, mind-maps, sentence completion exercises, identity ranking exercises of the kind used by Basit (2009) and Scourfield and Davies (2007), and word association exercises. Following training sessions designed to standardise the approach of the youth workers, the techniques were used in group sessions over a two month period in 2007-8, in 19 youth centres covering a range of areas of Rochdale and Oldham, and with both mono-cultural and mixed groups comprising a total of 242 young people. Local decisions were taken as to which of the possible research methods were suitable for each group: 142 young people from 13 centres participated in the word association exercises that are reported here. A brief description of the groups, their purpose and composition, is given in the table below.

Group	No. Participants	Location	Specific Purpose	Composition
A	11	Oldham – located centrally	Youth empowerment – run through careers company	Predominantly Asian, mixed Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin group
B	14	Oldham – located centrally	Alternative education/school based	White
C	8	Oldham – centrally located	Third Sector community cohesion group established before 2001 riots	Mixed Ethnicity
D	6	Oldham - Central Youth club location	Locally based youth group	Bangladeshi origin Youth Group
E	1	Oldham –	Locally based	

				youth group
F	12	Rochdale	Locally based youth group	Bangladeshi Youth Group
G	8	Rochdale	Locally based youth group	Pakistani 12-14 years old
H	6	Rochdale	Locally based youth group	Mixed 'Asian' 15-17 years old
I	16	Rochdale	Locally based youth group	Bangladeshi 14-19 year olds
J	12	Rochdale	Local	White 15-19 year olds
K	15	N Manchester	Youth Inclusion Project group based in peripheral areas	White
L	9	Rochdale	Church-based youth provision	White
M	24	Rochdale	Youth trust provision	Mixed but predominantly white

It could be argued that this raised the problem of compliance and conformity resulting from group-based research approaches (Albrecht et al, 1993), but the openness and honesty of young people in expressing their views could be seen as enhanced, and clearly the views we were concerned with are generally, formulated and expressed through group participation and a sense of group positionality (as we have argued above). The analysis of focus group, interview and identity exercises have been reported elsewhere (authors, forthcoming), although we present some fresh interview data here relevant to the specific issues we discuss in this article.

Closed association tests, such as the Implicit Association Tests (Greenwald et al, 1998), have been frequently used to explore and measure automatic associations between mental representations of categories and characteristics, and they are held to have the advantage of avoiding the processes of rationalization and social desirability that might

affect more dialogical methods. We used word association not in the expectation of being able to 'measure' any underlying construct, but in order to explore what Vincent (1994), following Edelmann and Sapir (1934), refers to as 'condensation symbols'. While recognising the limitations of using word association in an uncontrolled environment, and in conjunction with other forms of data collection that might prompt responses, we felt that the approach offered the opportunity to elicit associations at the 'doxic' (taken for granted) level of classification through identification and categorization (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). The young people were asked to list three associations with the following terms: 'British', 'English', 'White', 'Muslim People', the name of their local authority area (Rochdale/Oldham), and 'multi-cultural', and were advised to write only the first word(s) that came into their head without subsequent correction. The results of the exercise were analysed using two approaches: aggregating responses into narrow thematic categories, and looking for clustering of categories in individual response (as in a white/English/fish and chips cluster) and in group responses, as well as exploring the relationship between the processes of identification with 'own' group and classification of 'other' groups: these clusters were generated using a Boolean approach to identifying co-occurrences. The analysis was checked by an independent rater. There are clearly caveats to be entered concerning the data: it can be argued that by using a religious label for 'Muslim', and implicitly counter-posing it to 'White', 'British' and 'English', we are loading the dice in favour of religiously-based self-identification by young 'Asians'. The use of the term 'Asian' in the text is intended as distinct from its use as a form of ethnic labelling: it reflects a folk usage of the term as a form of categorization and identification by both groups of young people.

The Branding of Space

The way in which post-industrial urban centres have become conscious of the significance of image as a factor in the process of competing for inward investment has become an increasingly salient feature of local and regional policy (Trueman et al, 2007). In addition the development of a positive 'local' brand has been seen as important for securing civic pride and loyalty, and as a result, attachment to social order (Cozens,2002 ; Kavaratzis and Adshworth, 2007). Trueman's research in Bradford, a city with a similar socio-economic trajectory to Oldham and Rochdale, indicated that residents retained a strong loyalty to and identification with their local neighbourhood,

but a predominantly negative view of other quarters and the city as a whole: this was seen as a function of social and spatial differentiation, and as revealing a clear need for linkages between disparate communities. The city centre was identified with litter, crime, vandalism and prostitution, and appeared as a metaphor for neglect. Sampson has recently identified the significance of perceptions of disorder in reinforcing a hierarchical ordering of spaces which reinforces other indices of inequality, and renders the reproduction of inequality and disorder more likely (2009). He also notes the tendency for perceptions of localised disorder to be racialized.

We have already identified the disadvantages experienced by towns like Oldham and Rochdale in terms of their fragile economies and weak infrastructural connections with their neighbouring metropolis: elements which might undermine civic loyalty in a similar way. Classical urban sociology would suggest that these factors might be compounded by fragile social structures which are configured spatially, or to express it in the language of 1990s public policy: 'the multi-dimensional phenomenon of social exclusion finds spatial manifestation in its acute forms, in deprived or peripheral urban areas' (Madanipour, 1998, p. 86). In addition to perceived exclusionary factors related to public policy such as housing and crime, studies have suggested deficits in retail outlets in deprived urban areas (Alwitt et al, 1997). As is the case with similar towns, the shopping centres of Rochdale and Oldham are dominated by developed Shopping Centres, Spindles in Oldham and Wheatsheaf in Rochdale (increasingly marginalised by the Trafford Centre in Manchester), which largely house the well known high street chains, and lower rent frontages, with a high proportion of fast food outlets. Several of our respondents identified the barren character of local town centres as a negative feature as in this comment: *in * it's like more spread out and you can like meander and wander about, here Ok it's like just one street got loads of shops – I think it would be better if it was more spread out and you'd have less people hanging about.*

In common with other urban centres in England and Wales, there is a sharp differentiation between the day time retail economy and the night time entertainment economy, which, following the intended role of 'creative cities' in sponsoring regeneration, has become dominated to an even greater extent than previously by the consumption of alcohol (Roberts, 2006). Oldham achieved fame in 2009 as a centre of the binge drinking culture as a result of coverage on a BBC Panorama documentary,

accompanied by vivid images of disorder and violence in the town centre, and pioneered the reviewing of licenses of premises in order to encourage minimum pricing[v]. In addition, high profile criminal cases involving drug dealing and sexual exploitation achieved prominence in both the regional and national press[vi]. The combined effect of these factors and the disturbances of 2001 in Oldham were sufficient for the local authority in Oldham to seek the support of a major consultancy in attempting to re-brand the town (Kadembo, 2009).

In the process of construing young people's responses to place labels, we needed to bear in mind the way that spatial organization and the nature of the night time economy affected the nature of the contacts ethnic groups would have with each other. Young people going to the town centre for entertainment on a Friday or Saturday evening would take taxis from satellite areas which were driven by 'Asian' males, and after a night's drinking would be likely to visit a fast food outlet managed or owned, and staffed by members of the 'Asian' community. 'Asian' young people would see or hear accounts of drunken young white people in town centres, and would hear stories about hoax calls to taxi firms or groups refusing to pay fares. Contact under these circumstances provides a catalyst for mutually reinforcing negative images, rather than the more positive and mutual relationships that might occur in a shared classroom or lecture room.

The sense of the negative branding of the central spaces of Oldham and Rochdale was epitomised in the comment of one of the white participants in a Rochdale focus group: *There's a hole in the world like a great pit and people inside are full of shit, and it's the arsehole of the world and it goes by the name of Rochdale.* It also emerges clearly from the associations expressed by the young people and summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 here

Negative associations outweighed positive associations in a ratio of 20:1, and positive associations tended to reflect loyalty either to own neighbourhood (as in Trueman et al, 2007), or a specific institution such as a school or youth club. Both White and Muslim young people identified dirt, litter and the salience of local drug trafficking as key markers of the city centre, which was also seen as deficient in terms of style and shopping opportunities ('white socks' being a homonym for 'uncool'). The differentiated

responses appear to at least partially project the responsibility for many of the negative characteristics of the urban centre onto the 'other' ethnic group. White young people, who almost entirely resided in mono-cultural suburbs and satellites, identified the town centre with 'Pakis' and 'Asians', and a large number clustered these labels together with drug dealing. In addition some responses embedded associations which appeared to denote a sense of dispossession possibly explained by the phenomenon of the night-time economy discussed above (reinforced by a reiteration of some of these associations with 'Muslim'): *'Asians taking over', 'money grubbers', 'Kebabs'.*

Conversely, the 'Muslim' group associated the centre with clusters of alcohol, fighting, perceived deviant sexual activity (*'prostitutes', 'paedos', 'rapists', 'slags'*) as well as the drug dealing and misuse, which were commonly perceived by most young people (*'smackheads', 'crackheads'*). The town centres were associated with a drinking and clubbing culture with which many Muslim young people felt uncomfortable. This Muslim young woman from Rochdale identified it as a major barrier in achieving a stronger relationship with her white friend: *with some of my white friends it's a bit more reserved – it's like S we were mates, and she was the first person I talked to at college, she'd go clubbing and I wouldn't – couldn't relate 100%.*

However, Muslim young people were far more likely to identify with some of the positive developments which had been initiated as a part of the regeneration initiatives (particularly in Oldham), and to translate their positive associations with family and community and the idea of multi-culturalism, to their sense of place. Several respondents spoke of difficulties they or members of their family had experienced during periods where they had moved away:

> *I have friends who work in London, you know one works for Sky, one works for a big bank, they've gone down to do a job but they always want to come back like every other weekend, because they like it here. I've stayed the night with them and they were telling me how badly they can't wait for the end of the week to come back – their families are here.* (Young 'Muslim' respondent, Rochdale).

As we observe in the next section, some ideas about space and landscape were closely associated with the nature of the identifications made by young people and the features which characterised their categorizations of others.

Identification and Categorization

Many contemporary scholars of ethnicity stress the close relationship between the processes of ethnic or racial identification of self and categorization of others, though this analysis can be seen to date back to Weber. In his commentary on 'ethnic honour', Weber notes the way in which the ethnic honour of Southern Whites in the USA was 'dependent on the social *déclassement* of the Negroes' (1978, p. 391). Jenkins delineates the complexity of what he describes as the 'internal-external dialectic of identification' (2008, p. 59), the relationship between individual and group images of self and others, the public images through which each are refracted, and the formal and informal contexts in which these relationships are shaped. In discussing the results presented in Figures 2 &3, we can tease out both the reciprocal dependence of some of these forms of identification, and the fact that some forms of identification/categorization appear dependent on direct experience, whilst other depend on symbolic associations.

Table 2 presents a summary of the word association data for 'white', but we will also refer to the related associations of 'British' and 'English' where they appear to form a complex of associations (as in the case of the tendency to cluster together the associations of British/English/White/Queen/Bulldog/Proud). The left hand column represents the associations that 'white' young people made with the label 'white'; the right hand column the associations Muslim young people made with the same label, and the central column identifies those associations made by both groups. Associations in italic type were made by more than 15% of respondents, and those in bold type by more than 20%, and this format is employed for the other tables.

Insert Table 2

A strongly assertive sense of pride was evinced in the identifications many of the white young people made with 'white', and in several cases these associations were coupled with an oppositional identification against 'Asians' ('*it's alright because it's our country meant for white people*', '*not Asian*', '*Hate racist Asians*'),though these were most highly concentrated in the responses from one particular white council estate in Rochdale. Association with Christianity and the Church was also marked, though these positive identifications were balanced by those more associated with the folk devil caricature of

white working class youth (*'chavs', hooligans','scallies', 'drug dealers', 'tramps'*). All the associations in the previous sentence featured as ways in which the 'Muslim' young people categorized 'white'. We have discussed the issue of national identification elsewhere (authors , forthcoming) but in this analysis we decided to look at ways in which associations with 'white', 'British' and 'English' clustered together as forms of identification. The cluster is represented in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1

A point of interest in this figure, as in Table 2, is how little the identities appear to offer in the way of culture beyond their surface labelling. If this is an object to which Muslim young people ought to aspire to assimilate, it is a singularly barren one.

A minority of 'Muslim' respondents provided positive associations with 'white', some of which were associated with institutions, like the health service or schools, which were seen as both staffed by white adults and beneficial. Residential segregation and the system of catchments prevalent in both towns in the early 2000s meant that for many, secondary school was the first occasion on which they were likely to encounter a white peer group, as this Muslim young woman explains:

> *It's like with me I went to F which is another Asian populated school, but then I was on like a table of three well there were three white girls on it, and I was like shocked because I'd never been with white people, you know like next to you, just in among teachers or just like working but not as a friend. Got to know them but actually it was a shock.*

Many of the associations therefore appeared to be based not on direct contact, but rather on external dress codes associated with 'chavdom' (*'hoodies', burberries'*), negative associations based on experiences or assumptions about street and political racism (*'racist','NF/BNP', 'jump us for no reason', 'thugs/wannabes/bullies, 'murder'*), associations with the dark side of the night-time economy (*'alcohol', 'smackheads', 'druggies'*) association with 'haram' food and expressions of physical disgust.. The cluster analysis represented in Figure 2 reflects this negative attitude to the Other.

INSERT FIGURE 2

   The view that hostility was certainly bi-lateral was expressed by a young Bengali
Muslim male from Rochdale:

Well like my people sometimes gave grief in Deeplish. In Norden (suburban area near
Rochdale golf club) *Asians are the minority .. But no one discriminates against Asians
there, whereas in Deeplish white people are sometimes discriminated against .. I think
white people feel intimidated because they are in a minority.'* Qualitative data from the
interviews and focus groups also suggested that these negative associations with 'white'
might be governed by views of specific real or imagined groups (principally 'chavs'), and
localities:

> *I wouldn't go walking around Kirkholt you know for the sake of my head .. I don't
> want to get my head kicked in – it's because if I go to Kirkholt I'll be in a minority
> and therefore would be vulnerable to what's happening – I'm not saying everyone
> in Kirkholt is bad but it just has that sort of reputation.*

As we noted in the section on methodology, the choice of a religious label like 'Muslim'
as an object of association can be seen as loading the dice, and so it is probably not
surprising that there were some very positive identifications with the label on the part of
the 'Muslim' groups. In his study of young Muslim men in Glasgow, Hopkins (2007)
notes the organization of religious identification around religious practice and
observance ('doing Islam), and the positive sense of identification that this gave his
respondents. Similarly, the word association data from our study confirmed the centrality
of practice in relationship to identification, as shown in Table 3:

INSERT TABLE 3

Key associations for 'Muslim' were *Namaaz (praying 5 times a day), halal observance,
fasting, non-alcoholic, Salaam, Eid,* and symbols of the faith such as *Mecca, Q'ran,
Mosque, Kana Kabah. Hijab* but also cultural practices and values that they associated
with Islam: *Clean, Happy, Good, Calm, Trustworthy, Caring,* and the family and culture
which were seen as sustaining them. A number of the most commonly positive
identifications also featured in white categorizations of 'Muslim', but as a kind of mirror
image: so the 'strong faith' endorsed by the Muslim group was seen by white young
people as *'too strong in their faith'.* Both groups identified themselves as respectful and

categorized the other as disrespectful, and both groups associated 'Muslim' with 'terrorist', although the Muslim young people strongly labelled this as a stereotype.

'White' categorizations of 'Muslim' were predominantly hostile. As was the case with Muslim categorizations of whiteness, much attention was given either to visible external signs, like dress code (*'robed', 'ragheads', 'turbans', 'beard', 'shouldn't dress differently'*), or aspects of the townscape, which generally shared associations with a language of expropriation (*'take everything over', 'shops taking over', 'mosques – shouldn't be allowed', 'foreign cars'*). Other negative associations include the same expressions of personal and physical disgust which had obtained in the other direction. The *'always think they're the best'* association tended to cluster with *'too strong in their faith'* and *'disrespectful'*. The well-rehearsed negative iconography of religious symbols which has sparked mosque protests across the Atlantic and across Europe has been reflected in Oldham's own mosque controversy.[vii]

The data reported here can provide two alternative readings. One reading could see the mutual suspicion and hostility as an endorsement of aspects of the 'parallel lives' argument: lack of contact between groups does generate judgements based on poorly understood external aspects of differentiated cultures, and mutual suspicion. However, the other reading would point to the fact that this has been in part generated by a segregated school place allocation system, and that the 'separateness' of Muslim communities is only one interpretation of community strengths in terms of the role of family and community values which in other contexts the communitarian strand in public policy has sought to encourage: a strongly bonded community is a crucial resource in the face of economic and spatial marginalisation. In fact, reluctance to mix appears to be stronger amongst white young people, some of whom define Whiteness and Britishness precisely in terms of their incompatibility with and Asian or Muslim identity. Indeed, in response to the statement that *'Britain is stronger if groups live separately'*, only 16% of Muslims definitely agreed and 71% definitely disagreed, as opposed to 36% of the white group definitely agreeing and 30% definitely disagreeing, so displaying a small but significant white majority in support of the idea that even greater ethnic segregation would be better for all concerned, as we discuss more fully elsewhere (Authors, forthcoming b).This interpretation is highlighted by the responses to the label 'multicultural'.

Conclusion: A future for Multi-Culturalism?

Our respondents reacted to the label of 'multi-cultural', with a shared, spare, core definition which included a recognition that it involved different beliefs and religions, as well as mixed marriage, but with sharply different, and more intricate constructs, as is evidenced by Table 4. A large group of white respondents responded by refusing to recognise the word as having any meaning at all (*'don't know', don't understand', 'what does it mean?'*), while some others expressed explicitly negative connotations (*'smell', 'waste time', 'mongy', 'fights', 'boring people'*), or rejected the idea explicitly (*'dress like us in England', 'bad to mix with other* races'). Others made positive associations, but in relation to symbols of Black African-Caribbean culture (*'Bob Marley', 'cool'*). Positive responses that either acknowledged the positive benefits of multi-culturalism, or associated the idea with positive symbols were few and far between.

Insert Table 4.

By contrast, our 'Muslim' respondents combined an extended understanding of the word's meaning with a set of positive connotations that appeared to amount to an endorsement of the concept, and a sense that it could be identified as a positive aspect of English (if not Oldham and Rochdale) life. Acceptance of difference, in the form of religious observance, and associated dress codes and landscape features, appeared to be a fault line in the views and the discussions, with white young people. For example, one young white man, otherwise fairly positive about Rochdale as a diverse town, said, *That's how gangs start though, if their parents stuck to their religion and said 'stick with your kind of people, stay away from the rest of them, that's how gangs start'.* The following interchange in one of the focus groups encapsulates the tension between the two views of what multi-culturalism might mean:
A.By and large the cultures can run alongside each other but what they need to remember is that in Britain you have one culture and that's British culture – I mean you can have your own traditions but ultimately you are subordinate to British Law
B.You identify around what is your main priority – to be honest my main priority is not to be British – it's to practice my religion and take into account being British as well. So I don't exactly go against the law.

The critique of multiculturalism has, we would argue, created an environment where, as Baumann argues, the ontological insecurities of a globalised world can be projected on to those exemplifying difference, often familiar strangers:

In our civilized times, we do without branding, badges of infamy or dunces' hats to warn us when and from whom to keep our distance, but we have a lot of substitutes to do just that .. As the urban crowd becomes ever more variegated, the chances of coming across modern equivalents of burned-in brands grows accordingly; and the suspicion grows as well that we may be too slow or inept to read out the messages the unfamiliar sights may contain. So we have reasons to be afraid, and then it is only one small step that needs to be made to project our fears on to the strangers that triggered them, and to blame city life for being dangerous; being dangerous because of its variety' (2001, 147-8). The fear, anxiety and hostility which Baumann describes is woven from many threads: images, symbols and ideas from national and local media onto which local experiences of marginalisation and feelings of dispossession can condense; geographies of residence and consumption of public goods like education, and leisure, which can positively or negatively affect the nature of contacts between group; and the reinforcement of negative views of those outside group boundaries which can be such a powerful force for inclusive bonding. Whilst the concept of multiculturalism as a practice of patronage and a stimulus for separatism may have proved to be an effective lever for mobilising political support for groups from the English Defence League to Cameron and Merkel and their parties, there is little evidence on the ground in places like Oldham and Rochdale that there has been any consistent policy of any kind with these characteristics or effects. We have tried to identify in this paper the local, contingent and situated factors which configure mutual suspicion, and we would argue that successful policies to address conflict in these Northern textile towns need equally to be rooted in the particularities of young people's economic, social and spatial experiences.

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Table 1: The negative branding of town centres?

	Town associations expressed by 'white' respondents	Town associations expressed by both groups	Town associations expressed by 'Muslim' respondents
Negative	**Taxis** **Pakis** **Asians taking over** **Mixed race/multi-cultural (negative)** *Dole/Benefits* *No entertainment* *Clubs* *Kebabs* White minority Bad Boys Ghetto Money grubbers Rough Mosher White socks (uncool) Shit Nowt to do	**My Town** **Shopping (names of shopping centres)** **Dirty** **Scruffy** **Smelly** **Litter** **Scallies** **Smackheads, crackheads, drug addicts** **Rainy** **Dismal** Riots Racist Asians	**Prostitutes** **Fighting** **Drug Dealers** **Alcoholics** Crime, vandalism Don't like it Want to live somewhere else **Chav** Jaw (joy) riding Pedos (Paedos) Rapists Slags
Positive	Smoking Sik Monss (greatest) Friends Football team (Latics) Safe Rude	Youth Centre Own neighbourhood named as positive	Clean Developing Gallery (Oldham) Family Multicultural Community Home Family
Neutral	Council Estates	Macdonalds	Terraced houses

	Mad accent	Greggs	
		Town Hall	
		Game Station	

Table 2: Self-identification of 'white' young people and categorization of 'white' by 'Muslim' young people.

Identification	Overlaps	Categorization
Sik/normal/sorted/cool/	**Chavs**	**Racist/NF/BNP**
fab/rude/safe	**Fish and Chips**	**Haram food**
Pride/Pride in	**Scallies**	**Pork/Hamburgers/Meatheads/**
country/Proud	*Christian*	**Bacon**
Smart	*English*	**Beer/Alcohol/Drunks**
Clever	Hooligans	**Smackheads/Druggies**
Power	Army	**Thug wannabes/Bullies/**
Loud	Tramps	**Jump us (for no reason)**
Creative	Church	**Fat/Big Men**
British	Drug Dealers	*Fights*
English	Sex	*Dirty (reference to personal*
Normal		*hygeine*)
Good Weed		*No respect*
Chilling out		Hoodies
Bouncers		Burberry
Tall		A little bit stuck up
Polish		Full of themselves
European		Don't mix well
Anglo-Saxon		Don't marry much
Have jobs		Shameless
Friends		No religion
My race		Murder
Hate racist Asians		Smelly
Protestant		Bald
Motorbikes		Freckles
Cars		Pigs (police)
Queen		America
Flag		Jealous
Not Asian		Cottages
It's alright because its our		Football/Sport

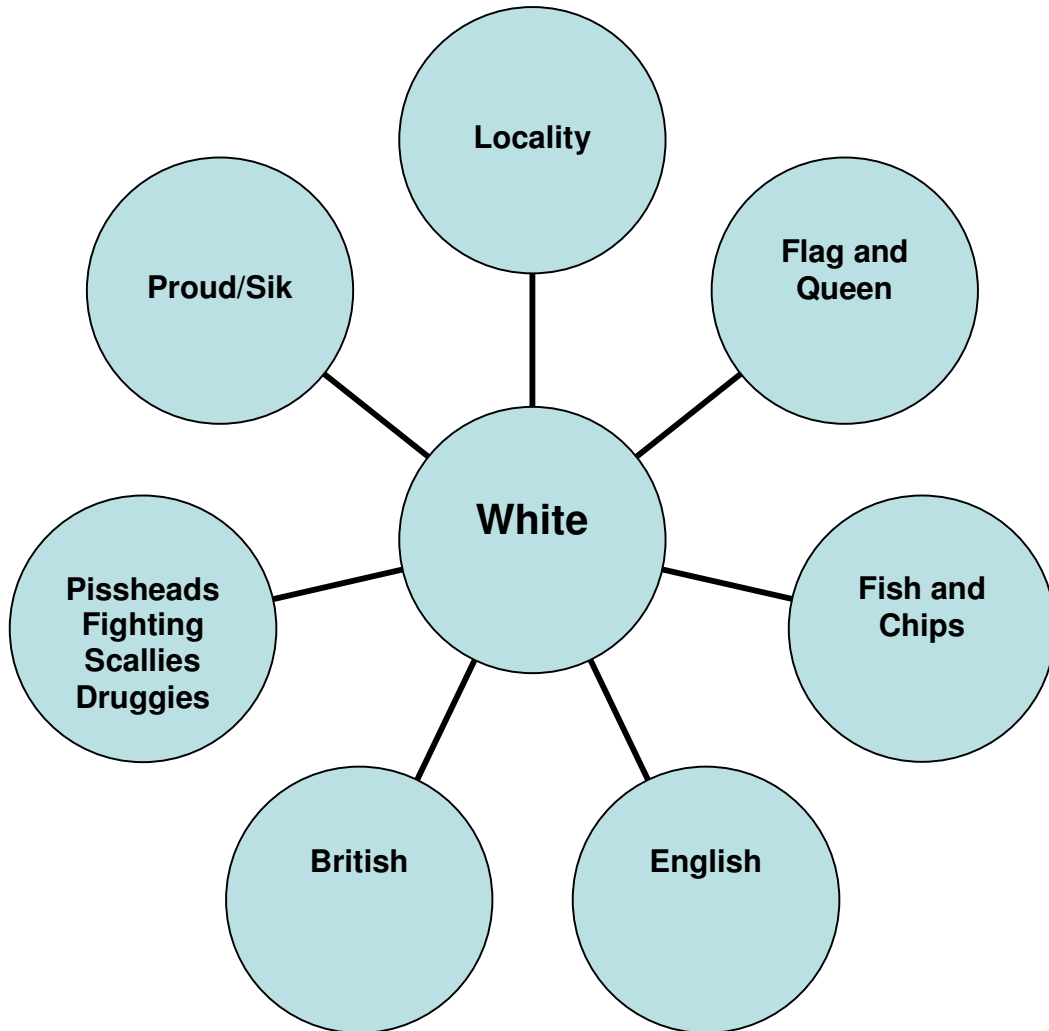|		
country meant for white people		Doctor
		Kind some of them
		All right/OK/Ok to get along with
		Cousin
		Some nice
		Some girls are fit
		Doctors
		Councillors
		Loving
		Caring
		Jolly

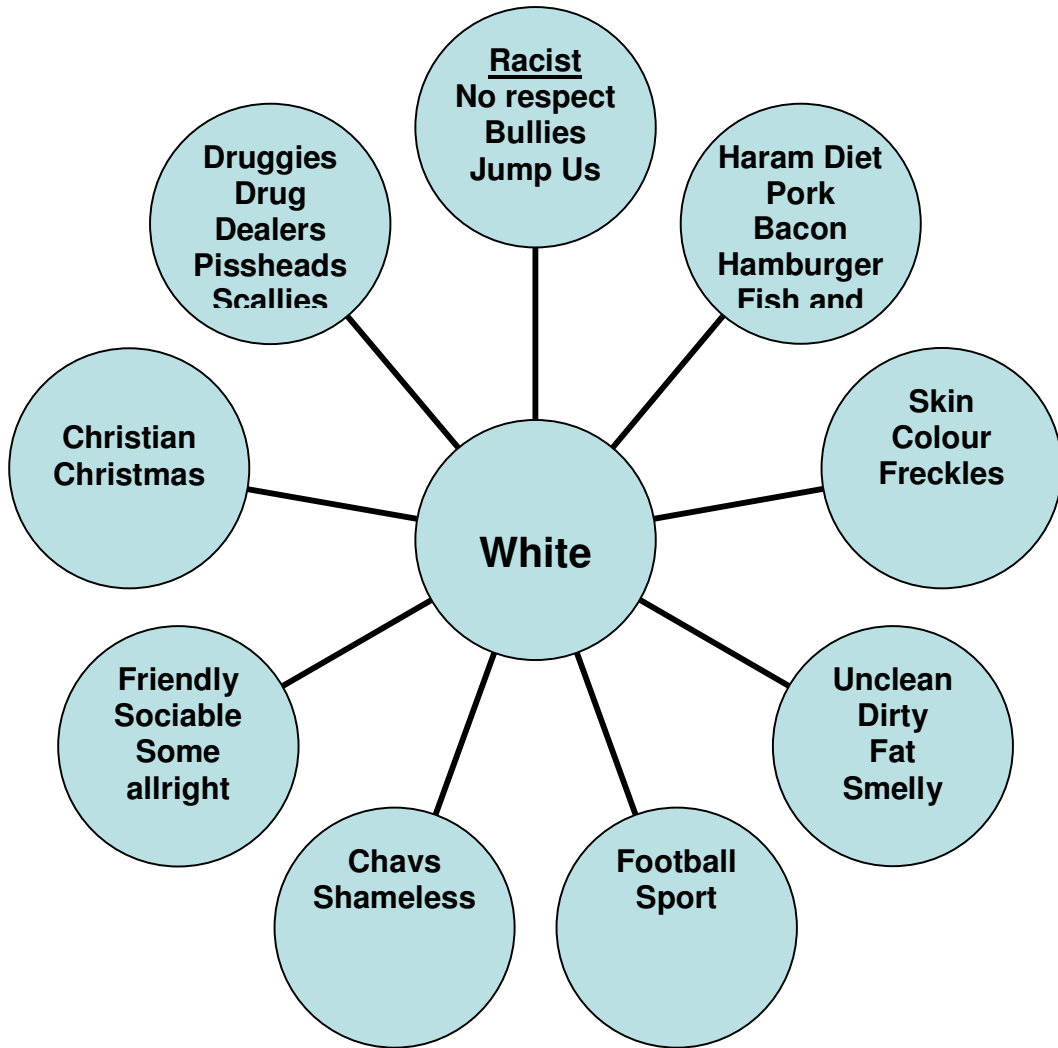**Figure 1: 'White' identification cluster**

Figure 2. White Categorization

Table 3: Self-identification of 'Muslim' young people and categorization of 'Muslim' by 'white' young people.

Identification	Venn Overlaps and Opposites	Categorization
Worship Allah	**Religion**	Immigrants
5 pillars	**Mosque**	Beard
God-fearing	Fasting	**Pakis**
Observance of	**Terrorists/stereotyped as**	Ragheads
Namaaz (Prayers 5 times	**terrorists**	Stink
a day)	**Strong faith/too strong in their**	Pray a lot
Salaam	**faith**	Taxis
Disciplined	**Respect/disrespectful**	Turbans
Halal dietary observance	**Q'ran**	Bad drivers
Eid	Well mannered/rude	Foreign cars
Clean	**Curry**	Shouldn't dress
Happy	**Hijab/Headscarves**	differently
Good	Drug dealers (1 identification)	Taj Mahal
Calm	Don't celebrate Christmas	Robed
Gentle	Hard-working	Bin Laden
Trustworthy		Mongy
Caring		Always think they're the
Approachable		best
Non-alcoholics		Start stuff for nothing
Big Families		Dodgy weed
Equal		Benefits
Mecca		Ugly
Kana Kabah		Sweaty
Family		Inbred
Culture		Shouldn't be allowed
		Twats
		Sikh
		Takeaway
		Pervy
		Take over everything

		(jobs)
		Close with each other
		Strong views
		Shops (taking over)
		Batter wimen
		OK to get on with (1)

Table 4: Multicultural associations

'White' responses	Overlap	'Muslim' responses
Don't know/Don't Understand (9)	Different Religions	**Same**
	Different Beliefs	**Normal**
What does it mean	Different view	**Equal**
Nuffin	Culture	British
Black People	Asian	Society
Fit/Sik	White	Good
Dancing	Black	Friendly
Music	**Mixed race/Mixed**	Happy
Bongo Drums	**marriage**	Not racist
Fights	**Half-caste**	**Different ethnicities**
Nice food	Lists of religions	**Different cultures**
Smell		Different Festivals/Mela
Tribes		Different Colours
Dress like us in England		Hadia 'guidance for
Speak our language		righteousness'
Multiply		**Mixed areas/all cultures**
Boring people		**mixed together/interactive**
Waste time		Getting on with each other
Oldham		Dual Heritage
Mongy (term of abuse)		Black and White Unite
Short		Asians/Goray
Workplace		**Respect**
Cannabis		Diversity
Bob Marley		Cohesion
Great		Integrated/Fusion/Combined
Good to mix with own race		Lists of nationalities
Bad to mix with other races		England
Troubled		London
Some nice some aggressive		**Community**
		Neighbourhood
Safe		**Friendship**

Kind		Ideas
Protective		
		Segregation
		Not Oldham

Notes

[i] 'Cameron tells Muslim Britain: stop tolerating extremists', The Guardian, 5/2/2011, p. 1
[ii] 'Cameron right on multi-culturalisms failures', http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/43660.html, accessed 9/2/2011
[iii] 'Cameron Under Fire', Jerusalem Post, http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Editorials/Article.aspx?id=207252, accessed 9/2/2011
[iv] Madeleine Bunting, 'Blame Consumer Capitalism, not multiculturalism', http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/06/capitalism-multiculturalism-cameron-flawed-analysis
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[vii] 'Anger over too-high mosque', Oldham Evening Chronicle, http://www.oldham-chronicle.co.uk/news-features/8/news-headlines/49992, accessed 17/01/2011