Youthful Muslim masculinities: gender and generational relations

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There is evidence of two main discourses about the masculinities of young Muslim men – one that emphasizes patriarchy and aggression, the other effeminacy and academicism – and together they offer polarized perspectives of young Muslim men's masculinities. This paper explores youthful Muslim masculinities through narratives of gender and generational relations, using interview and focus group data collected during discussions with young Muslim men, mainly of Pakistani heritage, who live in Glasgow and Edinburgh, in Scotland. I seek to use this data to disrupt these dominant discourses by demonstrating that young Muslim men's masculinities are influenced by markers of social difference, as well as locality, and so are multiple, fluid and multi-faceted.

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Introduction

It has only been in the last 15 years or so that geographers have started to research masculinities (e.g. Jackson 1989 1991 1994), and it could be argued that this work has now reached a critical mass in the discipline (Longhurst 2000; Berg and Longhurst 2003; McDowell 2003; van Hoven and Horschelmann 2005). Research about the geographies of masculinities has taken to task a wide range of concerns about men's everyday lives, masculine identities and gendered performances. Studies have investigated, for example, men working in merchant banks (McDowell 2001); constructions of masculinities in men's lifestyle magazines (Jackson *et al.* 1999) and in advertising (Jackson 1994); masculinities and sexualities (Browne 2005; Skelton and Valentine 2005); the spaces of fatherhood (Aitken 2000 2005); and young white men and economic change (McDowell 2003; Nayak 2003a 2003b). In this paper, I contribute to this burgeoning literature by exploring youthful Muslim masculinities, focusing upon the young men's perceptions on gender and generational relations.

Social scientists, including human geographers, have spent much time exploring and emphasizing the complex ways in which masculinities are socially constructed, produced, consumed and performed (Connell 2000 2002 2005; Edley and Wetherell 1995; Frosh *et al.* 2003; McDowell 2003). As Connell clarifies,

> Masculinities are neither programmed in our genes, nor fixed by social structures, prior to social interaction. They come into existence as people act. They are actively produced, using the resources and strategies available in a given social setting. (2000, 12)

Social constructions of masculinities 'are given life by their articulation. Through repetition they can achieve a remarkable durability' (Dunn 2001, 292). These 'widely held shared beliefs' or 'commonsense' understandings (Dwyer 1998, 53) are constantly yet subtly reinforced by television representations, newspaper and magazine images and other institutions (Said 1997; Dwyer 1998; Dunn 2001), and so influence what Alexander calls the 'dominant imagination' (1998, 440). There are two main discourses about the masculinities of young Muslim men – one emphasizing patriarchy and aggression, the other effeminacy and academicism – both of which feature strongly in dominant and academic discourses, but that vary according to

certain world events as well as through space and across time. As Claire Alexander has intimated, there are strong

> parallels between media and academic analyses, which raises pertinent, and disquieting, questions about the ways in which selected academic discourses have fed into, and upon, populist soundbite understandings of race and ethnicity. (Alexander 2004, 544)

Young Muslim men often appear in the dominant imagination as violently patriarchal, unemployed and involved in crime (Dunn 2001; Archer and Yamashita 2003). They are the society's 'ultimate Other' (Phoenix 1997, 7), part of the rise of the Asian youth folk devil (Alexander 2000a; O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000) and in conflict with their parent's generation (Alexander 2000b). Associated with deviance and violence, young Muslim men suffer due to the triple pathology of race, gender and generation. Alexander (1998 2000a 2000b 2004) has documented the rise of the 'Asian gang':

> these are youths wielding weapons, alienated from their families, their communities and the wider society, locked into a cycle of inevitable but meaningless violence, low self-esteem and self-destruction. (Alexander 2000b, 126)

This 'street culture' is 'male dominated and highly macho', and has increased significantly in recent years (Khan 1997, 18, in Macey 1999, 848; see also Keith 1995). The young men place importance on appropriate gender roles, family authority, dress and marriage as a method whereby they can control the freedom and choice of young women (Macey 1999). They are part of the Muslim Pakistani and Bangladeshi 'underclass' of the notorious Panorama documentary, 'Purdah in the Underclass' (Alexander 1998, 440) and are likely to belong to the group of anti-school Asian male students that Mac an Ghaill (1988) identifies as 'The Warriors'. Young Muslim men are portrayed as policing the streets, often using aggression and violence, and closely examining the behaviour and conduct of their female counterparts (Dwyer 2000). Many of these stereotypes of young Muslim men have been reinforced by the events of 11 September 2001 as well as the bombings in London on 7 July 2005, both of which associated young Muslim men with violence, aggression and terrorism.

Contrary to such a stereotype, there is also a now less prevalent discourse that represents young Muslim men as part of the wider category of young

'Asian' men and so identifies them as being passive, soft and weak. For example, 'Asian' young men have been conceptualized as effeminate, as more 'middle-class' and as 'behavers and achievers' in school (Archer 2001, 81), and O'Donnell and Sharpe have suggested that this stereotype has been fed by 'the apparent tendency of Asian boys to be physically smaller' (2000, 79). These young men often fall into what Mac an Ghaill (1994, 59) refers to as 'The Academic Achievers', a small group of students who have a 'positive orientation to the school curriculum'. Along these lines, Alexander suggests that Muslim masculinities are often represented as 'failing' masculinities (2000a, 236). This overall stereotype of effeminate and weak Asian young men is often reinforced by the tendency of these young men to suffer higher rates of racism at school (Archer 2001). Furthermore, stereotypes of black masculinity places young Muslim men (who, in the Scottish context, are overwhelmingly of Pakistani heritage) into a marginalized position, as

> for black men of African descent the stereotypes have been fixed on the body, on physicality, physical strength, and as a site for European fantasies about black male sexuality. (Westwood 1990, 55; see also Marriot 2000)

and in terms of 'jockeying for position' (Edley and Wetherall 1997)

> African Caribbean boys . . . often position themselves as superior to white, as well as Asian, boys in terms of their sexual attractiveness, style, creativity and 'hardness'. (McDowell 2003, 77)

As a result, young Asian men are not only stereotyped as being subordinate to young white men, but are represented as weak, delicate and subsidiary to the strength and prowess of black masculinities.

In this paper, I aim to disrupt these dichotomized stereotypes by exploring the complex, multiple and multi-faceted nature of youthful Muslim masculinities, by engaging with the lived experiences of young people whose voices are usually silenced, often unheard and frequently distorted (although for a rare exception see Ouzgane 2003). It has already been observed that young Muslim men are 'marginalised in human geography' (Hopkins 2004, 260), so by exploring the young men's narratives about women and home as well as generational issues, I intend to counter this marginalization. First, I offer a brief summary of the research project from which this paper arises.

Second, I explore the young men's narratives around women and home, emphasizing the ways in which they adopt contradictory masculine subject positions in promoting a form of sexist equality. Third, I explore the importance of markers of social difference and locality in terms of how the young men negotiate and perform masculine identities. Fourth, I offer an insight into the young men's understandings of generational differences, thereby challenging the notion that the young men are in conflict with their parents' generation.

The study

In this paper, I use data collected during 11 focus groups and 22 interviews with young Muslim men living in post-devolution urban Scotland. All of the qualitative interviews and focus groups were taped with consent, fully transcribed and anonymized by the author, and coded by theme. Any names used in the text are pseudonyms in order to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. All of the young men involved were aged 16–25 at the time of interviewing, and they participated in the research project between March 2002 and July 2003. I contacted a range of organizations – schools, colleges and universities, mosques, community and voluntary organizations and youth groups – and through a process of snowballing, asked if young men who might want to participate in the project could be identified. The focus groups took place in youth groups, school classrooms and community halls, and the interviews either took place in the homes of the research participants, or in local cafés and community centres. All focus groups and interviews focused on four key themes: Scotland and Scottishness, the local community, being a young man, and being a Muslim. However, they were also open and exploratory in nature, and so other topics of conversation were raised during the research process where relevant. This paper builds upon, in particular, the point in interview and focus group discussions where the topic of being a young man was explored. In this part of the discussions, I was interested in the young men's relationships with their parents, their perceptions about the role of Muslim women, as well as their aspirations and general views about gender and generation.

Of the 55 focus group participants, three were aged 20 or over, with the remainder being in their later teens, and of the 22 interviewees, eight were

under 20, with the remaining 14 being aged between 20 and 25. Over 70 young Muslim men therefore participated in this project. Although most of the research participants identified with a Pakistani heritage, there were also two young men with Indian backgrounds as well as young men with Bangadeshi, Iraqi, Kosovan and Moroccan parentage. As with diversity in the category Muslim (Modood 2003), individuals varied with regards to the frequency with which they practised their religion, displayed various levels of knowledge and understanding of their religious faith, as well as a range of political opinions (Hopkins forthcoming). Six of the interviewees held university degrees and diplomas, seven were in the process of completing them and the younger participants generally hoped to attend university in the future. The sample of young men recruited for this project could also be identified as relatively middle class, and this may relate to the slightly more affluent positioning of ethnic minority groups in Scotland compared with elsewhere in the UK. It has been noted that, in terms of race and racism, the Scottish context is different from the rest of the UK because of a lack of a racialization of the political process since 1945, different migration streams in and out of Scotland, and different experiences of the class structure (Miles and Dunlop 1987). This could explain why the sample recruited in this project did not contain the experiences of deprivation and disadvantage normally highlighted by research with Muslim communities in England (e.g. Alexander 2000a 2000b).

The Scottish context is also important in terms of how the research participants relate to the researcher, and indeed this is one aspect of the relationship between the researcher and the researched where there was a general degree of similarity. This often acted as a useful method for facilitating conversation, establishing connections and putting research participants at their ease. After all, the young Muslim men consulted in this project, are like me, young Scottish men. However, as Robina Mohammad (2001) has explained, insider and outsider status are not fixed and are constantly being negotiated, resisted and contested. Like Mohammad, my positionality varied throughout the project. Although there are aspects of similarity such as age, gender and connections with Scotland and Scottishness, my race, lack of religious affiliation and other subtle markers of social difference worked to highlight the lack of similarity between the researcher and

the researched. The young men frequently questioned me on my religious beliefs, which moved constantly between agnosticism and atheism throughout the project, and were eager to establish what school I attended before going to university. Although these are important methodological issues to consider, I agree with Audrey Kobayashi when she highlights her 'dis-ease' with the 'reflexive turn in human geography' suggesting that a focus on the researcher

> is actually a privileged and self-indulgent focus on the self that provides anything but an anti-racist lens and ends up distancing the writer . . . from the very people whose conditions she might hope to change. (2003, 347–8)

For this reason, I now turn attention to the circumstances and experiences of the young Muslim men consulted in this research project.

Gender relations

Blunt and Varley observe that 'the home is invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life' (2004, 3), and indeed the home is 'shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions' (Blunt 2005, 506). Furthermore, in terms of thinking about Muslim masculinities and femininities, Robina Mohammad notes that

> feminine space is the space of the home. It includes spaces for women and for their close male relatives, and is a domain into which the entry of other men is restricted. Spaces outside the home are largely masculine. (1999, 30)

It is of little surprise then, that the vast majority of young Muslim men consulted contextualized their discussion about the role of Muslim women, and in particular their mothers, by focusing on the meanings, associations and experiences of the spaces of the home. For example, in their narratives of home, it is clear that home is a place to 'have dinner', play the computer and watch TV, and therefore it is seen as a site for consumption and relaxation. The young men explicitly assume that the home is the domain of their mothers and sisters, and the connections between Muslim women and the home were regularly discussed during focus groups and interviews. Nasser and Saeed are both 16, and Imran is 17, and they all attend a local youth group in Glasgow and identify with a Pakistani heritage. Consider their views:

> Nasser: Women tend to stay in the house and things like that . . .

> Saeed: I mean a lot of women, they tend to stay at home and look after the kids, and that's hard work, right. The guy normally has a job.

> Imran: Yeah. (Focus Group, Glasgow, 24 July 2002)

Home is rarely referred to in terms of cooking, cleaning or general household chores, and so the young men 'perpetuated the (dominant) stereotypical assumption that home is a place of freedom and autonomy for males and a site of restriction and subservience for women' (Archer 2003, 75). One of the few exceptions to this was Babar, a 22-year-old university graduate with a Pakistani heritage, who mentioned helping with the housework:

> Babar: Help mum out in the house like with hoovering or whatever, like clean up yeah. My big brother is like handicapped so I need to help out a bit . . . (Interview, Glasgow, 24 June 2003)

This extract and the other comments made by Babar shows how he highlights that his situation is different from other young men his age because he has to help with the housework and assist his brother. The lack of reference to household chores in the young men's accounts is very different from the way that the young Muslim women in Dwyer's (1998 1999 2000 2002) research constructed the home as a place where they were expected to reproduce the parental culture which is reinforced through izzat (family honour). The lack of interest in housework could therefore be contributed to their expected role in the family as well as to their lack of interest in such activities and their desire to conform to a form of hegemonic masculinity which encourages them to avoid work and routines that they see as being increasingly feminized (McDowell 2003). However, in Babar's case, issues around disability prevent him from distancing himself from such activities, and although Valentine and Skelton (2003) have highlighted some of the challenges in relation to ethnicity and disability, it may be that Babar is creating an alternative Muslim masculinity where he can be 'one of the lads' (Interview, Glasgow, 24 June 2003) as well as assisting with household chores.

Discussions about gender also focused on the perceived inequality between men and women in

Islam and the young men's views, opinions and responses to this. Mohammed is aware of such inequalities and noted that this is 'a cultural thing and not a religious thing' (Interview, Edinburgh, 16 May 2002). Similarly, 16-year-old school student Ifty, and 18-year-old university student Kabir, both of whom identify with a Pakistani heritage observe:

> Ifty: . . . some people think that there is like a lot of sexism in Muslim men and women, but that sexism comes from like culture, Pakistani culture . . . but the actual religion of Islam, men and women are very close . . . (Interview, Glasgow, 16 July 2002)

> Kabir: . . . people from a particular culture think that Muslim women have to remain in the home or something, which is not from Islam . . . A housewife is the mother of the family and the teacher of the nation really because, you know, who teaches the children . . . it's the mother, you know, it's a huge responsibility and honourable task. But again . . . she can also work, she can also participate in society. (Interview, Edinburgh, 12 December 2002)

The argument that the association of women with the home was cultural and associated with their Pakistani heritage was a frequent comment made in this research, yet the young men also simultaneously attempted to justify that men are expected to work, earn wages and provide for the family. This suggests that they try to distance themselves from the 'sexism' of South Asian culture by stressing that men and women are equal in Islam, and so, in this case, they could be said to be advocating specifically Muslim masculinities. This is emphasized in the following extract, where three 17-year-old men participating in a focus group offer a response to the idea that Muslim women were oppressed:

> Omar: . . . that is just culture from Pakistan. That is not allowed in Islam.

> Jafran: . . . a lot of things come from Indian culture like arranged marriages which is like Hindu and Indian culture. People are mixing culture with religion, you can't do that.

> Faisal: See the Indian culture, they treat their women like shit. They just get married to them and just use them, they don't have a say in anything. But Islam doesn't promote that. (Focus group, Glasgow, 10 October 2002)

I would like to suggest here that young Pakistani Muslim men adopt contradictory masculine subject positions. They simultaneously argue that men and women are equal in Islam, whilst advocating sexist stereotypes about their expectations of Muslim women. The young men seem to promote a form of sexist equality. They attempt to distance themselves from the patriarchy of Pakistani culture, yet they also adopt the sexist attitudes that they say are the responsibility of that culture, and at the same time, advocate equality between men and women, which they argue is based on Islamic principles. Furthermore, Kaukab, a 24-year-old café owner, talked about wanting to 'be a good businessman', and 21-year-old university student Anwar mentioned that he wanted to 'get married and go out and work and provide for the family'. It is clear that these young men could see futures in households of their own, and in all but one case, this involved them being the breadwinner, earning money and providing for their (heterosexual) family. This perspective on masculinity links with the view of white working-class young men highlighted in the work of Linda McDowell (2002b, 115), where the young men's masculinities are constructed around a belief in 'domestic conformity' whereby the young men focus on earning wages and reproducing sexist and heterosexist familial situations.

Stereotypes about Muslim women tend to represent them as 'the passive victims of oppressive cultures' and as the 'embodiment of a repressive and fundamentalist religion' (Dwyer 1998, 53). The comments show how the young men adopt a number of arguments in their assertions that Muslim women are not the victims of an oppressive culture, nor are they marginalized by their religion, and in doing so, they engage in a series of contradictions about their perception of the roles of Muslim men and women. For example, these young men suggest that they themselves have to go out to work as a result of the fact that:

> Saeed: . . . women tend to care more about tradition and things like that.

> Nasser: Aye, we tend to be more free than the Asian women. (Focus Group, Glasgow, 24 July 2002)

Here the implication appears to be that Muslim women marginalize themselves, and are somehow responsible for their subordinate position. The young men also draw on stereotypes that associate young Muslim women with the spaces of the home and assume that they will not engage in any form of employment (Mohammad 2001). Muslim

women are also represented as being privileged because there are more community facilities available to them. Consider the views of 24-year-old Talib, a Muslim of Pakistani heritage:

> Talib: There's a lot more burdens placed on us yeah . . . I mean girls . . . because people think it's harder for them, there are a lot more facilities available for them than there are for boys. I mean like down at the [community hall] they've got loads of girls groups and things like that, but there's not that much for boys, you know what I mean. There's all these women's aid centres and that, but where's the male one? You know what I mean? (Focus Group, Glasgow, 5 September 2002)

This may be the case; however, the existence of more community and voluntary organizations targeting the needs of Muslim women is perhaps an indication of their marginal position. Furthermore, it may also be that Muslim men feel they need to perform a macho form of masculinity, and so feel less need to access local services and groups.

The third argument put forward by the young men is that, as Amar, a 21-year-old university student, notes, '[Muslim] women are "the height of respect"' (Interview, Glasgow, 9 July 2003), and this stands in stark contrast to the Muslim boys in Louise Archer's (2003, 83) research who constructed girls as 'out of control' and 'mental'. I suspect that this difference is due to the younger profile of the men in Archer's study. Saeed is 22 years old and Jamal is a 17-year-old school student, and both have a Pakistani heritage. Consider their comments:

> Saeed: . . . in the eyes of the Creator they are high, and in our eyes they should be very high as well . . . we should think that women are the best and that they are above us. (Interview, Edinburgh, 14 June 2002)

> Jamal: . . . I think that in Islam women are respected much more than men . . . you know it says in the Koran that under your mother's feet is where heaven is. (Interview, Edinburgh, 25 March 2003)

Jamal was one of many of the young men who commented on heaven being 'under your mother's feet'. Muslim women are also expected to cover themselves and 'not show their body'. Here it is recognized that it must be difficult for Muslim women because they are expected to dress modestly, yet, these young men also reinforced this form of dress:

> Saeed: . . . I think my wife has a harder time . . . I mean she wears a headscarf and covers her body you know. (Interview, Edinburgh, 14 June 2002)

> Mohammed: . . . if you are talking about a proper Muslim woman then I think it would be hard being a woman because they have to wear a headscarf and dress modestly. It would be harder for them to get a job . . . (Interview, Edinburgh, 16 May 2002)

It would appear that markers of Muslimness have heightened in significance in recent years (Hopkins 2004), particularly as a result of the events of 11 September 2001 in New York, and the bombings in London on 7 July 2005. The young men may be drawing upon gendered discourses in assuming that Muslim women are more likely to experience discrimination because of their dress, and they could also be said to be performing a hegemonic Muslim masculinity by assuming that women, rather than men, suffer more discrimination. Aware of the challenges this presents to Muslim women, the views of the young men show how they still reinforce this discourse. Qamar, a 22-year-old Pakistani Muslim, suggests that:

> Qamar: . . . In Islam, women are requested to wear the hijab, to cover their head, their face, their ears, and the main thing is that they do not reveal the shape of their body. Women are not oppressed. Most women prefer to stay at home and look after the kids you know. (Interview, Glasgow, 23 June 2003)

Saeed, in line with Qamar, also sees Muslim women belonging in the home, and he suggests that this offers protection to Muslim women who have to cover up when they go out:

> Saeed: . . . they are not kept in the house, but they are protected in the house, they cover up when they go out so that no one else can look at them. (Interview, Edinburgh, 14 June 2003)

The young men therefore adopt a number of strategies in opposing that idea that Muslim women are oppressed. I have argued that they adopt a form of sexist equality, whereby they advocate equality between men and women yet also adopt sexist stereotypes about the role of women. There are a range of reference points that the young men draw upon in order to justify and account for their masculine identities and performances, and these reference points include their religion, their South Asian heritage and the assumed preferences of their female peers. The young men account for any marginalization that Muslim women experience as

being the responsibility of women themselves as they are represented as being more traditional and choosing to stay at home. Moreover, they appear to suggest that women are not treated unequally as they are the height of respect, have more community facilities and are allowed to keep any money they earn and use that money as they wish.

Nineteen-year-old university student Abdul noted that 'white women have it easier than Muslim women, and are a lot more equal' (Interview, Glasgow, 19 November 2002). In focus group and interview exchanges, racialized discourses were drawn upon, placing Muslim women in opposition to white women. The main purpose of this appeared to be the argument that Western women are corrupt and therefore Muslim women are 'the height of respect'. Consider this exchange between Sabir, a 20-year-old Pakistani Muslim and Arif, a 22-year-old Indian Muslim, both of whom are university students:

Sabir: I think really in society really, women are oppressed, but it's a different type of oppression . . . people like say that like women in Islam wear a hijab or dress or whatever, are oppressed, but like, when I walk down the street and I see women that are wearing next to nothing, that is sort of oppression . . . when you look in the newsagent and see . . . like pictures of half naked women, that is a sort of oppression . . . in my opinion we live in a society today in this country where women are oppressed. It's a different type of oppression that people need to get their heads around, but women are oppressed.

Arif: [Islam] allows the woman to do what she is best at, and not based on the way she looks. It allows a woman to get a job based on her ability and her credentials, as opposed to her physical appearance . . . I just think that, from a respect point of view, when I see a woman with a headscarf, they have more respect for me than an attractive female who is showing off most of her body . . .

Sabir: I think it takes a lot for women to actually cover themselves up. If you've got a good looking Muslim woman and she says that she wants to cover herself up, it takes a lot to do that, and there is something about that that is really special, you know . . . (Focus Group, Edinburgh, 30 April 2003)

The idea that Muslim women are oppressed is reversed in this extract, as the focus group participants highlight the ways they see women in the West being oppressed by cultural constructions of ideal femininity. Furthermore, Sabir admits that women (both Muslim and non-Muslim) are

oppressed, and chooses to focus on what he sees as the unequal treatment of women in Scotland. It could be suggested that the young men in this focus group agree that many Muslim women are oppressed, but are choosing to avoid confronting the issue by focusing on non-Muslim women. Overall, these comments by the young men are all ways of justifying their perceptions about the role of women in Islam, and therefore display how they police the boundaries of acceptable Muslim femininity (Dwyer 2000). It was not only the young men in this focus group who commented on the role of women in the West. Consider the views of Aslam, a 22-year-old university graduate and Jamail, a 17-year-old school student, both of whom identify with a Pakistani heritage:

Aslam: If you think about it or the way I think about it is that women in this country are actually treated more unfairly than they are treated in the likes of Pakistan or India or any other place. It's actually now okay for a woman to walk down the street wearing whatever she wants, hardly anything, have men lusting, you know, just that concept I think . . . is awful. I think that is genuine abuse and people can believe that so much that it is actually okay and I think that's worse than any abuse that's happening in the East . . . Islam prescribes men and women to be equal . . . men and women are equal and there is no greater sex. Man is not better than a woman and no woman is better than a man. (Interview, Edinburgh, 18 December 2002)

Jamail: I mean in this country women are allowed to turn round and show their arse off, you know, and it's okay for you to walk around and have your breasts hanging out. Islam doesn't like that you know. (Focus Group, Glasgow, 3 October 2002)

It is clear that these young men dislike the dress choice of women in the West. They not only adopt a strategy of sexist equality, but also draw upon religious and Western discourses to justify their views about the role of Muslim women. As Dwyer notes, 'this policing by the young men appeared to be a means by which their own adolescent masculine ethnic and religious identity could be maintained' (2000, 479). The young men therefore possess multiple Muslim masculinities that do not conform to simplistic stereotypical understandings of Muslim men as patriarchal and effeminate. They place a central emphasis on earning capacity and the control of appropriate Muslim femininities, and draw upon a range of reference points such as religion, heritage and gendered expectations.

Markers of social difference and the importance of locality

Having demonstrated the importance of religion, heritage and gendered expectations to the formation of youthful Muslim masculinities, I now highlight the ways in which markers of social difference such as class and sexuality have important roles in influencing how young Muslim men construct, manage and perform their masculine identities. As I mentioned earlier, Babar's masculine identity and perception of the role of women vis-à-vis housework is strongly influenced by markers of social difference – namely disability – as he justified helping around the house due to his brother's (dis)ability. Thinking about other markers of social difference, Andrew Yip has highlighted factors that influence how non-heterosexual Muslims negotiate social and familial relationships. These include

> the strict censure of non-heterosexuality (specifically homosexuality) based on various Islamic written sources, the pervasive cultural censure of homosexuality as a 'western disease', the expectation of marriage as a cultural and religious obligation, the respect for parents, and the maintenance of family honour (izzat). (Yip 2004, 336)

Furthermore, Valentine *et al.* observe that little

> attention has been paid to the actual processes through which sexual dissidents negotiate their identities with others, and the consequences of such disclosures for those that are close to them. (2003, 480)

Omar, a 25-year-old health professional, who identifies as a gay Muslim, was originally from Glasgow. He felt compelled to leave home as his father beat him when hearing about his sexuality. He was in an arranged marriage until his wife ran away. He speaks to his mother once a week, although she still struggles to accept his homosexuality. Omar constantly asserted his identity during the interview and at a meeting of gay Muslims stating that 'I am gay and I am a Muslim' (Interview, Glasgow, 19 May 2002). Omar negotiated his gay Muslim identity by moving away from his family and participating in a support network for Muslims who are questioning their sexual and gendered identities. He highlighted his parents' disapproval of his sexual identity when he mentioned that 'there was no way I could be a gay', and since relations with families are 'critical in the cultural production of

masculinities' (Mac an Ghaill 1994, 52), Omar's masculine identity is strongly influenced by and intertwined with his homosexual identity. Despite this, as far as Omar is concerned, he still complies with many of the requirements of his religious faith:

> Omar: . . . because I'm gay . . . I think being gay excludes me from a lot of things . . . I'm not going to get married, yet most of us get married so . . . I try to follow my faith as much as I can, I fast, I've been to Mecca . . . you know, I love my parents . . . I suppose in certain respects I am a very typical Muslim, but because of the complications of my sexuality I am not. I suppose that is the only issue that makes me different. (Interview, Glasgow, 19 May 2002)

Whilst Omar highlights his connection with other Muslims and his compliance with the vast majority of the requirements of his religion, his masculinity has been formed in relation to the heterosexual masculinities of other young Muslim men, as well as in relation to the femininities of other young Muslim women. This appears to have assisted Omar in being sympathetic to the circumstances of young Muslim women, and in particular those of young lesbian Muslims:

> Omar: No . . . because from my being gay experience . . . I have met some women who have had a bloody hard time . . . Issues about doing well at school and that kind of stuff, is nothing compared to what lesbian women who are married have to go through. (Interview, Glasgow, 19 May 2002)

This understanding opens up the possibility for Muslim masculinities that are racialized, ethnicized, gendered and sexualized and therefore aware of the pressures and demands imposed upon young Muslims in terms of their sexual identities.

Alongside the relationship between gender and sexuality, recent studies have also highlighted the importance of the interactions within and between masculinity and class (Archer 2003; McDowell 2003; Connell 2005). The masculine identities of the young Muslim men involved in this research also influence and are influenced by their class position. This was most notable during a focus group with six young Muslim men at an elite private school in Edinburgh (14 November 2002). As O'Donnell and Sharpe observe:

> The notorious 'public school type' or 'public school man' was and is disciplined, tough, self-confident to the degree of arrogance, accustomed to the notion of leadership, and elitist in the highest degree. (2000, 52)

Omar,[1] a 16-year-old school student from Glasgow, summed up the general opinion in this focus group when he stated, 'I think it is up to the individual to do their best . . . so it's up to them at the end of the day'. The following exchange then took place between Ali and Nasser, who are 16 and 17 respectively, are Pakistani Muslims, and school-mates of Omar:

> Ali: . . . I mean girls don't need to do too much else, I mean they just like going shopping and that's about it, whereas boys like do lots and play sports and things like that.

> Nasser: . . . we have sports and you want to involve yourself in other activities, whereas they just have a much clearer goal . . . Asian women in Scotland, they don't usually go out like on a Friday night because it's obviously not allowed, whereas with boys Muslim parents are a lot more lenient towards them so like playing football is okay and cricket is okay . . . if they had just as much choice, and they were given the same chances that we were, then they would probably just do the same as well. (Focus Group, Edinburgh, 14 November 2002)

The young men here use their privileged position to condescend and belittle their female contemporaries, and there was general agreement amongst them that young Muslim women are only interested in 'going shopping and that's about it'. This shows how they disparage their mothers and sisters, whilst simultaneously reinforcing their masculine identities through their commitment to sport. Furthermore, the young men in this focus group also suggested that Pakistani Muslim women who experience racism did so because they do not conform to Western stereotypes of femininity, do not always speak English and 'do not integrate'. Tahir, an 18-year-old Pakistani Muslim stated that 'I think Asians should integrate like with the Scottish' and Ali, who is 16, observes:

> Ali: . . . [Muslim women] tend to speak their own language and they tend to wear their own clothes and that sort of stuff . . . I mean it's not very positive if you come over to a different country, and you are looking at the people . . . you know, its sort of like arrogant or something like that, a word like that. (Focus group, Edinburgh, 14 November 2002)

Again, the assumption here is that Muslim women are at fault and are responsible for their own marginalization, and the patronizing tone of the young men's statements demonstrates their feelings of superiority. Overall then, these upper-class young

Muslim men position themselves in opposition to, and in a superior position to, young Muslim women, and this is tied in with gendered, classed and racialized expectations of both young men and women. Furthermore, these young men use sport as a cultural tool in order to justify gender relations, bolster their masculine identities, and differentiate themselves from other young men (O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000).

This research project involved a relatively middle-class sample compared with many other studies of Muslim youth (for example, Alexander 2000a; Archer 2003) as there was little indication of poverty and deprivation in the young men's accounts which could be attributed to the different socio-economic status of ethnic minority groups in Scotland. However, the young men still framed their masculine identities in the context of earning wages, providing for the family and being the breadwinner. Talib and Qamar stated:

> Talib: If you're married yeah . . . it's the man's responsibility to provide for his wife and kids. The woman can go out and work yeah, but she gets to keep all of her money, she doesn't have to spend any of it on her husband or her kids or anything, the man has to, you know what I mean? (Focus Group, Glasgow, 5 September 2002)

> Qamar: … if a woman earns pay then that is hers to keep in a marriage, she doesn't need to give that to her husband and her husband can't ask that from her. When her husband works, he has to . . . give some of his income to his wife. (22-year-old, college student, Interview, Glasgow, 23 June 2003)

Here, they draw upon masculine ideas of providing for the family, and so suggest that women hold a position of privilege in being allowed to keep their earnings to themselves. This links with the research by McDowell (2002a 2002b 2003) where one of the main findings, as mentioned earlier, was the desire of the young men to achieve 'domestic conformity' (McDowell 2002b, 115). The young men consulted were continually involved in a process of constructing themselves as masculine, a construction that places a great deal of emphasis on waged labour, and this seems to be particularly important for young Muslim men as well. However, the young men take this a step further, as some of them could be in a position where their partners earn more money than they do, yet, as the husband, they still have to provide for the family. They therefore draw upon

Islamic discourses in order to support, justify and bolster their masculine identities and performances. Overall then, 'the boys drew on a traditional gender dichotomy in which men earn/work, providing for the home, and women have domestic responsibilities' (Archer 2003, 75), and even when their partners do work, their masculinities are not threatened as they still provide for the home.

As well as being influenced by markers of social difference, I would like to suggest that the young men's Muslim masculinities also interact with and are shaped by locality, and in particular, the masculinities of other young men in their local area. Mac an Ghaill notes that

> we need to consider not only gender differences but also relations between young men and women and within young men's peer groups ... Masculinities are also developed in specific institutional contexts in relation to and against each other. (1994, 61)

Young Muslim men's masculinities therefore interact with and develop in relation to the masculinities of other young men who inhabit the same local spaces and institutional contexts as they do. Social geographies matter, as the demographics of a particular place influence how young men construct, negotiate and perform masculine identities. The young Muslim men that I spoke to have been brought up in Scotland where the black population is very small compared with the South Asian population. This may have a direct influence on the ways the young men perform their masculine identities. Rather than the weak masculinity amongst black and Asian youth mentioned earlier, they may inhabit the powerful, strong and dominant masculinity often associated with black men. The fact that some of the young men stated that nobody 'messed with them' supports this assertion. Furthermore, part of this project focused on a segregated neighbourhood in Glasgow, and thinking about this context, the young Muslim men's masculinities also interact and compete with dominant white working-class masculinities that emphasize the importance of being visibly heterosexual, racially and ethnically superior and economically active (McDowell 2002a 2002b). The young men's location in Scotland and the demographics of the black and minority ethnic and white communities therefore have an influence on how their Muslim masculinities are developed, performed and contested.

Generational relations

The dominant discourses about youthful Muslim masculinities that I mentioned earlier also emphasize the significance of conflict between young Muslims and their parents' generation. They are defined as 'caught between two cultures', between the secular and modern world of the school and the traditional and fundamentalist world of the home (Knott and Khokher 1993).

> On the one hand there is the social world of family, community and religion – while on the other, there is the western world experienced through institutions like education and the media. (Qureshi and Moores 1999, 318)

This is sometimes viewed as a 'culture clash' where young Asians experience stress and identity conflicts as a result of having to negotiate and manage a number of contradictory, confrontational and competing identities (Brah 1996). These resurfacing dualisms are often stated as continuity or change, alienation or assimilation, tradition or modernity, fundamentalist or secular, parental culture or wider society. However, as Brah (1996) has convincingly argued, the notion of a culture clash is not supported by evidence. The young men's narratives of generation tended to concentrate on the differences between the young men's daily lives and that of older men like their fathers, and so contribute to recent work about fathering (Aitken 2000 2005) as well as to understandings about the ways in which men construct their masculinities in relation to other men. There was some indication of tensions between the young men and their fathers, and in this extract, 16-year-old Akthar and 17-year-old Ahmed, both of whom are Pakistani Muslim schoolmates, suggest that they intend to try to construct an alternative masculinity to that of their fathers and grandfathers:

> Aktahr: I think my grandad was meant to be quite strict so my dad is just following in his footsteps ... I'm not going to be following my dad's anyway ... I won't be as strict with things ... I mean he's trying to lose weight cause he has like high blood pressure.
>
> Ahmed: My dad has that as well yeah ... my dad would come home from work and do things like that as well and start moaning and getting stressed about things yeah.
>
> Aktahr: It's normally the man in the house that gets stressed.

Peter: Do you think that you'll be like that or do you think that will change?

Aktahr: Some want to be strict . . . I'm actually quite glad the way my dad brought me up because I can see how I shouldn't be if I have children. (Focus Group, Edinburgh, 19 June 2002)

Aktahr keeps a clear distance from his father by retiring to his bedroom when his dad arrives home. This could be read as Aktahr performing a hegemonic masculinity in front of his peers; however, he is adamant that his father has shown him how not to bring up his own children. Aktahr and Ahmed also comment on the everyday 'stress' that their fathers experience, acknowledging that they have 'high blood pressure'. The comments from this focus group reflect Archer's (2003) view that the boys in her research associated their fathers with power. 'Fathers were described as commanding the boys' awe, respect and sometimes fear' (Archer 2003, 102).

In line with Archer's findings, one of the strongest themes running through interviews and focus groups was a respect for their parents' generation. This respect was largely based on the young men's view that their parents are a hardworking generation, and contradicts the dominant discourse about young Muslim men being in conflict with their parents' generation. Consider the comments of 22-year-old college student Qamar, and 25-year-old youth worker Amin, both of whom identify with a Pakistani heritage:

Qamar: See my dad's generation . . . they are a very hardworking generation. They are used to working fifteen hours a day, or seventeen hours a day, eighteen hours a day, they are used to it. Seven days a week. They are more of a generation that like to work. My generation is more people who like to relax more, you know, like you work for two days on the trot and you are tired and you feel as if you can't do a lot of things. I mean I do my fair share of work but I can't see myself doing eighteen hours a day seven days a week. Maybe a few days but not that much. (Interview, Glasgow, 23 June 2003)

Amin: Well older Scottish people, I think that they also try to work hard and enjoy what they do . . . older people are part of the generation where everyone worked hard. I mean people today do not like to work, they are lazy and would rather not work. I prefer the hardworking attitude of a lot of older people. (Interview, Edinburgh, 22 July 2003)

Qamar's comments are heavily gendered and it is clear that it is his dad that he perceives to be a hard

worker. Qamar's account displays a respect and awe for the hardworking nature of his father's generation, and Amin also prefers those who have a 'hardworking attitude'. Amar comments on how his dad is constantly working seven days a week and his reference to 'Scottish Asians' draws on a racialized version of generational differences. Instead of this, Amar, a 21-year-old university student with a Pakistani heritage, notes:

Amar: Well for like older Scottish Asians it is totally different. My dad will get up in the morning, go to the shop or go to work, come home, watch TV and so on, do this and that, and then go to bed, and get up the next day. They will do that for seven days a week. You know, I relax more, do this and that, do a bit of shopping, go into town, check things out, you know. (Interview, Glasgow, 9 July 2003)

Young people are now spending a greater amount of time in a state of semi-dependency (Furlong and Cartmel 2001), and there is now also greater emphasis given to leisure and consumption. The significance of sport and leisure are important aspects of the young men's local frameworks and it is clear that this marks the young men's masculinities out as being different from their fathers. This construction of masculinity also contradicts the young men's emphasis on waged labour mentioned earlier, and demonstrates the ways in which they adopt contradictory masculine subject positions. Furthermore, their accounts of their relationships with their fathers also challenge traditional understanding of a culture clash between generations, as well as problematizing the dichotomous stereotypes that either associate young Muslim men with either patriarchy or effeminacy.

Ifty and Babar both note how sport is something that makes them different from their fathers. Ifty is 16 and still attends school, and Babar is a 22-year-old university graduate. Consider their comments:

Ifty: . . . they probably stick to their work and families and things like that whereas I like going out and doing sport and things like that. (Age 16, school student, Interview, Glasgow, 16 July 2002)

Babar: Yeah, he doesn't play football, he's not really into sport. He is just at work all the time, at the shop from like ten until six, and like he'll be in the house unless he's at the mosque for prayer which he does every evening. Other than that he might go out with my mum to my uncle's and aunt's house or whatever. That is the main type of social gathering that my mum can get, but when I'm at work I can meet my friends,

and at football I'm with my friends . . . my dad is always at the shop so he doesn't get to see his friends that much, so he likes to meet the neighbours or see the family and stuff. (Interview, Glasgow, 24 June 2003)

As well as working hard, the fathers of these young men are represented as being focused on the family and their religion. The religiosity of older Muslim men was also commented on by 22-year-old Pakistani Muslim, Rehman, who said:

> I would have to say that my dad is a bit more religious than I am, so religion is a lot more to him. He is a lot more likely to go to the mosque, and I mean I don't just mean a Friday, he'll go during the week as well. (Interview, Glasgow, 23 June 2002)

Overall then, the young men generally admire the hardworking nature of their parent's generation, although they acknowledge that their fathers tend to be less interested in sport and leisure and more focused on family and religion than the young men are themselves.

Homogenous views of the Muslim community were resisted during discussions about the everyday local lives of the young men's fathers. Consider the views of this 23-year-old university student:

> Faruk: . . . I mean my dad is quite relaxed, he's got that mindset because he was born and bred here you know. Other Asian's dads might be different, they might not go out as much to play football or go to cafes or whatever because they have never had that when they were younger, but my dad did. They don't have that mind set, their mind set is different, they are more like homely, more domestic, you know, rather than go out for food, they would bring it home and have a big kind of dinner. (Interview, Glasgow, 25 June 2003)

Faruk demonstrates the complexity and diversity of the Muslim community by highlighting his difference from other young Muslim men by claiming his mixed-race status in having a white Scottish father. Kabir also challenged the idea of a 'nation of shopkeepers', noting how many Asians have now completed higher education qualifications and are involved in a range of jobs. This is supported by previous research which highlights an increasing diversity in the economic and employment prospects of ethnic minorities, as well as the increasing numbers of such young people pursuing further and higher education courses (Ahmad 2001; Modood *et al.* 1997). This is also supported by the fact that many ethnic minority families are choosing to move to the suburbs (Peach 2000; Naylor and Ryan 2002), resulting in it

being more difficult to say what the typical Asian or Muslim community is, and demonstrating further that Muslim masculinities are multiple, fluid and influence and are influenced by a range of geographical contexts.

Although the young men narrate a respect for their parents' generation, there are also issues that cause unease, and this arose with particular reference to relationships, and having a girlfriend. Faruk talked about meeting his girlfriend in the afternoon, and also noted 'as far as I know I shouldn't be doing that, but again, from a personal perspective, I have this thing inside me' (Interview, Glasgow, 25 June 2003). Across the focus groups and interviews there was general agreement that young Muslim men are not allowed to have a girlfriend, and this is reiterated to them through imams at the local mosques, and more persistently from their parents. A few of the young men commented, like Faruk, that they had a girlfriend. Latif, a 16-year-old school student with an African heritage, mentions that one of the most challenging aspects of his everyday life is having a girlfriend and managing this relationship alongside family life. Even if he is 'not doing stuff', Latif has to carefully negotiate his relationship with his girlfriend, which he sees as 'natural'. Latif suggests that he has to hide, as well as look over his shoulder, in order to negotiate the local area. This would suggest that young women and men's behaviour and conduct is monitored by the local community through discourses of appropriate gendered and religious identities:

> Jamal: I don't know, my parents are quite broad minded and like they know what is acceptable and what isn't acceptable, you know, and they know, and I know many parents who aren't like that and it's stone cold.
>
> Latif: . . . I think that the girlfriend is like one of the hardest things as well, because you can't bring your girlfriend home if you know what I mean.
>
> Jamal: Aye, you can't go home and introduce her to your mum.
>
> Latif: Yeah, even if you like get on really well, and you are the sweetest guy, even if you just like not even doing stuff . . . you know you still need to hide and you are still looking over your shoulder. (16-year-old, school students, Focus Group, Edinburgh, 4 February 2003)

Jamal also highlights the multiple nature of the Muslim community by suggesting that his parents

are 'quite broad minded', acknowledging that others are not. These comments also demonstrate that the young men feel excluded from the home as they are not allowed to bring their girlfriends there and so have to use the other spaces of the local area in order to negotiate their relationships. Whilst the local community also polices the behaviour of their extended family members and friends, the young men adopted a number of strategies for managing their relationships with girlfriends, and many of these strategies might not be as easily utilized by young Muslim women, emphasizing the continuing significance of understandings of appropriate gendered behaviour. Amar stated that

> we've been going out for a year and a half, so another year and I might tell them [his parents] that she is the one I really want, you know. (Interview, Glasgow, 9 July 2003)

By travelling around half an hour away by bus from home, Amar manages to hide his relationship with his girlfriend from his parents. Amar also mentions how he would arrange to meet his girlfriend in the city centre, thereby increasing his level of anonymity. The freedom of young Muslim men to travel throughout the city was a privilege rarely offered to young Muslim women who are often expected to work in the local community and frequent the family home (Dwyer 1999; Mohammed 1999). They use this freedom to negotiate their relationship with parents, their girlfriends and their religion. In general, the young men who mentioned having a girlfriend did not discuss the ethnic background of their partner, although reading through Amar's interview transcript, it is clear that his girlfriend has a white ethnicity. This demonstrates that Amar's masculinity develops in relation to the spatial freedom afforded to him, along with race and ethnicity and other markers of social difference. The complexity of local frameworks may therefore work to exclude and segregate the young men and lead them to use alternative spaces and times in order to negotiate greater freedom and personal choice. Furthermore, they could also be said to be using their masculinities in order to exploit the lack of freedom given to young women.

The need to strategically negotiate their relationships with girlfriends is a concern most frequently voiced by young men from Glasgow. Their extended families tend to live in the local area, and given the higher levels of ethnic residential clustering (Hopkins and Smith 2005), there is an increased

likelihood that the young men will meet family friends and relatives as they negotiate the spaces of the local area. The young men who worked part-time in the evening whilst studying used the spaces of the college and university, and that of work, to see their girlfriends. Babar mentions how 'going to university, you have to relate to other people, you know, you talk to them and you get on fine' (Interview, Glasgow, 24 June 2003). These young men therefore used the different scales of their local everyday lives in order to negotiate and manage gender, generational and sexual relations.

Conclusion: multiple Muslim masculinities?

Research about young men as active subjects 'involves making masculinities plural and understanding and addressing them as relational identities which boys construct and inhabit' (Pattman *et al.* 1998, 139) and so involves highlighting the power and weaknesses involved in 'doing' gender. In this sense, the young men utilize a repertoire of masculinities in their articulations of their views and experiences. Whilst the majority of young Muslim men might aim to conform to hegemonic stereotypes of Muslim masculinity, a range of complex intertwining markers of social difference – gender, social class, sexuality, disability – disrupt this pattern, as do the young men's relationships with their fathers and their particular locations in urban Scotland. There are a range of masculinities inhabited and performed by the young men, highlighting the complexity of their experiences and the different ways that they see themselves, and are seen by others, as men. In this paper, I have demonstrated the diverse, heterogeneous and multifaceted nature of youthful Muslim masculinities that are simultaneously gendered, sexualized and classed, and influenced by generation and location. In different settings and at different times, the young men performed hegemonic Muslim masculinities, thereby placing emphasis on patriarchy and aggression, yet at other times the young men displayed masculinities that were sensitive to the importance of various markers of social difference and respective of their parents' lives. As Frosh *et al.* note, the young men's masculinities are multiple, flexible and part of a repertoire, as well as being

> themselves deeply racialised: full of the tension and drama, and the pain, of belonging and not-belonging,

including and excluding, that the dimensions of difference encoded in 'race' produce. (2002, 174)

Overall, the young men adopt a range of contradictory masculine subject positions, such as emphasizing equality and opportunity whilst also reinforcing sexist stereotypes and expectations. All in all, the various accounts of the young men's masculine identities simultaneously support, challenge and subvert dichotomized stereotypes that either associate them with effeminacy and academicism or patriarchy and aggression. There were accounts that could be said to be associated with an effeminate or patriarchal masculinity; however, there were also accounts that drew upon a range of discourses and markers, and so simplistic stereotypical understandings of Muslim masculinities have limited value.

McDowell acknowledges that her recent research is about young white men, and

the significance of 'race' and racism in structuring the lives of young men in different parts of the UK is, however, a key issue for further analysis. (2002b, 56)

This article contributes to understandings of the multiple natures of youthful Muslim masculinities (Alexander 2000a 2000b; Archer 2003). However, there is also a need to extend the analysis in research about men and masculinities to include a range of different groups of men and women in different places and at a range of times and scales. As Connell observes,

diversity also exists *within* a given setting. Within the one school, or workplace, or ethnic group, there will be different ways of enacting manhood, different ways of learning to be a man, different conceptions of the self and different ways of using the male body. (2002, 10; original emphasis)

If further research seeks to do this, geographers will be able to more fully comprehend, understand and appreciate the ways in which different groups of men enact masculinity, and the ways these gendered performances vary in relation to other men and women and in different places and times.

Acknowledgements

Note

1 Sixteen-year-old Omar and 25-year-old Omar are two different people. In order to respect the pseudonyms chosen by the research participants, I have kept the names that they requested.

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