

Interethnic Relations: Multidisciplinary Approaches
13 - 15 May, 2009 | Lisbon, Portugal

Workshop

The Role of Emotions in Interethnic Relationships of Muslims:
Feminism and Masculinities

Friday, 15th May | 11:15 to 15:30

***Intersectionality, Space and Emotion:
developing reflexive methodologies for engaged scholarship***

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Rationale: methodological analysis as transformative to research aims, process and findings

Drawing upon research experiences:

- Doctoral research on intersection of regulatory discourse and personal identity in relation to Islamic feminists
- Post-doctoral team research on police - Muslim community engagement as counter-terrorism practice
- Exploring academic, social and political implications
- Contributing to methodological debates and development - tentatively!

Emotive subjects: Research with Muslims post- 9/11

- Increase in Orientalist imagery and narrative
- Muslim as *dangerous* other
- Fear
- Hurt
- Grievance
- Mistrust
- Controversy



Emotive subjects, emotional responses

People just living their [lives], were harassed by the media, people could not go and buy food for their children, because they were being hounded by packs of journalists asking about the boy, about his family, about whether they saw him, whether they knew him or the such. People were seriously afraid. We had a few friends who lived in the area and they would call us everyday crying.

'Radical' political activist on aftermath of London Bombings

...the police also feel afraid, also feel intimidated, and also feel they are under obligation because in a way they are damned if they do, and they are damned if they don't.

**Community member
engaged with counter-
terrorism police**

Around here, where there's a lot of racism, it's normal to get people, kids but usually adults to shout 'white paki'...

Yes, either that or 'effing terrorist'...

... or if you're not wearing hijab like me, and you're with Muslims who are, they tend to shout 'effing Paki lover'

**White British Muslim women
discussing racism**

Researcher & participant standpoints: exploring research aims

- Context of emotive research subject – political, social, personal, academic
e.g. Discourse of ‘New Terror’
- Multiple and changing standpoints of researchers and participants
e.g. Community activists, police officers, academics
- Developing interdisciplinary methods and analyses within post-structuralist, post-modern framework:
Social Anthropology, Women’s Studies, Sociology, Social Policy, Criminology, Theology, including tools of analysis drawn from Fanon, Foucault, Taussig, Geertz...
- Academic investigation, rigour, responsibility and legitimacy
- Grassroots connectivity
- Policy influence, claiming power
- Engaged and / or activist research – research as act of justice
- Emotional connection, conscience and consciousness
e.g. Ruth Behar’s *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*

For example...

Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, 'engaged scholar'

...deconstructing the myth [of terrorism] in favour of reasonable ethnographic assessment is the first step... toward curbing such violence in the future.

Mahmood 2001:520

Reflexivity: examining the process of research

- Process of research – of studying the tension/dynamics/relations between individuals, groups and their intersections
- Reflexive methodologies: interrogating and revealing complexities through analysis of insider/outsider positions; team exchanges & diary; emotional responses to research
- Beyond Muslim/non-Muslim dichotomy: recognition and space given to intersectionality of positions , standpoints and identities as researchers and participants– religious, ethnic, gender, aged, power/status
- Creation of space underpinning and generated through research process
- Acknowledge, and enrich through, personal dynamics – with other academics, with participants – research process as generating relationships, social interactions and emotions around emotive subjects and experiences

For example...

Extract of team diary after a team meeting

Not only do the subjects we cover bring out emotion in participants, who express passion, anger, sadness, frustration, bitterness, determination... but our own reactions are interesting methodologically. We discussed our feelings when interacting in interviews - feeling out of depth, empathy, even frustration and anger, and how reflecting on these reactions is important. There has been the odd occasion when we have felt disappointed with a participant, who we had pinned hopes on and which they failed to live up to, but that this was a good reminder that non-judgement is vital. A particular example for me were my preconceptions about [participant] - I have had bad experiences with [his religious organisation], and having listened to the first interview without meeting him, had not changed my mind. However, arranging the second interview, speaking on the phone and eventually meeting him was a totally different experience, and we really connected - I have learned yet another valuable lesson - we can't always agree with everyone all the time, but we can still work together towards common goals, and find ways to connect positively. This is something that has to be done regarding partnership - police officers and community members may often hold very different, even opposing views, but they manage to work together for the sake of security.

Implications of developing methodologies of intersectionality, space and emotion

- Expectations of research – by researchers and participants – attainable, desirable, empowering?
- Research as creating safe and alternative spaces beyond dominant norms and narratives
- Opportunities to learn & share between researchers, researchers / research participants
- Interview as release of emotion: airing grievance and hurt regarding counter terrorism, racism etc
- Space and airing of emotion as part of healing
- Speaking to protest, text as resistance: intersection of scholar as engaged or activist
- Participants' own analyses of social processes, theological interpretation, political debate through this space – enrich academic analyses – feminist ethics
- Give 'voice' to unheard, claiming our own spaces
- Connect emotionally – academic as objective knower defiled – 'subjectivity' and post-modernist debate
- Rigorous, transparent research
- Potential for developing new conceptual tools and academic approaches

Thank you for your attention

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