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Citizenship, Ethnicity and Identity: British Pakistanis after the 2001 ‘Riots’

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ABSTRACT
There have been few studies of citizenship as an identity. This article explores citizenship as an identity among British Pakistanis in Bradford after the ‘riot’ in 2001, using qualitative data. The 2001 ‘riots’, the political successes of the British National Party and the events after September 11 pushed British-Pakistani Muslims into the forefront of national political conflicts around citizenship, national identity and allegiance to the state. Through the analysis of interviews with both first- and second-generation British Pakistanis we examine how citizenship as a mode of identity is contextualized by them in relation to national identity, Islam and ethnicity. We identify the two generations’ different ‘citizenship identities’. The second generation have a strong British identity as ‘British citizens’ with the ‘natural rights’ of a British-born citizen. In contrast the first-generation migrants from Pakistan express identities as ‘denizens’, living but not belonging in a foreign country, who remain because their children are now ‘British’.

KEY WORDS  
Bradford / citizenship / ethnicity / identity / Pakistanis / riots

Introduction

In 2001, Britain saw another summer of rioting in its cities: in Oldham, Leeds and Burnley in May and June and, most seriously, in Bradford where up to 500 people were involved in ‘riots’ over the weekend of 7–9 July. The
injured in Bradford included 326 police officers and 14 members of the public with estimates of damage to property ranging up to £10 million. Around 400 people were arrested in relation to the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham (Amin, 2002; Bagguley and Hussain, 2003a; Beynon and Kushnick, 2003; Denham, 2002: 7; Farrar, 2002; Kalra, 2002; Kundnani, 2001; Ray and Smith, 2002; Webster, 2003).

Academic accounts of the riots have emphasized several factors in their explanation. While Amin (2002) places most weight on deprivation, segregation and the demands of ‘new generation’ South Asians, others such as Kalra (2002, 2003) place a greater emphasis on long-standing grievances against local manifestations of racism and the police. A central feature of the months before the riots were contested claims in the national and local media about the levels of racially motivated crime by South Asians against Whites (Kalra, 2002; Ray and Smith, 2002). This led to increased mobilization by the British National Party (BNP) in Oldham and Burnley in the context of the 2001 local and general elections (Bagguley and Hussain, 2003a; Kundnani, 2001).

In the aftermath of these, the most serious riots in Britain since 1985, there was the usual raft of official reports, where a central theme was citizenship and reasserting national belonging over and above ethnic identity. The official reports tended to avoid attempts to explain the riots, and focused instead on the broader issues of segregation, social cohesion and proposals to instil a liberal conception of citizenship into the minds of South Asians (Bagguley and Hussain, 2003b; Cantle, 2001; Denham, 2002; Kalra, 2002). In contrast to the official reports’ institutionalist and liberal notion of citizenship, we are concerned here with how British citizenship already functions as a source of identity for British Pakistanis.

Our aim is to provide a detailed analysis of how the Pakistani community living in Bradford makes sense of their citizenship and identity in the aftermath of the worst urban riots in Britain since the 1980s. Using qualitative interview data, we discuss how Pakistani people living in Bradford sustain different identity claims in relation to citizenship, ethnicity and national belonging. In particular we want to examine how ‘citizenship’ is used as an aspect of British-Pakistani identity. This is an issue that arose during the research process. What repeatedly struck us while interviewing were the ways in which second-generation British Pakistanis drew upon popular ideas of citizenship and rights to assert their identities and sense of belonging. Furthermore, these identity claims seemed quite different from ideas of national belonging.

Our interest in the theme of generational differences arises from several sources. Firstly, it was immediately apparent ‘inductively’ from a reading of the interview transcripts. Secondly, other academic commentators have emphasized the role of the younger generation in their interpretations of the events of 2001 (Amin, 2002: 964–7; Kundnani, 2001: 108). As Kalra (2002: 25) has argued: ‘...all the young people in those towns who were engaged in violence were certainly educated if not born in Britain’. These themes of generational difference in relation to urban riots are familiar from analyses of the disturbances of the
1980s (Gilroy, 1987; Waddington, 1992). However, we want to push the question of generational differences further than this merely descriptive point. We wish to use it more analytically, albeit as an ideal type. More generally, Edmunds and Turner (2002) have recently argued that generations are socio-logically significant groups because their distinct cohort experiences give rise to a collective identity that means they can act in historically significant ways. In this specific context, as other analyses of the riots suggest, young South Asians are a socially and sociologically significant generation (Amin, 2002; Kalra, 2002; Kundnani, 2001). We should stress that like Edmunds and Turner our use of generation in a conceptual and analytical fashion is abstract and ideal typical. It does not therefore shed light on, for instance, those younger people who have migrated to Bradford through marriage. Furthermore, many first-generation South Asian migrants have been involved in radical politics since the 1960s, so it would be wrong to stereotype them all as politically passive. Indeed that is not what we are claiming here.

What follows is a critical review of recent theoretical debates around citizenship. This is followed by an outline of the methodology of the project. We then examine the relationship between national identity and citizenship as an identity, arguing that Britishness and Englishness are ‘racialized’ identities, while citizenship as an identity is not, which is precisely why it can be drawn upon by our respondents. We then go on to consider how our respondents expressed their citizenship identities in the context of their ethnic, cultural and religious contexts. In considering the interview data in the final section, we highlight the generational differences in citizenship identities, where younger people’s identities are contrasted with the older generation’s weaker ‘denizen’ identity born of the insecurity produced by their migration to Britain.

Citizenship versus Identity

Since Marshall (1950), sociological work on citizenship has extended the idea in relation to various dimensions of inequality, such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability (Bulmer and Rees, 1996; Held, 1989; Isin and Wood, 1999; Lister, 1997; Nash, 2000; Sypnowich, 2000; Turner, 1986; Waite, 1999; Yuval-Davies, 1997), or in relation to globalization and the restructuring of welfare provision (Delanty, 2000; Glenn, 2000; Roche, 1992; Roche and Van Berkel, 1997; Soysal, 1994; Turner, 1993; Urry, 2000). For the most part, these writers have reproduced the distinction between citizenship as a universal, rights-based discourse embedded in the nation-state and identity. To the extent that this implies certain universal features of the nation-state’s subjects as male, White, heterosexual, etc., citizenship is seen as exclusionary and creating social divisions as much as providing the means to overcome them. Citizenship and identity are usually counterposed to one another. The former expresses universal individual rights and duties, While the latter implies particularism and group membership. Kymlicka’s (1995) work has challenged the simpler
versions of this polarity, and there is now a substantial literature that analyses group identities in relation to citizenship rights and claims (Miller, 2000; Schwarzmantel, 2003).

Some writers, such as Isin and Wood (1999) and Pakulski (1997), have emphasized the relationship between citizenship and identity in terms of the right to an identity, where citizenship is an ever-expanding legal status including more and more social groups. This tends to overlook how citizenship can be a component of identity itself. Similarly, Solomos (2001) examined how citizenship can ‘cope’ with difference and multiculturalism, again reflecting the universalism of citizenship in opposition to the particularism of ethnicity. Turner’s (2001) suggestion that we analyse culture from the traditional perspective of citizenship also counterposes citizenship to cultural identity. Crossley (2001) discussed the inter-subjective preconditions of citizenship, where certain types of identity are required for citizenship to function. What all of this work shares is what one could term an ‘institutionalist’ orientation to the study of citizenship. However, we want to suggest a re-thinking of citizenship from the perspective of collective identity. In short we should recognize that citizenship is now a significant dimension of contemporary hybridized ethnic identities, and that this not only has major consequences for how we define citizenship sociologically, but also has implications for understanding the politics of ethnicity in contemporary Britain.

For the ‘institutionalist’ writers, citizenship is purely about the institutions that define and deliver citizenship rights. Citizenship rights may be treated as discourses to be critically analysed and seen as the objects of political contestation, but ultimately how people think and feel about citizenship is overlooked. Even those few studies that have examined popular perceptions of citizenship (Conover et al., 1991; Dwyer, 2000; Lister et al., 2003), have for the most part examined views about the institutions of citizenship, rather than how citizenship might be an aspect of their interviewees’ collective identities. However, within some of this work there is a concern with citizenship as an aspect of national identity in Britain that remains underdeveloped (Conover et al., 1991: 819–24; Lister et al., 2003: 240–2). This risks conflating citizenship with national identity – something we wish to avoid. However, our focus here is an ethnic group for whom national identity is problematic either because they were born overseas, or because ‘Britishness’ is a largely White identity that neo-fascists seek to mobilize. As Lister et al. (2003: 242) note, citizenship identities are grounded in individuals’ experiences, and this helps us account for the striking generational differences in citizenship identities that we have uncovered.

Brubaker (1992: 21), like many others, has argued that citizenship is about inclusion and exclusion, and that citizens in most European states are ‘insiders’ whose status is ascribed due to their country of birth. He suggests that many ethnic minorities in these countries are ‘outsiders’. They are ‘naturalized’ citizens, whose right to come to Britain is due to their birth in the former empire. For our analysis this highlights a critical difference in citizenship status and identity between the generations. At best the first generation could be seen as
naturalized citizens, and their citizenship identities are grounded in that experience, whereas the second and subsequent generations born in Britain feel that their citizenship is ascribed; it is their ‘natural right’ because they were born here. In some European countries there is a secondary citizenship status of being a ‘denizen’, of having a right of residence and other civil and social rights, but lacking the right to political representation (Castles and Davidson, 2000: 94–7). While there is no denizen status in Britain, what we want to suggest is that the first-generation’s citizenship identity approximates to that of being a denizen. While they have a right to be in Britain, they feel that this is precarious, and for that reason they feel that they are without a political voice.

The citizenship identities of the older generation are weak, temporary, and closer to the idea of a denizen. For the younger generation, their British citizenship is central to their self-understandings and assertions of who they are, and for them the threat from the BNP is just as much a threat to their Britishness as citizens as it is to their ethnic identities. However, their accounts of this threat are not in terms of a British or English national identity, but in terms of their rights as British-born citizens. They are expressing and defending a British multicultural, multi-ethnic citizenship identity.

Methodology

The research sought to develop an understanding of the 2001 riots and the impact the riot has had on the British-Pakistani community in Bradford. This involved exploring in interviews what the riots meant for ordinary people, and the impact they had on other aspects of their lives. In the interviews there was a focus on respondents’ views about how the police and the authorities responded to the riots, how the media represented them, and the extent to which the far right had an influence on the riots. This also entailed attempting to provide an understanding of identity in the Pakistani community, and to locate their experiences and perceptions in an appropriate cultural context. These aims provided the themes for the interviews, and respondents also completed a short self-completion questionnaire providing basic demographic details about themselves. The semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to integrate aspects that they themselves thought were important. All the interviews were conducted between June and August 2002 and were recorded and transcribed later. Informants were offered a choice of languages; all the young and middle-aged interviewees chose to be interviewed in English. The older participants spoke either Urdu or Punjabi. Interviews conducted in languages other than English were translated and transcribed simultaneously.

Existing community and professional networks in Bradford facilitated sample recruitment. We approached community groups and community centres, religious institutions, council organizations, disability groups and the Fair Justice for All Campaign, for both young and older people. The sample was deliberately generated from a diverse range of organizations, as this would
ensure it was not dominated by specific groups of individuals, often with similar experiences, who were not normally in the public eye or who were not necessarily politically active members of the community. Further contacts were also made informally by the use of snowballing techniques. In total, 34 interviews and one focus group were conducted, with 19 male and 21 female participants, whose ages ranged from 16 to over 60, with slightly more young women and older men.

The riot took place in the postal districts BD8 and BD9, and interviewees were largely drawn from these two areas. Participants were also drawn from surrounding areas that were not directly affected. A larger proportion of women than men interviewed were students and there were also more women in part-time employment than men. Men in comparison were more likely to be in full-time employment, married and supporting families. Twice as many men as women were educated to degree level, while the proportions with no qualifications were similar. Those who were born in the UK significantly outweighed the number of those who had migrated to Britain. All of those interviewed have been given pseudonyms.

Ensuring that all the respondents were Pakistani and Muslim was important, as those involved in the riots were predominantly from a Pakistani background. Religion was important because it provides a sense of cultural identity when considered in conjunction with a person’s ‘ethnic’ background. This is an important mediator of a person’s experience and understanding of the events in Bradford in 2001, especially in the light of subsequent media and political focus on Muslims.

Some commentators on the riots of 2001 refer unproblematically to ‘Asians’ in their discussions (e.g. Amin, 2002; Kalra, 2002, 2003; Kundnani, 2001). It is also evident from our interviews that our respondents used the term in a similar way. However, we are wary of using the term ‘Asian’ analytically for a variety of reasons. Firstly, at certain levels of analysis the term ‘South Asian’ is preferable as it refers to a broader if internally diverse and conflict-ridden pan-ethnic category that shares certain cultural characteristics. Indeed mobilization based on ethnicity might be mutually reinforcing with broader pan-ethnic collective action in a diasporic context (Okamoto, 2003). Secondly, it avoids the confusion that occurs when those of Chinese, Korean or Vietnamese origin (among others) are referred to as ‘Asian’, especially in North America (Okamoto, 2003).

More specifically, there are also limitations to applying descriptions such as Pakistani. While the Census uses the category Pakistanis the population is highly diverse in terms of cultural and social backgrounds. These regional differences become important due to the patterns of migration to the towns and cities of this country (Samad and Eade, 2003). Mirpuris are predominant within the Pakistani populations of Bradford and Birmingham, in contrast to the predominantly Faislabadi settlement from the Punjab in Manchester and Glasgow (Shaw, 2001: 317; Werbner, 1990). These regional differences are compounded by social divisions based on family (khandan), kinship ties (biraderi), caste or
Caste-like groups (zat) and tribe or caste (qaum) (Samad and Eade, 2003; Werbner, 1990).

Strong regional ties define Bradford’s Mirpuri population, but it is divided by the assertion of Kashmiri identity. They argue that they have distinct history, cultural heritage and language. Kashmiri identity is the product of a number of influences internal to the social organization of Kashmiri society. However, since Kashmir is not an independent nation state, British Kashmiris are not recognized by the Census. The exclusion of the Kashmiri identity at official levels and Kashmir’s unresolved future is breeding a growing sense of resentment amongst many British Kashmiris (Khan, 2000). In relation to the issues considered in this article these internal differences among British Pakistanis were subsumed in the face of the far right mobilizations. For this reason, the term British Pakistani seems most appropriate when discussing the particularities of the situation in Bradford, but when we feel the points are of more general relevance we refer to South Asians. Overall our approach has been not to take the categories used in everyday language for granted, as these categories are constantly shifting and our definitions are only a ‘temporary moment of closure’ (Gunaratnam, 2003: 38).

Citizenship and Definitions of Englishness and Britishness

Contemporary societies are increasingly confronted with minority groups demanding recognition of their ethnicity and accommodation of their cultural and religious differences (Kymlicka, 1995). The riots were related to expressions of these demands. The threat of neo-fascist political groups such as the British National Party (BNP) or the National Front (NF) marching into Bradford sparked fury amongst the city’s Pakistani population. Some of our respondents talked about how Bradford was commonly known as ‘Bradistan’ – a combination of Bradford and Pakistan. The Pakistani’s authentication of Bradford as Bradistan gives weight to the cultural and ethnic pluralism that characterizes Britain. Consequently the presence of the BNP was insulting as it threatened the diversity of cultures which exists within the area. At this level it was a threat to a distinctive local identity.

National identity has been consistently defined by the far right in terms of White ethnic homogeneity and unity. But in doing so they construct barriers between Whites and ‘others’ by maintaining dichotomies in which Englishness continues to reproduce Blackness as its ‘other’. This definition treats ethnicity as a major feature of British and English exclusivity. Ultimately this is centred on the invention of an elitist community that serves as a model for the nation as a whole.

If a shared identity or Englishness is a matter of sharing some substantive beliefs and requires a common public culture, this seems to be lacking in Britain, which contains a high degree of cultural pluralism. The idea of a shared national identity in Britain is therefore problematic (Kumar, 2002). Britain is
made up of the English, Scottish, Welsh and the Irish and in terms of shared beliefs it includes a substantial number of Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews and Sikhs (Mason, 1995). There is no common culture, first language, or robust set of values shared by British citizens, nor is there a shared way of life that could provide the basis for a shared national identity. In this sense Britishness is a political construct, associated with notions of empire, while Englishness is a cultural, even ethnic, construct that ‘racializes’ the politics of citizenship (Cesarani, 1996).

The integration of Pakistanis within Englishness is not only inhibited by the extreme right, but also is based upon their own common cultural history. For them, being British is based on the conception of British citizenship as an identity, rather than nationality as an identity; it is thus theoretically possible to integrate individuals from ethnic minority communities (Kumar, 2002). In this context Conover et al.’s (1991) findings, from a White sample, that the British as opposed to the Americans were unable to link their national identity to their citizenship are important. In the case of the White British they concluded that national identity and citizenship identity were not even ‘complementary’ (Conover et al., 1991: 822). National identity and citizenship identity are not the same thing for white Britons. Furthermore, for ethnic minority groups in Britain the situation is even more complex. Evidence from the recent General Household Survey revealed that while 45 percent of Whites called themselves British, 57 percent of those from ethnic minorities did so. Conversely 54 percent of Whites referred to themselves as English compared to only 11 percent of those from ethnic minorities, 37 percent of whom mentioned some other national identity (National Statistics, 2002: 3.19).

The Bradford riot of 2001 may be regarded from some perspectives as a clash of identities, or even between citizenship and identity. Indeed this would seem to be the view implied by the government responses as articulated in the official reports (Cantle, 2001). The younger generations regard themselves as citizens of Britain, but many have also come to see themselves as members of religious, racial, ethnic and linguistic groups. The belief in the basic conflict between citizenship and identity arises from a specific conception of each, citizenship as universal and identity as particular (Isin and Wood, 1999). For some of our respondents the riot was articulating a principle for the recognition of group rights. To many of the young men on the street that night their presence was defending the interest of their own religious and ethnic grouping. The Pakistani Muslim community was being threatened, according to Kamran and Omar (males, aged 19 and 20):

We didn’t win nothing really but you proved that we can stand up for ourselves. You know we are not going to be pushed around by. We don’t care if there is two or three hundred of you who is going to walk into our town and say oh we have come to batter you! We’re not going to run home and hide underneath the beds.

To be a citizen means to relate to the state in exactly the same way as others, yet for individuals belonging to any particular religious, cultural or ethnic
community there may be little or no recognition from the state. For these minorities to make sense of ‘their’ citizenship involves a re-definition of national identity. Those interviewed have developed their own concept of national identity as citizenship which accommodates the idea that a person may have multiple identities, for instance British/Pakistani/Muslim (Mason, 1995). There was also a recognition that these different aspects of an individual’s identity may come into conflict with one another and that one of these different aspects of a person’s identity may depend upon the content of the rest. Ethnic differences mean that what it is to be British for a White person may be radically different from the ‘Britishness’ experienced by someone who belongs to a minority group.

Ethnic, Cultural and Religious Identities

Our respondents expressed their identification with British citizenship in the light of how they made sense of their ethnic and religious culture within the broader British culture. Even though the younger respondents expressed strong identity claims as British citizens, they wish to celebrate their ethnic, cultural and religious differences, which are distinct from those of the wider society (Modood et al., 1994). Although citizenship and identity are often seen to be in conflict with one another, our respondents were able to accommodate the universalism of citizenship claims with the particularism of their ethnic identities. Thus citizenship, as our respondents expressed it, was a component or aspect of a broader hybridized ethnic and religious expression. Defining ethnicity carries with it notions of language, culture, religion, nationality, and a shared heritage (Fenton, 1999; Modood, 1994; Song, 2003). It is increasingly recognized as a political symbol that does not just exclude, but also serves as a mode of identity, a symbol of belonging and political mobilization (Werbner, 1990; Song, 2003). Ethnic identities remained ambivalent as many second-generation people identified with being ‘British’ as well as being ‘Pakistani’ or ‘Muslim’. However, this was also connected to being excluded:

I would never say I am English because I am not…. You have to look at what makes up that identity being Muslim how many times do you hear about Britain accepting Muslims as part of their community. (Khalid Hussain, male, age 30)

Here we can see how ethnic minority people’s adoption of ‘English’ or ‘British’ identities remains complex, because of their racialized nature, European heritage, connotations of ‘Whiteness’ and the colonial legacy (Ahmad and Husband, 1993). However, the second and subsequent generations also challenged such racialized constructions of Britishness in contrast to their parent’s generation. Their sense of Britishness was often a pragmatic reflection of being born and living in Britain. Young people, however, found identification with Britishness particularly meaningful. For our respondents, the reservations and negative experiences enhanced the young people’s sense of
Britishness as citizens. To this extent, external factors influence the young person’s sense of ‘ethnicity’.

The different experiences of White British society of younger South Asians, opposed to first-generation migrants, has been a central theme in several initial commentaries on the riots of 2001 (Amin, 2002: 964; Kalra, 2002: 25; Kundnani, 2002: 108). Socialization into cultural and religious values, against the backdrop of a potentially hostile majority culture, is a major concern of minority ethnic groups (Ahmad, 1996; Anthias, 1992; Modood et al., 1994). For us this is important because this hostility throws into question their citizenship. Although young South Asian people identify strongly with Britain as citizens, this is constantly negated by their experiences of British racism, which has focused on their ethnicity and since 2001 has especially focused on Muslims.

The separation of an idealized notion of Islam from lived religion, which is perceived to be corrupted through conflation with traditional customs, is important (Ahmed, 1988; Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). This reflects a wider process where religion has risen in importance as a distinct aspect of identity (Ahmed and Donnon, 1994; Samad, 1992; Werbner, 2000). For our discussion, one such development is significant; the re-imagining of Islam as a global religion (Ahmed and Donnon, 1994). Islam offers an important mode of being for young Pakistani people living in Britain, but in the context of their identities as British citizens. No young person that we interviewed was totally detached from their parents’ ethnic, religious and cultural traditions. Their lives as British citizens were overwhelming influenced by their religion, which is at the core of their lives. Most young South Asian people know enough about religious and cultural values both to feel that they belong to their religious community and to behave ‘appropriately’ (Atkin and Hussain, 2003). Second and subsequent generations of Muslims are thus reclaiming their religious identity and rediscovering Islam. Their ability to read English fluently allows them to research in the dominant tongue, the language of the web and text books. This diasporic awareness is reconfirming their religious roots as much as their cultural roots, and some made subtle distinctions between them:

We are British Pakistanis now and we are in a culture not in a religion no more. We are looking at things culturally. (Serena Khan, female, age 19)

Consequently, for the Pakistanis there have always been conflicts of identity, most particularly between religion and citizenship in the context of Islamophobia, and here our younger respondents especially emphasized the responses to the riots and then a totally unrelated event, the attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001. In the immediate context the BNP has focused its attention on Muslims. This and the broader Islamophobic response did not go without comment:

...if you are Muslim then people don’t want to know you and with all the propaganda to do with Islam at the moment. (Alisah Khaleeq, female, age 38)
They also related experiences of public harassment, and the consequent feelings of exclusion from ‘Britain’. Although they feel themselves to be British citizens, Islamophobia has excluded them from the ‘British nation’ but not from their identification with British citizenship:

We feel like outsiders in our own country…. Because before I was part of a community, whether there was integration or not that is completely irrelevant. I was part of a community, a British community in England. Now I am part of a criminal element in Bradford. (Imran Ishmail, male, age 28)

A sense of difference, enforced by racism and discrimination thus remains an important influence in how South Asian people make sense of their lives. Substantive citizenship rights are often denied to minority ethnic groups (Castles and Davidson, 2000). Racism can, therefore, be an important influence on young people’s sense of identity. As well as offering a form of self-identification, a symbol of belonging and mobilization (Samad, 1992), cultural reproduction also has a wider political significance, resisting exclusion. This was illustrated in the accounts given by some young people in relation to the earlier riots in Burnley and Oldham, and, in the context of the riots of 2001, others mentioned the way in which the riot was for ‘people like them’, a kind of expression of ethnic solidarity in the face of the threat of the far right:

They weren’t just there for themselves, they were there for the whole Asian population of Bradford. (Shabnam Ishaq, female, age 21)

Even the young men expressed these sentiments:

…we have mothers, daughters, sisters, you know and we want to protect them so it was like we don’t really want to cause a riot but we want to protect ourselves at the same time. So I think peoples were thinking I am not going to let them come into my area, into my homes so they all decided to go into town and stop it. (Kamran and Omar, males, ages 19 and 20)

Citizenship of the formal kind cannot prevent ethnic boundaries being constructed, racism cannot be eradicated through citizenship and nor does being a citizen automatically mean that the ‘social cohesion’ sought by the government (Cantle, 2001) can be achieved.

From Denizens to Citizens: Generational Differences in Citizenship Identities

The meaning of citizenship differs between the generations. For the first generation, citizenship is embedded within their physical state of being resident in Britain; they are just denizens. This is entwined within their historical ‘value’ within the economic infrastructure of the country, yet is dominated by an overwhelmingly low sense of security within the country. This has been discussed
within the citizenship literature as the status of being a denizen (Castles and Davidson, 2000).

Our respondents were able to distinguish quite distinct citizenship identities linked to generation and country of birth. The younger generation born here were seen by themselves and felt by their parents, to be British citizens with the same ‘rights’ as any other British citizen. The older generation express what we would term ‘denizen identities’: they feel that their presence in Britain is not one of a citizenship ‘right’, and consequently the younger generation see them, and the first-generation migrants feel themselves, as not having a legitimate voice. They feel that they lack the ‘full citizenship’ of their sons and daughters and the political rights associated with it. They fear deportation, and this expresses the core of being a denizen. Language is central to these differences.

The citizenship identities of the first generation are interwoven with their experience of migration, settlement and language. The acquisition of the English language is something which they may not have accessed fully, but for the second generation it provides a means of upward mobility. Skin colour and physical characteristics are not the only means of identifying difference: lack of fluency in English can also give rise to racism and negative stereotyping. These attributes become a means of separating ‘the alien’ from ‘the mainstream’, encouraging social conformity and invisibility, loss of self-respect and feelings of insecurity (Kershen, 2000). However, education has enabled the second generation to overcome this, with their bilingualism creating a different relationship with White society.

We can all speak English...we went to school here, we can speak English and if we get married, we have children, they will be able to speak English cos they are gonna be brought up in English schools. (Shabnam Ishaq, female, age 21)

Thus language gives them the link to British social institutions and an access to a British identity of citizenship that their parents lacked. The older respondents recognized this as well, where Ramzan Latif (male, age 64) argued that the relationships between the Pakistani community and the White community will improve because:

...our children now regard English as their mother tongue, things will improve because they are able to communicate better than we were able to.

These themes about language also emerged when we asked people about why the older generation had not ‘rioted’ in the past:

Nowadays, youngsters like to take their own stand and take matters into their own hands. A lot of people before did not have the education or the language to let their voice be heard but now the youngsters, they were born in Britain. They are aware of the law, the education scheme and the language as well. They are able to speak English and present their cases. (Serena Khan, female, age 19)

That the feeling of citizenship and the closely related belief in rights have changed over generations was also widely recognized by our older first-generation respondents, for Javed Ahmed (male, aged 47):
...the second and third generation, these girls and boys...they were born in this
country, they were brought up in this society, they are full fledged British youngsters,
you know. They believe that this is their country. They have got every right. So they
are not going to keep quite and face all the discrimination or insults.

However, the views of the older generation about the second and third genera-
tion’s citizenship were more often tinged with moral concerns that they were
abusing their citizenship, that they were being ‘bad’ citizens:

They are exactly the same as the White people; they have no tolerance at all.
Whatever the White people are doing, Asians are doing also and that is why there
is a major difference. The Asian youths believe that this is their country and they
should be given the same rights as the White people have. They do not want to tol-
erate anything anymore. They believe that they are just as much British as the British
are. (Ramzan Latif, male, 64)

The younger generation also talked about differences in perceptions of
homeland, and the way in which their parents initially felt that their stay here
was to be temporary. Their parents came primarily for economic reasons. Yet
for the second and subsequent generations the situation is different. The ideas
of belonging, migration and citizenship rights were linked together by some
second-generation respondents. They emphasized the significance to them of
their birth in Britain and how that shaped both their identities as citizens and
how they felt about where they belonged, in comparison to the identities and
feeling of national belonging among their parents who saw themselves as ‘outs-
siders’, again according to Kamran and Omar (males, age 19 and 20):

We have been born and grown up we have more or less decided that this is our home
and that it is not back in Pakistan. So we see it as in thirty years time, forty years
time we’ll still being here and our parents didn’t think of that.

This has also made the individuals more secure about their positioning, accord-
ing to Shabnam (female, age 21):

Like a lot of people are established and they are secure now. The security is there
now because they know there are a lot of Asian people here now. Whereas then
there was one Asian family here, one Asian family there. The population of Asians
has grown and so I think there is more strength within the population now.

The older first generation, in contrast, felt that they were still living ‘in a
foreign country’. Although none expressed definite plans to return to Pakistan,
this was an issue that they talked about. What was keeping them in Britain was
that their children were born here and the ties of kinship were paramount for
them. The theme of being in a ‘foreign country’, but not really belonging, of
feeling that they were still ‘visitors’ was also central to their criticisms of the
2001 ‘rioters’. This expressed the insecurity born of their experiences of migra-
tion, increasingly restrictive immigration laws and their identities as denizens.
In no sense did they express a feeling of belonging in Britain, but only belong-
ing with their families:
They want us to leave the country. If they were to compensate us for how long we have worked in this country, then I would willingly go back. However I am happy here, my children are here, their partners and their children are here. It’s just like living in Pakistan with all my extended family here. We don’t go out to cause trouble and so far we have had none in return. (Ramzan Latif, male, age 64)

Conclusion: Belonging but Excluded?

The identity of ‘British citizenship’ is articulated through the themes of ‘belonging’ and ‘rights’ and moreover these rights are expressed in egalitarian terms. Their British identities express a hybridity of universality and difference: a universality of equal rights as British citizens, with the right to be different within Britain, and a recognition of the difference of Islam. Their claims to difference, however, are circumscribed within the citizenship of being British: that Islam should be recognized, accepted and tolerated rather than vilified and constructed as alien. It belongs to Britain as much as any other religion. These expressions of a citizenship of belonging are in contrast to some of the official political responses to the riots and how they constructed notions of citizenship based upon language and allegiance to ‘nation’ (Bagguley and Hussain, 2003b; Cantle, 2001; Denham, 2002; Kalra, 2002). What is being expressed is not so much a contest between identity and citizenship or difference and universalism, but rather a political contest over citizenship. British-Pakistani people’s citizenship identities and claims are diverse and not uniform; in particular they vary between first-generation migrants and those born here. The first generation still speak as if they are visitors, as temporary economic migrants. The second generation ‘belong’ through their place of birth. Furthermore, the identities of the second generation are hybridized, synthesizing South Asian culture, Islam and Western culture within their identities as British citizens. Nowhere could this be clearer than in their enthusiasm for English football combined with their pride in Islam and as Pakistanis while asserting their rights as British citizens. While they articulate their ethnic distinctiveness they do so through asserting their ‘universal’ rights through being British.

While the citizenship identities we have analysed here for the first generation are rooted in their experiences of migration, and those of the second generation are rooted in their experiences of growing up in the UK, they have both been expressed in response to the mobilizations of the BNP. The expression of denizen identities by the first generation and the associated lack of feeling secure in Britain have been a response to the BNP and the wider response to the riots. In contrast, the second generation responded to the BNP mobilization through a strong assertion of identity as British citizens. In this sense citizenship identities are best thought of as resources that were mobilized in response to the BNP mobilization. However, we would suggest that these assertions of citizenship identity are not specific to Bradford or other riot locations, but through the
media attention given to these events, they might well be found among South Asians across Britain.

Political and social theories of citizenship place too much emphasis on integration, uniformity and commonality. In contrast, we have emphasized how people think about and identify their own citizenship. In recent debates about citizenship and identity this has been all too frequently ignored. Consequently we have been concerned with citizenship as a political identity that is not fixed or essentialized, but which flows through the process of hybridization that characterizes the new ethnic identities that are being constructed among younger South Asians in Britain today. When people make statements about British citizenship they are expressing quite fundamental ideas about where they belong, about who they are and what rights they have. In this context these rights entail duties and obligations from the state and others towards them as British citizens.

Feeling they belong but perceiving that others – the dominant White population – do not yet fully accept that they belong here and that they are British is central. Our second-generation respondents already feel themselves to be part of the national community at the level of their identities as citizens, but they do not feel themselves to be British in the conventional sense of national identity. National identity and citizenship identity are not the same thing. Our respondents did not express any strong demands for ‘group rights’. Even recognition of Islam was limited to claims for tolerance and freedom from harassment. This is a demand for ‘recognition’ rather than ‘integration’. In this sense ‘difference’ is to be accommodated within the idea of equal rights.

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References


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