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The dialogic construction of self and other in response to terrorism

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The dialogic construction of Self and Other in response to terrorism

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Abstract

An applied linguistic study of talk in twelve focus groups (N=96) – six in London, where bombs exploded in July 2005, and six in Leeds, home to three of the bombers – investigates the effects of terrorism on people's personal and social landscapes. Emotional responses of fear, of both violence and retaliation, and suspicion contribute to multiple disruptions in the construction of Self and Other. Muslim participants, who before lived with a multiplicity of voices and positions, feel reduced by non-Muslims to more simplistic categorizations through the discourse pattern of 'lumping', which positions all Muslims as potential terrorists and sometimes as part of a wider group of 'non-desirable aliens'. Terrorist claims of Muslim identity bring tensions to religious positioning and interpersonal relationships, often resolved through 'moral splitting' that separates 'good/normal' from 'bad/brainwashed' Muslims. Less Muslim in-group bias and more non-Muslim empathy to Muslims is found than predicted. Personal connections are tested and disrupted by terrorism and some prove more resilient than others. Implications are suggested for social moral responsibility and leadership, and for discourse interventions.

Keywords: terrorism, empathy, lumping, splitting, Muslim

The dialogic construction of Self and Other in response to terrorism

In July 2005, 52 people died and over 700 were injured after four young Muslim men carried bombs in rucksacks from Leeds to London and exploded them in the underground (subway) and on a bus. It was not just the violence and death that shocked people in UK, but the fact that the young men, the first suicide bombers in UK, were British, three of them born and brought up in a long-established Muslim community. After this event (which became known as 7/7), government and community leaders worked hard to prevent a violent backlash in Muslim communities in UK, and were, by and large, successful. However, the event caused much social and personal disruption, shifting notions of both Self and Other.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of that disruption on people's personal and social landscapes through an applied linguistic study of talk in focus groups. If, as a society, we can better understand how people and groups respond to an ongoing threat of terrorist attack, we should be better able to offer support towards resilience and protection against fragility. The study forms part of a larger project investigating the dynamics of empathy in dialogue in times of uncertainty.[1] Empathy concerns how one person (the Self) emotionally and cognitively responds to another, how they understand how it is to be 'the Other'.[2] In this study, where focus groups discuss the risk of terrorism and its effects on their everyday lives, we attend to one particular aspect of empathy in dialogue: how the Other is dialogically constructed in relation to the Self. By tracing patterns of stabilization and variability in dialogic construction of Self and Other, post 7/7 and 9/11, the study aims to understand the impact of increased uncertainty on people's emotions, and on the voices and positions that people construct for themselves and for others.

The study is innovative in applying a complex dynamic systems view of society, culture, cognition and discourse which allows researchers to attend to interdependencies of affective, cognitive and social factors in people's lives. This approach highlights the fluidity of constructions

of Self and Other as voiced in people's accounts, and how people move in and out of multiple social

identities.

Background

The Complex Dynamics of People and Groups

A complex dynamic systems view theorizes the connection of world, body and mind

(Hutchins, 2010; Spivey, 2007; Thelen & Smith, 1994), as well as the connection of self and other

(Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), and of self and collective (Sealey, 2010; Sealey & Carter,

2004). It is combined here with social-cultural theory (Markova, 2000; Vygotsky, 1962) and

dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981; Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007) to connect lives with

conversations (also Linnell, 1998).

The approach takes as its concern systems of activity on timescales that range from micro to

macro, and examines that activity within and across these timescales (Gibbs & Cameron, 2008).

Complex systems are comprised of many, heterogeneous, elements or agents, which are interrelated

in various ways. Both elements/agents and relations between them change over time, giving rise to

non-linearity and lack of predictability. Timescales of relevance in this study range from micro-

level of face-to-face interaction to macro-levels and scales of society and culture. On each

timescale, the concern is with the dynamics of systems in flux: the flow of talk with its shifting

meanings and emotions; dynamic ideas about identity and social groupings; changing cultural

narratives and social attitudes. Timescales are connected by feedback and feed-forward loops;

people engaged in everyday conversations (and here in focus groups) both contribute to and are

constrained by their membership of and affiliation to various social groups. External events such as

terrorism are disruptions that spread unpredictably through the multiple connected systems that may

tip a system into chaos or eventually produce new stabilizations along with new kinds of variability.

In the case of 7/7, social chaos was avoided but lives were disrupted. Our analysis therefore seeks to

trace the impact of terrorism as it affected social and individual systems, and to identify changed patterns of stabilization and variability in people's constructions of Self and Other.

Terrorism, increased uncertainty and social identity

The central constructs in this study – uncertainty, identity and social relations – are all approached as complex and dynamic. Uncertainty, in the sense of unpredictability and the loss of simple linear causality, is inherent in complex dynamic systems generated by multiple and dynamic interrelations between elements (Byrne, 2002). Hermans suggests that uncertainty may produce either avoidance or reduction. Some people, he suggests, may "simply avoid uncertainty … and prefer to travel through an endless series of fragmented cultural pieces" (Hermans, 2001, p.275).

Hermans (2001) and Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) characterize identity in terms of a multiplicity of voices and positions. Moreover, the Self (or subject) is always understood or stabilized in relation to some 'Other', and because of this interdependence is said to be dialogically constructed. In the face of continually experienced insecurity, people work towards stability or 'securitization' (Kinvall, 2004; Kinvall & Lindén, 2010). Hermans and Dimaggio suggest that intensification of uncertainty, as from a terrorist attack, may produce anxiety which leads people "to find local niches in which they try to find security, safety, and certainty" (2007, p 34). According to Kinvall & Lindén, increased uncertainty can lead people to reduce complexity, searching for "a single, stable, essentialized identity" and subscribing to "myths of homogeneity" (2010, p. 598) in which identity becomes a fixed and somehow natural category. The coherence provided by fundamentalist world views, often contextualized in simplifying narratives (Ashmore, Jussim, Wilder, & Heppen, 2001), provides security and comfort when multiple identities become too difficult to deal with. We might expect participants' talk to display simplifying narratives as essentializing strategies, and for new stabilizations of the complex dynamic system of identity to involve reductions of complexity.

Work on inter-group relations and self-identity (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew, 2008; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Staub, 2001; Tajfel, 1981) has shown how prejudice, conflict or tension

heighten differences between groups, and how simplifying categorizations of the Other contribute to strengthening self-identity. The neuroscience of empathy also demonstrates bias towards in-group members (Lamm, Batson, & Decety, 2007, 2009; Xu, Zuo, Wang & Han 2009). Reducing complexity plays a role in dehumanizing the Other in processes that precede violence (Cameron, 2011b; Halpern & Weinstein, 2004). Conversely, it has long been known that inter-group contact can lead to reduction in prejudice (Allport, 1979), and more recently that contact contributes to allowing the Other multiple identities (Brown & Hewstone, 2005) and to increased perception of outgroup variability (Swart, Hewstone, Christ, & Voci, 2010). Increasing the complexity of the Other is a kind of 'particularization', contrasted by Billig with categorization (Billig, 1985, 1996).

The social identity and self categorization literatures lead us to expect participants to show more strongly bounded, and thus simplified, construction of in-groups and out-groups in response to the threat of terrorism. However, Witteborn's study of Arab collective identities in post 9/11 USA and Moskalenko et al's study of college students suggest that identity labels and groupings are themselves subject to change and shifting in such circumstances (Moskalenko, McCauley, & Rozin, 2006; Witteborn, 2007). Moreover, the effect of inter-group contact over a long period in a society such as contemporary Britain is under-investigated and so it is less clear what we might expect in terms of stability or fragility of inter-group connections. Our research questions therefore ask about stabilities and shifts in social identities and social groupings, and discourse strategies employed in dealing with uncertainty.

Emotions

Emotions play a key role in empathy, moral response (Haidt, 2007) and decision-making (Kahnemann, 2003). Emotional responses to terrorist events in society include anger, fear and sadness. While anger decreases people's feelings of risk, fear increases it (Fischhoff, Gonzalez, Lerner, & Small, 2005). A dynamic interaction has been observed between emotion and in-group/out-group boundaries in post-terrorism contexts. In a study in Belgium and the Netherlands in the week after 9/11, Dumont, Yzerbyt, Wigboldus, & Gordijn (2003) manipulated in-group

boundaries. When the victims were seen as part of the in-group, participants had higher ratings for fear and reported being more likely to engage in information-seeking and social sharing. A study with a nationally-representative US sample confirmed that anger and fear have different consequences (Skitka, Baumann, Aramovitch, & Scott-Morgan, 2006). Participants who were more fearful were more likely to support the deportation of suspect individuals and less likely to support war than those who felt anger. A particularly interesting – and worrying – finding is that both groups had a very wide definition of the out-group; in other words, the emotions of anger and fear 'spill over' to other groups as well. This means different groups within society may have different emotional responses following a terrorist event. In Australia, Aly and Green (2010) showed fear to be the predominant emotion displayed by both their Muslim and non-Muslim participants, but the types of fear differed, with Muslims expressing fear of a backlash and limitations to civil liberties whereas non-Muslims were more likely to express fear of physical harm.

The study thus seeks to explore participants' reports of emotional responses to 7/7 and how they describe their impact on shifting social identities, behaviour and attitudes.

The Dialogical Self

In this applied linguistic study using talk as data, dialogical self theory is used to connect what people say in focus groups with research issues of emotional responses to terrorism and shifting social identities. 'Dialogic' is used here in two ways: firstly, to refer to dialogue or talk as the context of data and analysis; and secondly, relating to dialogism, an approach to thought and communication that places alterity, or 'otherness', at the heart of dialogue and understanding (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Linnell, 1998; Markova, 2000). Through dialogue, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, people construct understandings of themselves and others. Other people's ideas and influences (i.e. their 'voices') interact with our own in internal dialogues to produce a 'dialogical self' that is not simple, finished or fixed, but rather is dynamic, partial and multivoiced. The dialogical self is both real and imagined, an embodied self in space and a constructed self in the imagination. The Other, as constructed in the imagination of this dialogical self is, in some sense,

part of the self, as well as also an embodied other in space. Multivoicedness in the dialogical self refers not just to individual voices but to the voices of a group or collective (Hermans, 2001; Wertsch 1991). As members of social groups, people speak from various social positions and "the collective voices of groups enter the self-space and form positions that agree or disagree with, unite or oppose each other" (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007, p. 36). The multiplicity of positions and voices used by an individual can thus include voices of other individuals and of groups, both one's own groups and groups that the Other is held to belong to; tension and conflict can arise across any of this multiplicity. Social power, dominance and asymmetry cannot be ignored in this conception of the dialogical Self, particularly when considering globalized contexts such as London or New York, and minority groups such as Pakistan-heritage Muslims living in Britain (Linnell, 1990; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007).

This study contributes to the dialogism literature by revealing how people not only move between multiple positions and voices in response to uncertainty caused by the threat of terrorism but how they also simultaneously occupy multiple positions and voices.

Research questions

The study thus seeks to trace the impact of terrorism on social and individual systems, identifying emotional responses to 7/7 and their effect on social identities, behaviour and attitudes. Through applied linguistic analysis, it aims to identify changing patterns of stabilisation and variability in people's constructions of Self and Other, and strategies employed to deal with uncertainty. Analysis of dialogical tensions will reveal, not only how people move between positions and voices in response to uncertainty, but how they simultaneously occupy multiple positions and voices.

The following research questions are addressed:

• How do participants describe their emotional responses to the risk of terrorism and the impact of emotion on social identities, behaviour and attitudes?

- How are stabilities and shifts in social identities and social groupings described by

    participants through multiple voices and positions?

- What dialogical tensions occur around these voices and positions?

- How are these tensions resolved, or not?

Method

Data

The data came from transcriptions of 12 focus group discussions, each lasting about 90

minutes, on the topic of living with the risk of terrorism, recorded in 2006. Focus groups were

recruited in two different locations: Leeds, in the north of England, and London. Separate groups

were organised for Muslims and non-Muslims as it was felt the nature of public reactions to, and

reporting of, terrorism might limit the candour of participants in a mixed group. A female Muslim

moderator was used for Muslim groups. Separate groups were also organised for men and women,

to address Muslim cultural sensitivities. Non-Muslim groups were split by socio-economic status,

on the basis of occupation and education, although this distinction is not analysed here. With 8

people in each group, participants were 16 Muslim men, 16 Muslim women, 32 non-Muslim men

and 32 non-Muslim women. All participants were British nationals (apart from 2 Muslim

participants), aged between 20 and 69 years, with a full range of ages in each group. Muslim

participants were mainly of south Asian (Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani) heritage.

Moderators asked the same series of questions of each group but otherwise left participants

to interact with minimum interruption. The opening question asked what came to mind when

hearing the word 'terrorism'. Some questions were specifically designed to prompt consideration of

perspectives of other social groups; others asked about decisions in people's daily lives.

The original project was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Psychological

Sciences, University of Leeds, in line with British Psychological Society ethical guidelines, and

participants' names have been changed to protect their anonymity.

Analysis

To answer the research questions, analysis of focus group talk focuses on linguistic and discursive features that indicate multiple voices and positions, and on episodes where social groupings or relations are explicitly topics of talk.

The audio recorded discussions were transcribed into intonation units, stretches of speech produced under a single intonation contour (Chafe, 1994; Du Bois et al., 1993; Stelma and Cameron, 2007). Transcription conventions[3] included the symbol <Q…Q> to mark beginning and ending of quoted speech, both actual and imagined, so that voices brought into the talk by quoting were readily found. The word length of the transcribed talk totalled 213,271 words.

As part of earlier work on the data, transcriptions had been analysed for metaphors by the authors (details in Cameron et al., 2009). To determine the new analysis, a section of transcript was subjected to intensive discourse analysis which identified features relevant to the research questions and prompted a multi-level, nested type of qualitative discourse analysis. At micro-level, data was coded in Atlas.ti for references to people and for narratives, in addition to metaphors. At a longer timescale of minutes, episodes of talk were analysed for discourse dynamics: the flow of topics, turn-taking and positionings. Atlas coding was done mainly by the second author under guidance from the first author. Consensus on coding procedure was reached through shared work and training, and checked by double blind coding of samples and discussion to resolve disagreements. Each analytic tool is now described.

Metaphors. The discursive affordances of metaphor make it a useful analytic tool. Metaphor features heavily when people try to explain emotions such as helplessness or fear; it contributes to positioning the speaker, attitudinally and affectively, as when used to summarise and evaluate; and key topics in discourse are often framed metaphorically (Cameron, 2003, 2007, 2008). The method of metaphor analysis is fully described in Cameron et al. (2009) and Cameron & Maslen (2010). Briefly, verbal metaphors were identified and underlined in the data; these 12,363

individual metaphors were grouped together into connected sets, or trajectories, of 'systematic metaphors', such as *UNCERTAINTY FROM TERRORISM IS PLAYING A GAME OF CHANCE.*[4]

References to people The data was coded for social references as obvious loci for talk about Self and Other. Three broad types of social references emerged from preliminary analysis: individual, group, and social marker. Individual references included people known to the speaker (*my children, my son*)[5] and public personae (*Bin Laden, Blair*). Group references included general (*people*), political (*BNP* - British National Party), ethnic (*Pakistani, English*), religious (*Muslim, Hindu*), and other identity groups (*skinheads*), as well as hybrid groups defined in relation to other groups (*non-Muslim, British Muslim*). In addition were what might be called 'every-person' groups, represented by an imaginary individual (*Joe Bloggs, any other British youngster, the average bod*). Social markers were aspects of appearance used in talk to suggest membership of a particular social group, principally physical characteristics (*beards, clean-shaven*) or clothing (*cap, hijab*).

Dialogic tension around Self and/or Other in talk was often signalled by a string of references in close succession, as shown in bold in extract 1.

Extract 1

1618	Janet	.. **everyone** assumes,
1619		if you're,
1620		.. erm,
1621		… (1.0) **dark skin** and **Indian**,
1622		.. you're **Muslim**.
1623		which is untrue,
1624		of course.

(London, non-Muslim women 1)

Janet describes how people in general (*everyone*) make inaccurate classifications of Muslim, using skin colour (*dark skin*) and heritage/nationality (*Indian*) as defining features. In lines 1623-4, she explicitly marks the inaccuracy of such assumptions (*untrue*). Examination of surrounding talk,

prompted by this succession of references, showed that Janet was in the process of empathising with Muslims who experience this kind of over-generalisation, or lumping, while also distancing herself from those who over-generalise; several layers of dialogical construction of Self and Other were thus involved.

Where such strings of references in the coded data indicated problematic voices and/or positions, further discourse analysis of the episode was carried out.

Narratives. Preliminary analysis showed that talk about Self and Other often crystallised in narratives, exploiting the power of stories to establish perceptual-cognitive coherence at individual level and to construct broader shared understandings at group and socio-cultural level (Labov & Waletsky, 1967; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Ritchie, 2010).

Two distinct narrative types occurred frequently. One was retellings of actual, specific events and experiences, which included characters, setting and action, were usually told in first person and in the past tense. The other narrative type involved typification (Myers, 1999), i.e. presenting a state of affairs that other participants seemed to be expected to recognise as representing 'how things are'. These 'scenarios', as they were called, were more general, usually brief, having only some elements of narrative, usually told in present tense, and often hypothetical. Settings or places often underpinned scenarios, acting metonymically to suggest typical events or actions connected with those places.

Discourse dynamics. Along with codings of instances and utterances as metaphor, people references, or narratives, the dynamics of discussions were traced to find episodes displaying multiple voices and/or positions around Self and Other, explicitly discussing social identities, or featuring tensions around social relations.

Methods from 'positioning theory', as developed by Harré and colleagues, were also employed in analysis of talk segments. Positioning is a more dynamic alternative to 'role' that connects cognitive psychology with social action and moral reasoning (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999; Harré, Moghadamm, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009). When people position themselves or

others through their actions, including their discourse actions, i.e. their talk, they ascribe or deny them certain rights and duties that are normatively associated with that position. People can challenge or negotiate the positioning done to them by others, in processes of 'second order positioning'. Harré et al (2009) draw a strong link between positioning and storylines, i.e. the trajectory of narratives that people construct for themselves and others. Positioning was found helpful in analysing what is implied in particular ways of describing or characterising self and other, in operationalizing 'voice', and in revealing tensions from conflicted positionings.

Participants in focus groups speak both as individuals and, usually at later stages of discussions, as part of the forming group. Analysis allowed us to see occasional 'outliers' in some groups, i.e. individuals who made clear that their views diverged from others'. Most of the time, however, individual contributions were accepted or built on by other participants, with occasional clarification or resolution of disagreement. The perspectives reported in the Findings section emerged as consensus or non-disputed within a group and across similar groups.

Findings

After an overview, detailed findings are presented, illustrated with extracts from the data, selected to be clear, but not extreme, examples of non-disputed perspectives.

Overview of Findings

The most frequently mentioned emotional response to terrorism was fear of violence around everyday activities, for participants themselves and for close family members. Terrorism and its reporting in the media created images and stories that became internalised and activated new levels of suspicion. Beards and rucksacks (as seen in video images of the bombers) became symbols of suspicions; everyday actions, such as taking a seat on the train or going out, could activate potential terrorism stories, reinforced by internalised voices of fearful parents or relations. Muslim participants reported similar fears for self and family but also experienced an additional fear – of

retaliation. Many Muslims reported feeling they were subject to new levels of suspicion in their everyday lives.

Fear and suspicion contributed to multiple, connected disruptions in construction of the Muslim Self. For example, hiding or disguising of Muslim identity when in contact with non-Muslims was reported in response to fear of retaliation. Muslim participants, accustomed to living with a multiplicity of voices and positions, found themselves, as Other, externally reduced and confined to more simplistic categorisations by non-Muslims. Claims by terrorists to be acting as and on behalf of Muslims brought new tensions to participants' religious positioning. Discourse strategies to resolve this tension included a 'moral splitting' of good Muslims from bad Muslims, and an exclusion of terrorists from being Muslim at all. A stronger strategy was positioning of terrorists as abject-other, brainwashed or mentally ill. Contrary to what might be expected from Social Identity theory, this splitting was done by both Muslims and non-Muslims, and helped to stabilise constructions of Self and Other.

A major trend reported in construction of the Muslim as Other was the absolutizing strategy of 'lumping', positioning all Muslims as potential terrorists, and sometimes also as part of a wider group of 'non-desirable aliens'. Lumping was enacted in non-Muslim focus groups by some participants, and widely reported in Muslim narratives of participants' everyday lives. It was offered by many non-Muslim participants as a likely or actual result of fear generated by terrorism, often with a degree of empathy for what Muslims would experience. Some Muslim participants reported action to reject lumping; others seemed to accept it as a natural response to events through imagining how they would react in an analogical situation, demonstrating empathy with non-Muslims.

Some pre-existing interpersonal relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims – at work and as friendships – managed to maintain stability despite the disruption of terrorism. However, participants reported subtle tensions being placed on relationships, requiring re-negotiation of Self and Other, with second order positioning and moral splitting serving as stabilising strategies.

The Emotional Impact of Uncertainty

The metaphors used by participants suggest that uncertainties generated by terrorism produced strong, negative emotional effects, even on those not directly involved. Metaphors of *VIOLENT ACTION* were used to describe the impact of terrorism on people, families and society: people are *crushed, knocked down, mashed up; impacting on* people's lives; families are *ripped apart*; terrorism *shook the whole world up*. Similar metaphors were also used in talk of social and governmental responses to terrorism: Muslim communities in UK were seen as vulnerable to a *backlash*; as a result of the war Iraq is *completely broken up*; and as a result of prevention measures human rights have been *squashed*.

The emotional effect was also spoken of in terms of *BALANCE* metaphors, particularly by women participants. Terrorism disrupts emotional equilibrium for individuals: terrorism is *upsetting*, *makes you a bit more edgy*, and you want to *get back to normal*. For society too, it brings disruption from the norm: *things are out of balance*; it *upsets the fragile peace* or *harmony*.

As was found by Aly and Green (2010) in their Australian study, the most spoken about emotion was fear, and in particular, fear produced by an invisible and silent enemy, who not only attacks locally but may also live locally: we had terrorists on our own doorstep. The terrorist enemy is invisible and silent in several ways: attacks cannot be predicted, and no advance warning is given; there is no conventional declaration of war, no organisation with uniforms or other visible military status; the 7/7 bombers were young British Asian men and looked like any other tube passengers on cctv pictures seen afterwards. The invisibility, and thus the unknowability, of this enemy evoked a particular kind of fear that made both Muslim and non-Muslim participants feel helpless. Lack of agency was voiced through *GAME OF CHANCE* metaphors, preferred by non-Muslim men: *we get caught up in a poker game; it's like a lottery; if my number's up; we're pawns in a game.*

Both Muslims and non-Muslims fear for themselves but spoke much more about fears they have for their families, particularly if they worked in the city and travel by tube:

Extract 2

989	Eshal	<X there's X> a fear.
990	Maya	…fear.
991		…(9.0) and you're helpless.
992		you can't help it.
993		you can't help,
994		..you know,
995		to protect yourself,
996		…(2.0) like --
997		my husband and my son,
998		..they they work in the City.
999		.. every morning,
1000		I f- you know,
1001		I- you know,
1002		when they go,
1003		I know like,
1004		I wish that--
1005		erm,
1006		..like they don't--
1007		they are safe at home,
1008		at night,
1009		but I am scared.
1010		.. one phone call,
1011		you know sometimes,

(London, Muslim women)

After mention of her husband and son, Maya elaborates on her helplessness. The phrase *one phone call* (1010) works as a 'story index' (Ritchie, 2010) to evoke a narrative of family members injured or killed in an attack and the speaker knowing nothing until a phone call arrives from police or hospital. The narrative is implied in the contrastive space of what is actually said from line 1004, of what remains unspoken after *I wish that … they don't …* (1004-6) and what is implied as the negative version of *they are safe at home* (1007).

Increased fear for family was internalised – people know that families worry about them when they travel – and these fearful voices come to influence or question decisions that people make about their everyday lives, as when Amy, in extract 3, exemplifies her parents' worry with words they might have said (3412-4):

Extract 3

3410   Amy   the biggest club in London,

3411   and they knew I was going out for my birthday,

3412   <Q oh are you w- --

3413   are you going there?

3414   are you going there? Q>

3415   everything that happens in London,

3416   is completely magnified.

3417   .. they worry –

(London, non-Muslim women 1)

In addition to fear for self and family and internalised fear coming from families, Muslim participants expressed an additional layer of uncertainty and fear, of being attacked in retaliation for terrorism.

Extract 4

1090   Maya   .. like Friday nights,

1091   you know,

1092   we ge-get --

1093   gather together for the prayers,

1094   .. you're scared,

1095   you know.

1096   you think,

1097   <Q oh my God Q>,

1098   if you're going to be in a group,

1099   .. you never know,

1100   you're not safe there.

(London, Muslim women)

Maya here constructs a changed dialogical Self who, seen through the eyes of the imagined non-Muslim Other, may now be a target for retaliation. Overt demonstration of collective religious identity, such as praying together or wearing particular clothing, previously only of concern to the Self and one's own group now becomes a symbol that might provoke the Other. Tensions produced by this shift echo in *MENTAL HEALTH* metaphors used by several Muslim women participants in speaking of the emotional impact of terrorism: *that's what makes you paranoid; it was like a nightmare.*

The Muslim Self Disrupted

In response to a direct question from the moderator about other groups who would be affected by terrorism, all non-Muslim groups agreed that Muslim communities in UK would be likely to suffer as a result. What also shows strongly through the data are the multiple, connected disruptions to construction of a Muslim Self brought by terrorism, and ways in which these new tensions are resolved. This section considers how Muslims deal with disruptive uncertainties by re-positioning the Self in various ways.

Dialogical Tension for the Muslim Self. By declaring themselves Muslims and acting on behalf of Islam, the terrorists raised issues about what it means to call oneself a Muslim post 7/7 and 9/11. In

extract 5, Maya illustrates the disruption to collective identity by first voicing the imagined position

of Muslims who support terrorism and then commenting on how bad this position makes her feel as

a Muslim herself:

Extract 5

3493	Maya	or the people who hate .. Americans.
3494	Mod	mm hm.
3495	Yasmina	..extremists.
3496	Daania	extremists.
3497	Maya	yeah.
3498		.. they would say <Q yes Q>.
3499		..er,
3500		<Q they deserve it Q>.
3501		..(2.0) and it's Muslims saying that,
3502		…(1.0) and you feel like,
3503		<Q oh my God Q>,

(London, Muslim women)

Maya responds to her voicing of an imagined extremist justification (3500), with oh my god

(3503), suggesting strong despair, disapproval or horror at claims by terrorists to be acting in the

name of Islam. British Muslims, in order to deal with the disruption and achieve a new stabilisation

in the dialogically constructed Self, search for a way to position themselves as Muslim but, at the

same time, as different from the terrorists. One response from Muslim participants was to declare

that terrorist attacks are contrary to the authoritative voice of 'true' Islam. They do this explicitly

(extracts 6 and 7) and through metaphors which position terrorists, not as acting from within Islam,

but as outside it: using religion as a weapon or a shield. Positioning terrorists as outside Islam

allows non-violent British Muslims to remain 'inside'.

Extract 6

3697   Aalia   I don't think the Muslim religion,

3698   really allows it,

3699   either.

3700   Maya   they use it as a shield,

(London, Muslim women)

Extract 7

612   Aneesa Islam doesn't say,

613   go around killing people.

614   [[you know what I mean]]?

615   xxx   [[yeah]].

616   Haifa   and then,

617   with them doing what they're doing,

618   they're using Islam,

619   as well.

620   as a weapon.

621   and it's really not fair,

622   because,

623   the people that are genuinely --

624   you know,

625   are Islamic,

(Leeds, Muslim women)

Dialogical tension is here resolved by positioning terrorists as outside Islam. Another such

strategy appeared across Muslim focus groups, in which terrorists are again differentiated from

other Muslims but this time within the larger category. In this process, 'good Muslims' (*people that

are genuinely .. Islamic*) are separated from 'bad Muslims' who carry out terrorism. This 'moral

splitting' of the category Muslim appeared again and again in talk, often overlapping with the

inside/outside Islam differentiation seen above.

In extract 8, Sarfraz does moral splitting through positioning terrorists as *not everybody* but

only *bad onions in the sack*. This metaphor parallels the *rotten apple in the barrel*, which was also

used, expressing both the common-sense notion that evil co-exists with good, and the metaphorical

notion that morally bad ideas spread through a social group like rottenness through a container of

fruit or vegetables.

Extract 8

572	Sarfraz	why is it being blamed on us,
573		.. what's--
574		(2.0) why are Muslims being targeted?
575		all right,
576		the people who are doing this,
577		s- ..they call themselves so-called Muslims,
578		...but it's not everybody.
579		.. you know,
580		there are --
581		there are bad onions in every sack

(London, Muslim men)

Alongside moral splitting, the reference to so-called Muslims (577) seems to position the

terrorists as outside Islam. These two strategies for resolving dialogical tension for the Muslim Self

– creating an inside/outside Islam differentiation and moral splitting – co-occur in people's talk,

even though logically exclusive. Such variability is characteristic of complex systems finding new

stabilisation following disruption. One or other strategy might prevail in the longer term but, short

term, both occur. Moral splitting will be seen again later as a strategy used by non-Muslims.

Dialogical Tension for the British Muslim Self. By attacking in London, terrorists created a

further disruption to the identity of British Muslims who were, as a result of terrorism, now seen as

a risk to Britain despite being *loyal citizens* (a phrase used by one of the participants – see also

extract 14). They can no longer simply think of themselves as British but have to realise that others

may position them differently. Farid describes this change in awareness as a shift from monolithic

to hybrid identity, from *British* (1341) to *British Muslims* (1342).

 Extract 9

1338	Farid	you know,
1339		my children suddenly have realised,
1340		that,
1341		..not only they are British,
1342		..they are British Muslims.
1343		.. that is ..what has happened.
1344		that suddenly they have realised,
1345		<Q oh I am a Muslim Q>.
1346		..until now,
1347		they were living,
1348		… (2.0) as if they were any other British youngster.
1349		..but now they particularly feel it.
1350		..so that,
1351		..age of innocence,
1352		has suddenly.. disappeared.

(London, Muslim men)

The children's sudden realisation of their altered position is heard through Farid's voicing,

oh I am a Muslim (1345). The summarising metaphor in the coda of this narrative, *that age of*

innocence has suddenly disappeared (1351-2), evokes a conventionalised sense of the idyll that a

parent might wish childhood to be, while also being, in a way, literally true of the time before 9/11 and 7/7. The disruption of terrorism leads to a shifting and re-organising as people realise that they must take account of the position being assigned to them by others. For Farid's children this entails a re-vitalising of their Muslim voice.

The social identities of British Muslims have to respond to dialogical tensions created by new uncertainties, in particular to being positioned by non-Muslims. This section described how resolutions of these tensions are offered by moral splitting and differentiating inside Islam from outside, at a group level, and by revitalising multiple positions and voices at an individual level. In the next section, positioning of Muslims by non-Muslims in response to terrorism is considered in more detail.

Lumping Muslims as Other

Lumping is a kind of positioning, a process of social categorizing, that downplays variability by bundling disparate people into a single block (Zerubavel, 1996). Like splitting, lumping involves moral attributions, usually negative. It appears in the data as a frequent and accepted response to uncertainty, only contested by other participants in one or two instances. The lumping of Muslims constructed the Other as various social groups, and was almost always associated with moral arguments for distancing from, and reducing empathy with, the lumped Other.

Muslim participants described the experience of being lumped as metaphorically *BEING LABELLED*. They feel their lack of agency in being not just positioned in a group which simplistically conflates terrorists with Muslims, but, more strongly, labelled and marked out as such.

Extract 10

577	Yasmina	…(6.0) just the fact that you're branded.
578		…you're grouped with them.
579		regardless of what you think.
580		..or are.

581		you're just --
582		you're just,
583		assumed to be one of them.

(London, Muslim women)

Extract 11

1478	Haifa	<Q the Muslims Q>,
1479		they'll just label all of us,
1480		won't they.
1481		<Q the Muslims .
1482		this is what the Muslims have done Q>.

(Leeds, Muslim women)

Extract 12

643	Aalia	..terrorism is associated with Muslims,
644		people will look down on you,
645		..however hard you try,
646		for example,
647		to do anything for the country,
648		when as a person,
649		.. it will never h- be highlighted,
650		just because you have got .. trademark,
651		that you're Muslim.

(London, Muslim women)

The positioning and negative labelling of Muslims by the more powerful social group, heard in the above extracts, was not monolithic. Sometimes UK Muslims were lumped as Muslims-and-terrorists; sometimes they were inaccurately lumped with people from other Asian heritage communities and religions. In extract 13, Aasif uses a hypothetical and typifying scenario to

describe his experience of being lumped by *outsiders* to his community in Southall, an area of

London.

Extract 13

1507	Aasif	if you're a brown-skinned --
1508		erm,
1509		…(1.0) around many of the areas,
1510		… say for example,
1511		erm,
1512		… say Southall,
1513		for example,
1514		.. that's a majority of Asian .. community there,
1515		.. there's probably a majority of Sikhs there.
1516	Sarfraz	yes it is.
1517	Aasif	and there's Muslims there.
1518		…(2.0) but the if the er,
1519		.. the outsiders come,
1520		..say the English,
1521	Khalid	…(2.0) BNP.
1522	Aasif	yeah <<@>> if they come,
1523		you know,
1524		..you're brown,
1525	xx	that's it,
1526	Aasif	..<Q you're a Paki mate Q>
	[LAUGHTER]	
1527	xx	that's it.

(London, Muslim men)

The opening phrase of the narrative, *if you're a brown-skinned*, is, given what follows, most likely a voicing of a lumping being made by others. Positioning through the social marker of colour, *you're brown* (1524), is done by *outsiders* (1519) or *the English* (1520). As an alternative to colour, lumping by outsiders might use inaccurate ethnicity, *a Paki* (1526). The inaccuracies in lumping contrast with his own, more precise, sequence of references to community 'insiders' in lines 1514-17: from ethnicity (*Asian...community*) to religious sub-groups within the ethnic community (*Sikhs and Muslims*). The outsider categorisation is further specified to *the English* (1520), and Khalid adds *BNP* (1521), the right wing British National Party. The closed positioning implied by the lumping is echoed in the repeated syntax of 1524 and 1526: *you're X,* and in the response of an unidentified participant, *that's it*. The lumping is not just inaccurate but firmly fixed and not open to negotiation.

Sometimes British Muslims are lumped by non-Muslim participants with recently arrived asylum seekers and refugees, despite the fact that some Muslim communities have lived in UK for three or more generations. This, the most extreme lumping, was accompanied by the most extreme negative evaluations, and in several groups coincided with mention of the storyline of white discrimination arising from extreme liberalism.

Extract 14

1903	Phil	asylum seekers come in the coun- --
1904		.. into the country,
1905		… they get a house,
1906		… they get a mobile phone,
1907		… they even get a new car,
1908		.. right.
1909	xx	yeah X
1910	Phil	up to t- --
1911		up to' equivalent,

1912	I think it were fifteen hundred pound,
1913	.. for a car,
1914	.. bought for 'em,
1915	.. and put through the test.
1916	.. if we go to another country,
1917	do we get anything like that?

(Leeds, non-Muslim men 2)

Inaccurate information about payments to asylum seekers (which, in reality, are only very small) is presented as fact; in 1912 Phil seems to be trying to recall where he had heard the information, implying ratification by an external source. Lumping of this type often draws, explicitly or implicitly, on such 'circulating stories'. These cultural-level narratives are often generated and maintained by the media. Although based on inaccurate information, they feed into social prejudices and people's fears, and become, for some social groups, accepted as common knowledge, carrying a judgement about what is right and wrong. The 'rich asylum seeker' constructed in extract 14 is one of several circulating stories appealed to in the discussions.

Although lumping in its most general form of grouping or categorising disparate things together, is a widespread human cognitive process (Zerubavel, 1996), the 'moral lumping' that is a malignant positioning in response to social disruption, appears to be more dangerous (Sabat, 2003). Lumping British Muslims with terrorists or with other ethnic, religious or social groups can both reflect and reinforce the assumptions, prejudices, and lack of understanding / knowledge of those doing the lumping. The risk is of dehumanising the Other and thus increasing the possibility of violence against them (Halpern & Weinstein, 2004; Kinvall, 2004). Increased suspicion of the Other co-occurs widely with lumping.

Responses to Lumping

     The Muslim in disguise. The data contains several accounts of Muslims who deny or disguise their Muslim identity in certain public situations as a response to lumping assumptions that might be made by others. They adopt a deceptive positioning for protection, acting according to a storyline in which being seen as Muslim is potentially dangerous.

     Fahima describes how her husband, a taxi driver, will sometimes, especially late at night with customers who look *rough*, deny his Muslim religion and instead suggest he is Hindu or Sikh, taking advantage of the inability of his customers to know the difference.

Extract 15

2926	Fahima	if they look really rough ,
2927		and they've asked him that,
2928		<Q are you a Muslim Q>,
2929		[[[he'll say <Q no Q> to 'em,
2930		yeah]]]
2931	xx	[[[XXXX]]]
2932	Fahima	i- if they've asked what religion,
2933		like,
2934		he's lied,
2935		and said <Q I'm Hindu Q>,
2936		or <Q I'm Sikh Q>.

                             (Leeds, Muslim women)

     Muslims applying for jobs report being advised not to be too accurate about their identity and to change their first name to appear less obviously Muslim.

Extract 16

1532	Daania	and he said to me,
1533		somebody had told him,

CONSTRUCTION OF SELF AND OTHER AFTER TERRORISM   1

1534   [that <Q don't write Samir [FAMILY NAME] Q>.

…

1537   you know Samir is a,

1538   ..typical Muslim name.

…

1541   [and this is true as God],

1542   when he applied as Sam [family name],

1543   ..he got interviews,

(London, Muslim women)

Muslims also report being newly aware of the potential effect of their appearance on other people. One reports a friend deciding not turn up in person for a visa extension application because he had a beard and thought that increased his chances of being rejected, so sent the application by post. Another described her friend not being able to wear her hijab when doing her social work job.

Disguising one's membership of the newly suspect grouping is a response to being positioned that derives from the asymmetry of social power (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007; Linnell, 1990); possible negative or violent reactions of the majority Other feel sufficiently significant to reduce explicit statements of collective identity by some minority British Muslims. Others respond differently to this tension.

Being constructed as dangerous, and resisting construction. In a kind of visual lumping, increased suspicion towards those who outwardly appear Muslim was widely reported as a response from non-Muslims, and sometimes from Muslims too. Distinguishing features of the 7/7 bombers – the rucksacks in which they carried explosives, and their beards – become symbolic and generate a new voice of suspicion in people's minds. In extract 17, the stranger on the bus with a rucksack has potential to be part of a terrorism storyline: setting and character suggest a vague but frightening plot and outcome – if something did happen. The imagined voice of family chiding after the potential event serves to prompt her to get off a bus early:

Extract 17

3006	Emma	[I got on a bus],
3007	Iris	[X walk off]
3008	Emma	to go to work,
3009		and a weird chap,
3010		got on with this rucksack,
3011		and you know,
3012		you- you --
3013		it brings it back into your mind.
3014	xxx	yeah.
3015	Emma	and I actually did get off ,
3016		two stops before,
3017		I was supposed to get off.
3018		because it makes you--
3019		makes you panic.
3020		and it's like,
3021		well,
3022		if I don't get off,
3023		and I take that risk,
3024		then if something did happen,
3025		touch wood it never does,
3026		you know,
3027		people would be thinking,
3028		<Q oh well,
3029		why didn't she get off Q>,

(Leeds, non-Muslim Women 2)

Emma is frightened by her own imagined narrative, constructed on the basis of seeing a *chap with a rucksack*. In an interesting parallel to this account, a Muslim man reports a similar experience on public transport from the other perspective. In a literal positioning and re-positioning, Sarfraz responds to someone moving away from him by changing his own seat to stay close, thus making a point about his innocence and the insult he felt from the other man's behaviour:

Extract 18

946	Sarfraz	after ..7/7,
947		I usually travel on a train,
948		from [LOCATION] to City Euston,
949		.. and er,
950		.. I've --
951		..I think it was just ..four or five days after that,
952		I went into work,
953		..I went into the station,
954		I sat on the train,
955		.. and there was this white guy,
956		..sitting right across me,
957		.. I was carrying a rucksack,
958	xx	oh God <@>
959	Sarfraz	a bag,
960		I'm an accountant,
961		.. and er,
962		..he looked at me,
963		..he looked at my beard,
964		.. he looked at my bag,
965		.. he just stood up and walked away,

966		I said <Q what the hell Q>.
967	Aasif	X the guy who was on the news,
968		as well,
969		with a rucksack.
970	ALL	<@ @>
971	Sarfraz	and you know what I did?
972		I followed him,
973		and I sat there beside him.
974	ALL	[<@>]
975	Sarfraz	[in the next table].
976		he was pretty uncomfortable,
977		but I made sure I sat beside.
978		you know,
979		this is what can happen.
980		it's--
981		because,
982		if --
983		it was me,
984		..an adult.
985		what-- what could that ..scene --
986		what sort of any impact,
987		would a child have,
988		if he saw that?

(London, Muslim men)

Sarfraz's action is both individual response and made on behalf of the collective, personified

in 987 as an imagined child watching the scene. His change of seat to follow *the white guy* is a

second order positioning in which he negotiates (physically) the positioning of himself as a potential terrorist which the man had made by moving away. This kind of challenge by second-order positioning is an alternative response to disguising one's Muslim identity, open to those who feel strongly enough to overcome power asymmetry.

Empathic responses. Some empathic understanding of lumping strategies was expressed by Muslim participants. In the *them-us* comparison of extract 19, Yasmina imagines herself in the position of the non-Muslim Other, using Jews to construct an analogical parallel in which lumping the Other is natural and inevitable:

Extract 19

1805	Yasmina	I don't blame them,
1806		for having a stereotypical,
1807		.. erm,
1808		…view towards us,
1809		because ..quite --
1810		if- .. if another community did it,
1811		.. if the Jews did it,
1812		.. then we would hate them as well,
1813		..so--
1814	Zaara	yeah it's true.
1815	Yasmina	..it's just normal.
1816		I suppose.

(London, Muslim women)

Yasmina here, and other Muslim participants elsewhere, empathises cognitively with the more powerful social group. A simplistic in-group/out-group distinction would not predict this, and it indicates the complex array of social identities that British Muslims are used to working within, and from which they respond to the new situation.

Empathy was expressed by non-Muslim participants, who do not necessarily like the newly suspicious voice that they experience in themselves, by imagining its effect on those suspected.

Extract 20

1697	Amy	I've got no first hand experience of it.
1698		I don't know anybody who's .. Muslim,
1699		or anything.
1670		.. but I can sympathize,
1671		.. with what they must .. be feeling,
1672		just from my own suspicion,

(London, non-Muslim women 1)

Extract 21

773	Celia	the majority of the doctors,
774		I was in hospital with,
775		they were Muslims.
776		and the nurses.
777		and we got onto this debate about terrorism,
778		and how it affected their lives,
779		and they said that it does.
780		people do react,
781		and treat them with suspicion.
782		and it--
783		it's very hurtful for them.
784	xx	it must be really hard for 'em.

(Leeds, non-Muslim women 1)

Celia's empathy with Muslims experiencing the new suspicion is supported by an important factor that influenced non-Muslim responses to terrorism – their personal connections with Muslims.

Personal Connections in the Face of Disruption

Throughout the data, it is person-person relationships that support stability following disruption from terrorism; where individuals have a strong work relationship or friendship, they find ways of maintaining it through disruption brought by 7/7. Some, such as a Jewish employer of a Muslim man, explicitly protect established relationships. Not all relationships survive unscathed, and those that do require dialogical work, including second order positioning. Once again, moral splitting becomes a key strategy.

Zoe's friendship with a Muslim (22) not only maintains stability, but also supports her attempts to understand how the bombers managed to act without their families' knowledge:

Extract 22

1572	Zoe	I've got a friend who's Muslim,
1573		and her parents have no idea about her life.
1574		the--
1575		she goes to work,
1576		and gets changed every day.
1577		and she's got a--
1578		a white British boyfriend,
1579		who they don't know anything about.
1580		so I can believe that,
1581		parents don't know.

(Leeds, non-Muslim women 1)

Yasmina, on the other hand, recounts with disapproval how her friend now lumps all Muslims as *mental* and *crazy*.

Extract 23

1870	Yasmina	..and I've got an English friend,
1871		and she says that,
1872		all Muslims are just <@> ..terrorists,
1873		and all mental,
1874		.. and all --
1875		..they're all crazy.
1876		[that's what she said].
1877	Zaara	[they talk everywhere].
1878		.. in the bus,
1879		[[in the train.
1880	Yasmina	[[and she tells me on my face]],
1881		and I'm like,
1882		<Q don't be stupid Q>.
1883		but she goes,
1884		<Q oh not you Q>,
1885		and I said,
1886		<Q yeah well,
1887		that's not good enough Q>.

(London, Muslim women)

Here, disruption from terrorism brings interpersonal disruption between friends. The English friend resolves dialogical tension between her Muslim friend and her new view of Muslims through a splitting that separates Yasmina from other Muslims: *not you* (1884). Yasmina challenges this position as *not good enough* (1887). Other Muslim women recounted similar disappointment with friends or work colleagues who seem to suddenly ignore the complexity of their cultural voices, that

they had thought established over the years, and now position them simply as Muslims, as if this aspect became so large as to hide all others.

Moral splitting is the most frequent reported strategy used by non-Muslims to resolve dialogical tensions that the 7/7 bombings produced for the construction of Self and personally-known Muslim Other. In extract 24, Carol, who comes from the same area as the bombers and has Muslim neighbours, positions and re-positions Muslims and terrorists until she reaches a construction that feels comfortable.

Extract 24

1242	Carol	I don't think,
1243		they are the religious people.
1244		I I don't think they're normal Muslims,
1245		that are doing this.
1246	xx	no
1247	Carol	because normal Muslims aren't like this .
1248		these are--
1249		these are brainwashed,
1250	Edith	the- these are [what]
1251	Carol	[people]
1252		to me [[that are mentally ill]]
1253	Edith	[[what everybody thought were]]
1254		normal Muslims,
1255		who lived in --
1256		in our--
1257		just round in Bradford,
1258		Lee- [specific place],
1259		where you live.

1260	xx	mm
1261	Edith	you know.
1262	Carol	but I didn't think,
1263		that's what normal Muslims were.
1264		I never ever thought,
1265		that's what normal Muslims were.
1266	Edith	no I I don- no
1267	Carol	normal mu-
1268		the--
1269		normal Muslims,
1270		you know,
1271		they are different.
1272		they've got their own beliefs,
1273		they've got their own ways
1274		but,
1275		normal Muslims don't go blowing up people.
1276		those people that blow up people,
1277		are not to me normal Muslims.

(Leeds, non-Muslim women 2)

The dialogical work involves a moral splitting between (a) *people who do this/that blow up people* and (b) *the religious people/normal Muslims*, who Edith characterises as people living locally (1254-59). The first group are described as *brainwashed* (1249) and *mentally ill* (1252). This is a frequent characterisation of the terrorists across all focus groups; participants seem to resist the possibility that the bombers could have been acting with full mental capacity and responsibility, as if no fully human person could carry out a terrorist act. This positioning constructs the terrorist as an abject-Other (Kinnvall, 2004; Kristeva, 1982), distanced from both Self (subject) and Other

(object). Dialogical tension is then resolved, since *normal Muslims* can be positioned as Other, *different* with *their own beliefs and ways* (1271-3), but close enough to the Self to remain those who were known before. In Muslim focus groups, dialogic construction of terrorists as *brainwashed* abject-Other helped to resolve tension for participants of how families like themselves might have harboured young men ready to kill.

Conclusions and Implications

The London bombings brought global terrorism suddenly close to home, and for Leeds participants, questions raised about how young Muslims might become terrorists were uncomfortably local. This article has examined how new uncertainties impacted on social identities, behaviours and attitudes through shifting dialogical constructions of Self and Other.

Adopting a complex dynamic systems perspective allowed for the central concerns of "identity, "social groups" and "inter-group contact" to be understood as fluid, interacting and multiply layered rather than as stable, bounded or fixed. The study shows not just that identities/groups are multiple and fluid but how people dialogically occupy multiple voices and positions, sometimes simultaneously. In contemporary Britain, individuals relate in many different ways to others encountered in neighbourhoods, workplaces and socially. Even the strongest social identities that some people spoke from, which can be characterised as 'white, working class and local' and 'Muslim with strong religious commitment', are affected by encounters and experience with people from beyond those groups. Moral splitting and lumping in dialogical construction of Self and Other were major strategies by which non-Muslims and Muslims worked towards new stabilizations.

Muslim in-group bias was much less intense than might be predicted by Social Identity theory, apparently interrupted by other identity aspects, including Britishness, living in a particular neighborhood, or personal relationships.

After disruption by terrorism, people have to make sense of new social landscapes. Responses were shown to be more positive, imaginative and empathic than might be feared or

predicted. Participants not only changed how they see the Other, but also reflected quite extensively on how the Other might now position or construct them. These processes essentially concern empathy. Both Muslims and non-Muslims reported or made explicit gestures of empathy towards the perceived Other, e.g. historical analogies invoked for the positive purpose of understanding how the Other might feel.

How then can a society support social resilience and protect against fragility? The study suggests that it should be helpful to provide space for empathic responses to be publicly heard, while also taking steps to reduce suspicion among people who have lived together for years. By analysing discourse strategies, the study suggests that mediators and others with a concern for fairness in public, or private, debate might usefully attend to moral splitting and lumping, noticing and challenging as appropriate.

Instances of positive action reported by participants – the boss explicitly supporting Muslims in his firm; Muslims challenging lumping by friends or strangers; non-Muslims turning empathy for Muslim neighbours into supportive words or actions – suggest implications around moral responsibility and leadership committed to avoiding negative outcomes after such events. Moral leadership would include challenging negative and inaccurate circulating stories in the media that support negative lumping; encouraging people to use their social power to sustain positive relationships in situations despite wider social disruption; bringing to light examples of positive individual action in the face of risk; externalising and challenging the voices and moral reasoning that people internalise and that lead to reduced or negative interactions with others.

Underlying most of the implications are emotional factors. While fear is a normal and expected response to terrorism, other emotional responses may be irrational, exaggerated or unpleasant. However, all emotions feel real to those who experience them and, as demonstrated, influence behaviour and attitudes. A final implication is that emotional responses must be taken seriously, heard and acknowledged, before they can be challenged or channelled into more positive social responses to negative events.

Notes

1. The Living with Uncertainty project: www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/livingwithuncertainty/

2. A full review of the literature on empathy and of the various aspects of empathy being considered across the project can be found in Cameron (2011a).

3 Transcription conventions:

,	short pause or slight fall in intonation
.	pause or fall in intonation
?	rising intonation
..	very short pause (under half second, approx.)
…	short pause (under one second, approx.)
(1.0)	one second pause
(2.0)	<Q…Q> quoted speech or thought, imagined or actual
[	overlapping talk
XX	indecipherable talk or speaker

4 Italic small capitals are used for labels of systematic metaphors, i.e. verbal metaphors connected across a discourse event.

5 Words and phrases taken from the transcribed data are in italics.

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