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# Encountering Misrecognition: Being Mistaken for Being Muslim

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Exploring both debates about misrecognition and explorations of encounters, this article focuses on the experiences of ethnic and religious minority young people who are mistaken for being Muslim in Scotland. We explore experiences of encountering misrecognition, including young people's understandings of, and responses to, such encounters. Recognizing how racism and religious discrimination operate to marginalize people—and how people manage and respond to this—is crucial in the struggle for social justice. Our focus is on young people from a diversity of ethnic and religious minority groups who are growing up in urban, suburban, and rural Scotland, 382 of whom participated in forty-five focus groups and 224 interviews. We found that young Sikhs, Hindus, and other south Asian young people as well as black and Caribbean young people were regularly mistaken for being Muslim. These encounters tended to take place at school, in taxis, at the airport, and in public spaces. Our analysis points to a dynamic set of interconnected issues shaping young people's experiences of misrecognition across a range of mediatized, geopoliticized, and educational spaces. Geopolitical events and their representation in the media, the homogenization of the south “Asian” community, and the lack of visibility offered to non-Muslim ethnic and religious minority groups all worked to construct our participants as “Muslims.” Young people demonstrated agency and creativity in handling and responding to these encounters, including using humor, clarifying their religious affiliation, social withdrawal, and ignoring the situation. Redressing misrecognition requires institutional change to ensure parity of participation in society. **Key Words:** *encounters, geopolitics, identity, Islamophobia, race.*

本文同时探讨有关误认的辩论与探索遭遇，聚焦苏格兰来自少数族裔与信仰背景、并被误认为穆斯林的年轻人之经验。我们探讨遭遇误认的经验，包含年轻人对于此般遭遇的理解与回应。理解种族主义与信仰歧视边缘化人们之运作——以及人们如何应对并回应此般运作——是争取社会正义的关键。我们聚焦在苏格兰的城市，郊区与乡村长大，并来自各种少数族裔与信仰群体的年轻人，其中三百八十二位参与了四十五次的焦点团体和两百二十四次的访谈。我们发现，年轻的锡克教和印度教徒，以及其他南亚年轻人与黑人和加勒比的年轻人，经常被误认为穆斯林。这些遭遇倾向在学校，出租车，机场，以及公共空间中发生。我们的分析指出在一系列受中介的、地缘政治化的和教育空间中，形塑年轻人被误认经验的相互连结的议题动态组合。地缘政治事件及其于媒体上的再现，对南“亚”社群的均值化，以及对于非穆斯林的少数族裔与宗教团体的可辨识性之缺乏，共同建构了我们的参与者的“穆斯林”身份。年轻人在处理与回应这些遭遇时，证实了行动力与创造力，包括运用幽默，澄清他们的信仰联系，社交退缩，以及忽略此般情形。纠正误认必须要有制度性的改变，以确保社会参与的平等。 **关键词：** 遭遇，地缘政治，身份认同，伊斯兰恐惧症，种族。

Al explorar los dos debates acerca del reconocimiento equivocado y las exploraciones de encuentros, este artículo se enfoca en las experiencias de jóvenes pertenecientes a minorías étnicas y religiosas, quienes en Escocia son confundidos como musulmanes. Exploramos las experiencias de encuentros con reconocimiento equivocado, incluyendo las percepciones que tienen los jóvenes de tales encuentros y sus respuestas a los mismos. Tener en mente el modo como el racismo y la discriminación religiosa obran contra la gente marginada—y el modo como la gente se comporta para responder a eso—es algo crucial en la lucha por la justicia social. Nuestra atención está centrada en jóvenes de una diversidad de grupos minoritarios étnicos y religiosos que están creciendo en la Escocia urbana, suburbana y rural, 382 de los cuales participaron en cuarenta y cinco grupos focales y en 224 entrevistas. Descubrimos que los jóvenes sikhs, hindúes y otra gente joven del sur de Asia, lo mismo que jóvenes negros

caribeños, regularmente son confundidos como musulmanes. Este tipo de encuentros tienden a ocurrir en la escuela, en taxis, en el aeropuerto y en otros espacios públicos. Nuestro análisis apunta a un conjunto dinámico de asuntos interconectados que configuran las experiencias de reconocimiento equivocado de los jóvenes a través de un ámbito de espacios mediatizados, geopolitizados y educativos. Los eventos geopolíticos y su representación en los medios, la homogeneización de la comunidad del sur “asiático”, y la falta de visibilidad ofrecida por los grupos de minorías étnicas y religiosas no musulmanas, todo ello contribuyó a construir a nuestros participantes como “musulmanes”. Los jóvenes mostraron diligencia y creatividad en el manejo y respuesta a estos encuentros, incluso con humor, haciendo claridad sobre su afiliación religiosa, retirada social e ignorando la situación. Rectificar el reconocimiento equivocado requiere cambio institucional que asegure paridad de participación en la sociedad. *Palabras clave:* encuentros, geopolítica, identidad, islamofobia, raza.

Debates about race and ethnicity have occupied a central place in social and cultural geographies for around sixty years now; researchers have charted the complex geographies of ethnic residential segregation (Smith 1989; Ellis, Wright, and Parks 2004; Phillips 2006; R. Johnston, Poulsen, and Forrest 2007), the spatialities of ethnic and racial identities (e.g., Ehrkamp 2008), and the significance and influence of whiteness (e.g., Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Vanderbeck 2006; Faria and Mollett 2016; Inwood and Bonds 2016). In the last couple of decades, we have witnessed an increasing interest in matters of faith among geographers who research issues of race and ethnicity, with most work here exploring the geographies of Muslim identities (e.g., Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008; Hopkins and Gale 2009; Gokariksel and Secor 2012; Mansson McGinty 2012; Dunn and Hopkins 2016). There is now some evidence of research in this area diversifying to include other minority faith groups (e.g., Mills 2012, 2015; Hopkins 2014). Closely related to ongoing debates about the urban geographies of race, ethnicity, and religion—and connected to concerns around multiculturalism, citizenship, and belonging (Fortier 2008; Nagel and Hopkins 2010; Chan 2010; Ehrkamp and Nagel 2012; Phillips 2015)—social and cultural geographers have recently been drawn to critically investigate the microgeographies, politics, and tensions associated with encountering “others” in the city (e.g., Askins 2016).

Some recent work about geographies of encounter refers to *contact theory*, which was initially developed by social psychologist Allport (1954), who argued that increased everyday contact among different social groups can enhance the relations between them, especially when the inequalities between such groups are also reduced. Valentine (2008) was concerned by the “worrying romanticization of urban encounter” in such work and pointed out that it can “implicitly reproduce a potentially naïve assumption that contact with ‘others’ necessarily translates into respect for difference” (325; see also Askins and Pain 2011). Wilson (2016) pointed

out that geographers have tended to focus on the value of encounters, the possibilities they hold in fostering social change, as well as their politics and spatiality. Furthermore, a key concern for geographers has focused on meaningful contact and the conditions and contexts required for this. For example, Mayblin, Valentine, and Andersson (2016) investigated meaningful encounters at an interfaith project with Muslim and Jewish youth cricket teams in the United Kingdom, and Leitner (2012) explored spaces of encounter between white residents and immigrants of color in rural Minnesota. Moreover, Wilson (2013) examined the role that a multicultural primary school plays as a significant location for encounters for both children and their parents in Birmingham, UK—sites where diversity is celebrated and tolerated yet also a locality where there can be hostility, racism, and questions over belonging. Other contexts in which such encounters have been explored include university campuses (Andersson, Sadgrove, and Valentine 2012), small towns (Leitner 2012), public spaces (Matejskova and Leitner 2011), public transport (Bissell 2016), and cafes (Jones et al. 2015).

Within this work about geographies of race, ethnicity, and religion as well as explorations of meaningful encounters, the voices of young people have occupied a somewhat constrained space. This contrasts with the plethora of work in human geography and neighboring disciplines about youth, ethnicity, and belonging (e.g., Back 1996; Mills 2012; Barber 2015b; May 2015). In this article, we focus specifically on encounters that are characterized by experiences of misrecognition to make an important contribution to debates about young people, multiculturalism, and ethnic diversity. We examine ethnic and religious minority young people’s experiences of, and responses to, being misrecognized as Muslim; more specifically, we explore the spatialities and forms of misrecognition as well as responses to encountering misrecognition. These issues are important for geographers, as they are about the challenges and complexities of living together and

sharing space; moreover, these issues are of relevance to policymakers, practitioners, and others who are working toward creating tolerant, inclusive, and understanding communities.

Our focus in this article is on Scotland, a nation that has been grappling with its relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom and the ambiguity of its postdevolution status. On 18 September 2014, the Scottish independence referendum asked the question “Should Scotland be an independent country?” With a turnout of 84.6 percent, 55.3 percent of those who voted said “no” to independence (Hopkins 2015). The ambiguity of the Scottish context is further complicated by the ways in which residents in Scotland simultaneously experience the proimmigration rhetoric of the Scottish National Party and the conservative policies of the UK government where immigration matters are decided (as matters of immigration are not devolved to the Scottish Parliament). The 2011 Scottish Census included questions on both religion and ethnic group membership. For religion, respondents could select from the main world religions, with Christianity divided into Roman Catholic, Church of Scotland, and other Christian. For ethnic group, respondents have six choices: white, mixed or multiple ethnic groups, Asian, African, Caribbean or black, and other ethnic group. This provides a rich data set about ethnic and religious diversity. The 2011 census found that 4 percent of the Scottish population were from ethnic minority groups, with the largest group being the Asian population (particularly Pakistani), accounting for 3 percent of the population, or 141,000 people. In terms of religious minorities, just over 1 percent (77,000 people) identified as Muslim, with Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs accounting for a total of 0.7 percent of the population.

The young people whose experiences we focus on in this article are growing up in a “refashioned racial landscape” (Puar 2007, 180) where the racialization of religion (Dunn, Klocker, and Salabay 2007) has resulted in racialized and ethnicized discourses being inflected with matters of religion and belief; in particular, stereotypes about Islam and Muslims have become interchangeable with debates about race, ethnicity, and belonging. “Muslims thus become the ultimate ‘Other,’ transfixed through the racialization of religious identity to stand at the margins: undesired, irredeemable, alien” (Alexander 2002, 564). Additionally, the political and policy backdrop to the racialization of religion focuses on debates about community cohesion, interethnic interactions, the problematic stereotyping as “suspect” of Muslim communities, and deliberations over the prevention

of Islamic extremism (e.g., Fortier 2008; Mythen, Walklate, and Khan 2009; Spalek 2013). These interweaving debates have been heavily critiqued by many (e.g., Chan 2010; Walklate and Mythen 2015); a useful example is Phillips’s (2006) challenge to the simplistic discourse that Muslims living in British cities self-segregate and live parallel lives when in reality their residential choices are shaped by a diversity of factors, including racism, community safety, and the availability of housing.

We initially explore debates about misrecognition and the relational nature of recognition and misrecognition in the context of encountering others. Following this, we briefly introduce the study on which this article draws before exploring the experiences of ethnic and religious minority young people who are mistaken for being Muslim in Scotland. We consider the complex spatialities of misrecognition and the different responses of our participants to encountering misrecognition. Before concluding, we offer explanations for encountering misrecognition that include media coverage, geopolitical issues, and the homogenization of the Asian community. After explaining our methodological approach, we explore our participants’ experiences of misrecognition, after which we critically consider the everyday spaces in which these occur, including school, in taxis, at the airport, and in other public spaces. Drawing attention to young people’s agency, we then move on to consider four sets of responses to misrecognition that include using humor, clarifying religious affiliation, ignoring the situation, or engaging in a form of social withdrawal.

## Encountering Misrecognition

The focus on encounters has tended to center either on whether or not encounters with different groups take place or on the quality and nature of such interactions, whether they are characterized as positive, meaningful, and welcoming or as negative, toxic, or harmful (Wilson 2016). Surprisingly little has been said about encounters that involve misrecognition or misidentification, although a small group of scholars provide conceptual insights about the nature, form, and meaning of misrecognition. Most notably, Taylor (1994) noted that in encountering misrecognition, “a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (25). Moreover, to encounter misrecognition

“is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down upon or devalued by others’ attitudes, beliefs or representations” (Fraser 2000, 113); rather, it is to be “denied the status of a full partner in social interactions, as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem” (Fraser 2000, 113–14). Going further, Taylor (1994) suggested that “misrecognition shows not just a lack of respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred” (26).

To misrecognize is to “project qualities onto something” (Berlant 2011, 122) and is about fantasizing about others to make them come across as understandable to the person who is engaging in a process of misrecognition. “Misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) describes the psychic process by which fantasy recalibrates what we encounter so that we can imagine that something or someone can fulfil our desire” (Berlant 2011, 122). Encountering misrecognition is therefore a serious matter given the “central role that forms of misrecognition play in shaping present and future cross-cultural relations” (Martineau 2012, 162). As Martineau (2012) cautioned, misrecognition closes off opportunities and possibilities for cross-cultural engagement and interaction and so has significant consequences for people’s ability to live together and share everyday places comfortably. In discussing encountering misrecognition, it is important to acknowledge the interconnections of this with racial “passing,” which involves identifying with and presenting as being a part of one group while denying ancestry of another. As Barber (2015a) noted, “Scholarship on passing recognises that it can take on a variety of forms and may serve a range of different purposes and intentionalities” (528; see also Kennedy 2001; Kroeger 2003; Barber 2015b). Barber (2015a) observed that racial or ethnic passing might be employed for a number of reasons but often it is about looking for acceptance or avoiding stigma. Debates about passing are closely interrelated with those about misrecognition, but we focus on misrecognition here because our participants tended to reflect on being misrecognized or mistaken for being Muslim (and there were no cases of people who talked about passing as Muslim).

In understanding the consequences of encountering misrecognition, it is useful to think about it relationally by exploring what is meant by recognition. Ahmed (2000) noted that “to recognise means: to know again, to acknowledge and to admit” (22), and Taylor (1994) commented that “due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need”

(26). Without recognition—and by encountering misrecognition—marginalized groups can suffer, as such interactions “often painfully fill their discursive consciousness . . . making them feel noticed, marked, or conversely invisible, not taken seriously, or worse, demeaned” (Young 1990, 133–34). We see recognition and misrecognition as coconstituted, situational, relational, and imbued with power; they exist on a continuum, are highly unstable, and are contingent on space and time. Although we focus in this article on misrecognition, studies about recognition (e.g., Fraser 2000) are also important in helping us to understand the complexities of both recognition and misrecognition and the relationalities between them.

Given the severe consequences associated with encountering misrecognition, it is surprising how little attention has been paid to it by social and cultural geographers as well as other researchers. There are some exceptions to this, most of which focus on misrecognition—or what Willis (2010) referred to as “social collisions”—in relation to gender, social class, or both (e.g., Skeggs 2001; Doan 2010). There are also some examples of researchers, particularly in transnational or transcultural research, having specific identities misrecognized when in the field (e.g., L. Johnston 2010; Fisher 2015). One of the most insightful contributions is Archer’s (2012) discussion of the misrecognition relating to the class status of minority ethnic parents and their children; she pointed out that the “positioning of ME [minority ethnic] groups as ‘working class’ might be read as a form of misrecognition, since it serves to legitimate the symbolic location of power and class privilege within the white middle class” (142). She argued that racialized and classed inequalities are supported by the misrecognition of the success of minority ethnic groups while also pointing out that this potentially hides racism by reducing it to being only about class.

Alongside this clustering of work about classed and gendered misrecognitions, there is also a small but growing scholarship about people’s experiences of being misrecognized as Muslim. Puar (2007) referred to the “prolific creativity” (179) involved when people are attacked as a result of being mistaken for being Muslim:

Let us ponder for a moment the span of violence: verbal harassment (being called “bin Laden,” “son of bin Laden,” “Osama”), especially on the phone and while driving; tailgating; hate mail; defecating and urinating on Sikh gurdwaras, Islamic mosques and Hindu temples, leading in some cases to arson; blocking the entrance of a Sikh temple in Sacramento with a tractor and truck and jumping into the sacred holy water at the temple;

throwing bricks, gasoline bombs, garbage and other projectiles into the homes of Sikhs and Arabs and slashing car tires; death threats and bomb threats; fatal shootings of taxi drivers, the majority of whom have been turbaned Sikhs; verbal and physical harassment of primary and secondary school children, as well as foreign students on college campuses; and attacks with baseball bats, paintball guns, lit cigarettes and pigs' blood. (Puar 2007, 179)

There have been a number of studies in the United States from various disciplines about the damaging consequences that misrecognition has for the Sikh community, particularly following the events of 11 September 2001 (hereafter 9/11; Ahluwalia and Pelletiere 2010; Mahalingam 2012; Arora 2013). Related to this, Cashin (2010) observed that biases against Muslims are "more likely to be expressed explicitly" (127) compared to prejudices against other groups, which results in heightened racist exclusions for Muslims and others who are mistaken for being Muslim. In a recent report, it was noted that two thirds of the Sikh young people who participated in a survey conducted by the U.S.-based Sikh Coalition (2014) were subject to bullying at school, with children often being referred to as "terrorist" or "Bin Laden." Furthermore, turbaned Sikh children experienced bullying at school at a level twice the national average.

In summary, then, this brief discussion about misrecognition demonstrates its close relationship with ethnic passing as well as its relationality with recognition (Fraser 2000; Kennedy 2001). We have also highlighted the damage that misrecognition can do, especially when characterized by experiences of exclusion, marginalization, stigmatization, and violence. This is exhibited most clearly in research about the misrecognitions experienced by the Sikh community after 9/11; aside from this small body of work, there have been very few studies that have sought to advance theoretically informed empirical insights into people's experiences of misrecognition. This is the important contribution that this article makes. Before exploring ethnic and religious minority young people's encounters with being misrecognized as Muslim, we introduce our study and reflect on the methods we used.

## The Project

The data we draw on are from a large qualitative study of ethnic and religious minority young people in Scotland (see Hopkins et al. 2015; Botterill et al. 2016). One of the aims of this project was to explore

the issue of Islamophobia in relation to the experiences of young people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds in Scotland who are targeted because they look Muslim (Alexander 2004) and to explain how different religious, ethnic, and minoritized youth experience and understand Islamophobia and the impact of this on community relations, social cohesion, and integration. A total of 382 young people participated in the research during 2013 and 2014; forty-five focus groups and 223 interviews were conducted with young people who belonged to six different groups: Muslims, south Asian non-Muslims (e.g., Sikhs, Hindus), asylum seekers and refugees, international students, central and Eastern European migrants, and white Scottish young people. We recognize that these categories are in themselves problematic and many of them overlap. For example, many international students and some of the asylum seekers we worked with were also Muslim and so belonged to at least two of the categories we mentioned. We used these categories, however, as a way of organizing the data and were sensitive to the different identities and affiliations used by our participants; indeed, when we quote from them, we use their self-identified ethnicity where this was provided. All of the participants were between 12 and 25 years old when they took part in the research. In this article, we focus specifically on those participants whose embodiment of race, ethnicity, and religion led them to be mistaken for being Muslim.

Participants were recruited through a process of snowballing whereby initial contacts with schools, colleges, universities, religious groups, and community and voluntary organizations were then used to assist the team in identifying young people who might be interested in participating in the research. All participants were provided with an information sheet about the study; written consent was obtained from all participants and parental consent also was acquired for young people who were under sixteen years of age. The interviews focused on young people's everyday lives, their interactions with people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds in different spaces, their engagements with politics, and their multiple identities. All participants were given a reward voucher to thank them for taking the time to participate in the research. All of the focus groups and interviews were fully transcribed, coded using NVivo with specific themes—including identity, Islamophobia, misrecognition, and visible minorities—and then analyzed manually in further depth. The themes we explore in this article

represent significant issues that we identified through this process of analysis. When we quote directly from our participants, we use pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality; moreover, we have chosen to age band the participants rather than providing their precise age to further minimize the risk of them being identified. All of the focus groups and interviews were conducted by one of the authors of this article, all of whom share a commitment to antiracist research (Anthias and Lloyd 2002) that sensitively explores the experiences of ethnic and religious minority young people.

## Being Mistaken for Being Muslim

Young people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds referred to experiences of encountering misrecognition by being mistaken for being Muslim. These experiences varied in their nature and intensity, but all were characterized by a racist reading of the phenotypical features of our participants—such as their skin color, facial features, hair texture, and style—that problematically (and often incorrectly) associated them with specific countries of origin and with the Islamic faith. Many of these experiences of encountering misrecognition as Muslim could be seen to be commonsense, everyday, harmless encounters; however, regardless of the level and nature of these encounters, they all involve racist and exclusionary readings of the “other” (Leitner 2012; Kilomba 2013). Nearly all of the young Sikhs who participated in this research talked about being misrecognized as Muslim. Yasmin, a young Sikh woman, age nineteen to twenty-one, from Glasgow, said, “People do sort of mistake me for a Muslim sometimes, and I just have to say, ‘No, I am not!’” In a focus group in suburban Glasgow, a focus group participant said, “Even if you are Sikh they call you a Muslim,” and one of the other participants then said:

I remember when I first made like one of my friends like someone like two years ago and she was like, “What are you?” And I was like, “Well, Sikh.” She was like, “What like a Muslim?” And I was like, “No like Sikh.” And she was like, “Is that not the same as Muslim?” And I was just like, “Oh god, no!” And she was like, “I don’t get it, so you are Muslim.” “No.” People actually just think that if you are brown you are Muslim, and was in school and I was just like, and this was only like two years ago, she was like fifteen. And she didn’t even know what a Sikh was. I was just like, oh god! Ha ha. But I think that it is everywhere in Scotland. Obviously how bad it is will change but even in school I think that there is. (Sikh focus group, Westhills School, mixed)

Although this account might appear light-hearted, it is important to note that “those who question exercise a power relation that defines . . . the territory as theirs, drawing a clear boundary between You, the racial ‘Other,’ who is being questioned and has to explain, and we, the *whites*, who question and control” (Kilomba 2013, 66).

Many of our Hindu participants recalled similar experiences. A participant in a focus group with Hindu school students in suburban Glasgow clarified that “most people mistake me for Muslim,” and Aahna from the same school said this during an interview:

Uhm most of the time people think I’m Muslim. Ehm but like nobody ever. . . . It’s not like they say it just because . . . they’re not trying to stereotype they just don’t know that much about Hinduism and stuff . . . sometimes it’s like they’d say, “Happy Eid” and stuff, which I understand—it’s quite nice. If they thought I was Muslim that’s fair enough. Like they were never trying to like hurt me or anything. It was always like just trying to be nice. (Twelve to fifteen, interview, suburban Glasgow)

Such experiences of misrecognition were not only experienced by South Asian young people who follow Sikhism or Hinduism. For example, Donald (age twelve to fifteen) attended a Roman Catholic secondary school and has an Indian heritage. He explained:

Most people actually do [think I am Muslim] . . . our RE [Religious Education] teacher once thought I was a Muslim because of my skin color. Then, yeah and when I first came to this school some of my friends now were shocked that I was a Catholic. They thought I was Muslim as well.

He noted that “there’s not many brown-skinned open Catholics” and recalled, “Yeah, they keep on asking questions like ‘How long have you been a Catholic for?’ And like ‘Are your mum and dad Catholic?’ and stuff like that.” He claimed that he doesn’t “really mind, I kinda understand why they’d say . . . that. Like even when I see a brown person I, I kinda think they’re Muslim.” The extent of Donald’s experiences of racist misrecognition as Muslim is such that his legitimacy as a Catholic is regularly questioned, including the authenticity of his parents’ religiosity. Furthermore, Donald’s experiences demonstrate the ways in which religion has become racialized, as assumptions about his religiosity are made based on his perceived ethnicity (Dunn, Klocker, and Salabay 2007).

Black young people from Africa and the Caribbean also recalled encounters in which they were

misrecognized as Muslim. During a focus group with young black girls with African and Caribbean heritage, the following exchange took place:

Participant 1: Yeah that is another thing. Every time like they are, it has happened to me in this school actually as well actually. I will get my lunch, and the woman is like "It is not halal" ha ha. I say, "I am not a Muslim!"

Participant 2: I know. I get that all the time.

Participant 1: I laughed for like a little while, and she was like, "Why are you laughing?" I was like, "I am not Muslim" ha ha. And she was like, "What are you then?" And I was like, "I am Christian." And it was like, "Oh, right okay." It is okay, I understand, I get it a lot. She was like "it is fine." But most of the time in school, they will be like, "Why are you not off for Eid?" "I am not a Muslim!" (Black African girls focus group, Bayfield School)

In addition to South Asian and black young people, there were also a minority of cases where young Central and Eastern European migrants felt that they encountered misrecognition and were mistaken for being Muslim. This points to the ways in which young people who are often seen as "white" encounter misrecognition and are part of a recategorization and remaking of what it means to be white (Nayak 2012). For example, in a focus group with young men with diverse backgrounds in Slovakia, Romania, and the Czech Republic, one of the participants said, "Some people say I look Muslim because of the skin color," and his schoolmate responded, "Some of them because we look like Pakistani, we have got the same face, same skin color" (Slovakian/Romanian boys, Bayfield School). This could also be connected to the racialization of space (Leitner 2012) as many of these young people lived in an area of inner-city Glasgow that has been associated with the Pakistani Muslim community for the last forty years. We now explore where encountering misrecognition tends to take place.

## Spaces of Misrecognition

From our analysis, there were four interconnected locations that participants identified as being places where they encountered misrecognition: at school, in taxis, at the airport, and in other public spaces. These spaces are interconnected in the sense that they flow into, across, and out of each other and constitute the "throwntogetherness" (Massey 2005) of everyday

places. For our participants, experiences of misrecognition tended to take place when they were engaging with other members of society who were often in positions of authority, who they did not necessarily know very well, or with whom they had previously had little or no contact at all. Taking school first, during a focus group with Sikh boys at a school in Glasgow (ages thirteen to seventeen), one of the participants said, "Yes, sometimes we get called Muslims," and his friend responded, "Some teachers, say 'Aw you are all Muslim.'" Continuing the discussion, another Sikh boy said, "Yes, yesterday I was in the dinner hall and I was like getting chicken nuggets and then the lady was like, 'They are not halal.' I was like, 'I am not Muslim,'" and another responded, "Yeah, I know that happened. Same with me." Encounters with those in authority—such as teachers or other school staff—are often regarded by minorities as reflective of the extent to which they belong within the community (Blackwood, Hopkins, and Reicher 2013) or are positioned as separate from it.

In a different example, Victor (age nineteen to twenty-one), a British Indian young man who was born and brought up in London and was now studying in Scotland, talked about his encounter with a taxi driver on the way home after a night out:

In [my town], and you know the taxi driver asked me if I'd had a good evening or whatever. And I said, "Yeah, it was absolutely great fun." And he was like, "Oh like was it really fun even though you didn't drink?" And I was like, "Oh like what would make you say that?" He said, "Oh because you're a Muslim," and went on to say, "Well actually I'm a Jain," so I, you know I sort of maybe, sort of but sort of, sort of fanned the flames a bit more with the whole thing. That you know he . . . clearly thought I was Muslim. And I was like well "No," and that, you know I didn't, I didn't take it offensively I just thought you know maybe it's a, a genuine mistake . . . well I was mistaken for someone else.

In encountering misrecognition within the confined space of a taxi, it is clear that Victor felt uncomfortable about this encounter, as he intimated his relief at it not escalating into a more unpleasant interaction. Victor was also downplaying the significance of his experiences of encountering misrecognition, which we would argue was part of his strategy for managing and responding to such interactions. Although not evident from this quote, participants who referred to encountering misrecognition in taxis suggested that the proximity, closeness, and immediacy of being in a taxi



alongside being in this space for a specific length of time made these encounters feel more intense and potentially more powerful than others. Unlike in public spaces where encounters might be fleeting (Peterson 2016), the intimacy of the taxi combined with the length of time of such encounters heightened experiences of encountering misrecognition, making them particularly memorable for some of our participants. This meant that such experiences of encountering misrecognition were more anxiety-provoking than those in other contexts, as people felt constrained and unable to escape or move away from encountering misrecognition in a way that they might be able to in public spaces.

Research has shown that airports are sites of “humiliation, distress, and in some cases, fear” (Blackwood, Hopkins, and Reicher 2013, 1097) for Muslims and, by extension, for those who are mistaken for being Muslim. Drawing on research with Muslims in Scotland, Blackwood, Hopkins, and Reicher (2013) found that many of their participants felt that they were denied a sense of identity through their treatment by the police at airports. Furthermore, they were concerned about the likelihood of being questioned, talked about the “prototypical ‘Muslim airport story’” (1097), and even if they had not experienced the stigmatization of being criminalized at airport security, they had heard about it in their community. The othering that Muslims or those who look Muslim experience in such spaces is not only about interactions with those in authority, as members of the public can easily enter into similar forms of racial and religious profiling. Reflecting on an encounter in Edinburgh airport, Ananya, an Indian international student (age nineteen to twenty-one) who was studying in Scotland, recalled:

I flew into Edinburgh airport and as we were coming out of the plane, we were walking down towards the immigration bit and this lady behind me, I think she was in a rush or I don’t know and well we were all walking in the same direction but she wanted me to move, so instead of saying, “Excuse me,” she said, “Hey Paki, can you get out of the way” . . . which was really quite, it was really shocking because I hadn’t really either expected that, never had that before. Really came out of the blue to be honest and like I was of course off an international flight and I was completely exhausted and so I turned around and I looked at her and I said that, I said, “First of all, I’m Indian not Pakistani and like there’s no need to be so rude,” and then I just moved out of the way. And she

kind of, she was a bit taken aback that I didn’t, I don’t know, that I actually responded.

Although Ananya was surprised by being referred to as a “Paki,” this was a common experience for many of the participants in our study, including not only those from South Asia but also many of the African participants, as well as some of those who had migrated from Central and Eastern Europe. As Moosavi (2015) noted, Muslims in Britain are regularly “racialized as South Asian to the extent where Islam is even thought of as a ‘Pakistani religion’” (44). Being Muslim and being Pakistani are therefore regarded as the same thing and are used interchangeably as a racist insult; calling Ananya a “Paki” means that the person who said this might have also misrecognized Ananya as a Pakistani Muslim. Furthermore, the intense nature of this encounter involves being hailed:

Hailing as a form of recognition which constitutes the subject it recognises (= misrecognition) might function to differentiate between *subjects*, for example, by hailing differently those who seem to belong and those who might already be assigned a place—out of place—as suspect. (Ahmed 2000, 23)

It is important to emphasize that every time a person is placed as the “other”—as in the case of Ananya—that person is “inevitably experiencing racism” and Islamophobia and is “being forced to become the embodiment of what the *white* subject does not want to be acquainted with” and therefore is “denied the right to exist as equal” (Kilomba 2013, 42). Many of our participants downplayed their experiences of misrecognition or othering. For example, Darvesh, a young Sikh man from northern Scotland noted:

But if I’m, you know, driving or walking, I work, my headquarters . . . which is in the middle of nowhere, you know, it’s out of [the city], and if I go for a walk there it’s, I get stared at. (Twenty-two to twenty-five, Sikh, Aberdeen)

Although this might not qualify as misrecognition per se, Darvesh’s experiences—which he also talked about happening when out with his friends or work colleagues—involve a strong othering where he encounters what could be referred to as *racial vibrations* (May 2015); he partly explained such experiences with reference to the very small size of the Sikh community where he lives but also had the sense that people thought he was Muslim. As Kilomba (2013) observed, “Being looked at and questioned are forms of control that of course embody power”

(66). Moreover, when minorities “are positioned as solo in arrangement,” this results “from segregation and [is] therefore an expression of racism; the isolation of Black people is a strategy to reassure white dominance” (109). These examples all place a lot of burden on ethnic and religious minority communities with respect to how they represent themselves, how they challenge racism and discrimination, and how they manage and respond to such exclusions. Having now explored where our participants encountered misrecognition, we now consider their responses to such experiences, as well as their explanations for why misrecognition takes place.

## Responses to Encountering Misrecognition

When encountering misrecognition, our participants were not simply the passive victims of processes of racial and religious profiling but instead had often developed sophisticated strategies for responding to misrecognition. Additionally, our participants presented a range of explanations for why they encountered misrecognition. We now consider their responses and explanations. There were—broadly speaking—four sets of responses to misrecognition evident in the transcripts: using humor, clarifying their religious affiliation, ignoring the situation, and social withdrawal. We now consider each of these in turn.

One of the most frequent responses to encountering misrecognition was to employ humor to make light of the situation. A useful example of using humor in response to encountering misrecognition was provided by Kudoo, a young Sikh man who was born in Afghanistan but now lives in Glasgow. Consider his account:

Umm, when I was about 17, it was New Year’s Eve . . . and one of the guys said, “Oh is that a bomb in your bag?” Typical, and that is one incident that does stick out, and me being me I was, if someone said something to me I would go, “Yes, and I am going to put it under your chair!” And the guy crapped it ha ha, he was drunk anyway so I don’t think he knew what was happening. The guy crapped it and just left the restaurant and the manager came and said sorry to me and x, y, z, but I got a free meal ha ha. Got a free meal for the inconvenience, but again that incident does stick out . . . it was New Year’s Eve, he was fairly drunk, he was about seventy, so I don’t think he knew what who was who. (Nineteen to twenty-one, Sikh, Glasgow)

Kudoo continued by saying, “I would never take offense, I would probably try and join in the banter,” and explained that he would not take offense as “this

is what these guys are looking for.” Kudoo—like many of the young people who participated in this study—used one tactic among many he had developed to respond to an incident where he was misrecognized and connected with both Islam and terrorism. This is a useful illustration of the sophisticated strategies employed by young people who have to manage racist incidents. On the other hand, incidents like these also serve to remind those who encounter misrecognition about their marginal social position. Although incidents such as this might be regarded as “a bit of banter” or “only a joke,” inappropriate use of humor can “injure people’s social standing, or cut deeply into relationships and interactions between people within and across different social groups” (Lockyer and Pickering 2008, 809).

In addition to responding to experiences of misrecognition through the use of humor, a common response of our participants was to respond by clarifying their religious and other affiliations. In this sense, our participants encountered misrecognition and responded by using this as an opportunity to educate others. For example, when asked about how he handled misrecognition, Bob, a young Sikh man from Glasgow, said, “Yeah, but I just told them that I’m actually a Sikh.” For others, this involved a process of managing multicultural intimacies by actively engaging with others in a positive way so as to minimize the chance of any encounters turning sour. Consider what Ajay said about visiting the gym:

I was at the gym, and I’m probably one of the politest guys there, like, I’ll put all of my equipment away, I’m always, any time a staff member, I’m like, “Hello how are you doing,” “Goodnight,” “Hope you have a good weekend,” and so on. Most people just go in and out, and that’s it. I actually purposefully put in an effort to kind of, change people’s opinions without doing it so forcefully if that makes sense, or trying to show it off, it’s more like, okay, I’m just going to be extra nice, and part of that’s the way I’ve been brought up, just be nice, talk to people, build relationships, make a network as well. (Twenty-two to twenty-five Sikh, Aberdeen)

This account—and in particular Ajay’s comment about wanting to change people’s opinions—points to the ways in which he feels he might be regarded as suspect, viewed as a potential risk, or misrecognized. To avoid this happening, he purposefully engages in positive interaction to increase the likelihood of him being included and accepted and to minimize the possibility of the encounter being unpleasant or resentful.

Given the frequency of encountering misrecognition as Muslim for some of our participants, the extent of their resilience was such that they claimed to not even notice that it has happened. Put differently, they were choosing to not notice it. This is evident in this example.

I don't even notice it. . . . It doesn't even register with me now, and I don't know if that's because I've just built up a wall or, or more that I'm, I'm proud of who I am, and I've, kind of, stepped into these shoes now. It's not like I'm trying to be a Sikh and stick out, I am that. . . . So when people see me and think oh gosh, look at him, it's fine, it's how it's meant to be. (Darvesh, twenty-two to twenty-five, Sikh, Aberdeen)

Although he chooses not to notice it, Darvesh's narrative also refers to his need to defend himself against racism given that he has built a resilient "wall" as part of the process of not noticing.

The most concerning response evident among a small group of our participants who encountered misrecognition was the tendency to withdraw from social interaction as much as possible in an attempt to avoid such encounters altogether. For example, having moved to Aberdeen, Shera, a Sikh man age twenty-two to twenty-five observed:

I was a lot quieter. A lot. I had . . . I wouldn't speak as much, I wouldn't say too many things . . . and I would stay out of certain conversations . . . simply because it could associate me, associate myself with something else that could be related to . . . anything. I mean people, they look at me and I have got a turban, I have got a beard, so they would normally associate me with someone who is highly religious or . . . a religious extremist or whatever have you. So I tend to stay away from those kind of topics and stuff like that. But that was just when I first came out here and that last, that was my entire first year . . . that I behaved in that way. It wasn't until my second year where I started coming out of my shell and just generally didn't care. It shouldn't affect me, because it did hinder my . . . my education at the same time . . . so in my first year I would just come in for university, go to my lectures, do my work, and just leave. I didn't have any social life in my first year, and more out of . . . yeah, I would say it was out of fear. But that was fear brought on by myself.

Although Shera put his initial withdrawal from social interaction down to fear and the related influence of media representation, this example provides a powerful example of the damage that can be caused by young

people's everyday encounters and experiences of being mistaken for being Muslim. His account also demonstrates the lines between media coverage, geopolitics, and everyday encounters even as he takes responsibility for the racism he experiences.

Through these sets of responses and strategies to manage their experiences of encountering misrecognition, our participants are forced to respond not only to the incorrect identification of their religious affiliation but also to the racist assumptions that are problematically associated with Islam. As demonstrated here, many of our participants had developed sophisticated strategies for responding to and countering misrecognition. Kilomba (2013) noted, "Those who are 'different' become perpetually incompatible with the nation; they can never actually belong" (65); our participants thereby face the double challenge of managing their perceived incompatibility with the nation alongside their racist misrecognition as Muslim.

## Explaining Misrecognition

In talking about encountering misrecognition and being mistaken for being Muslim, many of our participants also offered explanations for why these encounters took place. In this final section of the article, our analysis points to the complex set of interweaving factors that result in ethnic and religious minority young people encountering misrecognition as Muslim. An interconnected and dynamic set of issues is in operation here, including geopolitical events and their representation in the media, the homogenization of the Asian community and its relation to the colonial history and othering of the "Pakistani community," and the lack of visibility offered to ethnic and religious minority groups who are not Muslim.

The majority of our participants explained their experiences of misrecognition as being a result of specific geopolitical events—such as 9/11, 7/7, and the "war on terror"—and the ways in which these events were represented in the media (see Horschelmann and El Refaie 2013). Kudoo said, "If they see the turban they just link the turban and terrorist" (Nineteen to twenty-one, Sikh, Glasgow, born in Afghanistan). Saanvi said, "In the media and stuff, like, you just kind of associate brown with Muslim and it's like, just kind of people not really wanting to kind of learn more about experiences and stuff like that" (Sixteen to eigh-

teen, Hindu, Dundee). Furthermore, consider the views of Satnam:

Yeah, you know, things like being called a Paki, or being called Bin Laden, or terrorist, or things like "Oh, I'm going to bomb you." Remarks like that very much rooted within what was going on in that kind of period of the time then. (Twenty-two to twenty-five, Sikh, Glasgow)

In some focus group discussions, the participants referred to the Woolwich incident of 22 May 2013 in which soldier Lee Rigby was attacked and killed by two black men (Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale) who claimed they killed him in response to the killing of Muslims by British forces. This was raised in a focus group with black African boys in Glasgow:

Participant 1: Which one was that? The one in Woolwich?

Participant 2: Yeah. I was like "Thanks," it is not going to be only Muslims now, it is going to really put black people out there.

Participant 3: Because we did so many good things, one like bad thing. I am not saying, what they did was terrible, horrible, like but one . . .

Although the young men in this focus group were Muslims, their discussion demonstrates the clear linkage among political events, media coverage, and young people's everyday experiences of racism and misrecognition. Moreover, the points they made suggest that they might have not previously been the victims of Islamophobia; their feeling is that this will now increase as black people will be synonymous with Islam.

In addition to the influence of geopolitics and the media, the participants in this study made it clear that the Asian community was regarded by many as one homogenous community that lacked internal diversity. In particular, participants felt that being "Asian" was synonymous with being "Pakistani" and being "Muslim." In a focus group in suburban Glasgow with Sikh young men and women, one participant said, "Like everyone thinks of us as just Asian," and later on, another said, "Even if you are Sikh they call you a Muslim, say that you are one." Furthermore, one of the focus group participants said, "[It] kind of annoyed me that in S1 [first year of high school] I was the only Sikh person in our class, and when we learnt about [it] everyone would just come up to me and, 'I never knew you were Sikh' or 'I thought you were a Muslim' . . . 'I didn't know you were actually Sikh.'"

Participants explained this homogenization as being connected to the fact that the Pakistani

Muslim community in Scotland is the largest minority group within the Asian community. When asked about encountering misrecognition as Muslim, participants noted that it is "because there is a lot of them" and that the Muslim community is "bigger." The sense here, then, is that the Muslim community is more visible, more politically organized, and better represented through community groups and voluntary organizations compared to the smaller religious and ethnic minority communities who lack visibility and end up being homogenized into a larger "Asian" community that is also assumed to be a Muslim community.

An example of the homogenization of the Asian community is the ways in which many of the ethnic and religious minority young people who participated referred to examples of racist name-calling when they were referred to as a "Paki." The black African boys who participated in a focus group in inner-city Glasgow mentioned that "some people call us Pakis for some reason," and some of the young people with heritages in Slovakia, Romania, and the Czech Republic also mentioned this. Consider Ajay's account:

I've had people call me Paki, and, one, I laugh at it now, because, wait, hold on a second, I'm not even from Pakistan, and two, what makes them think that I am? So when I look at it, and I think about, some calling me a Paki, or saying something racist about me, or mistaking me for a Muslim, I think it just annoys me more the lack of education that the government's providing in terms of different belief systems (Twenty-two to twenty-five, Sikh, Aberdeen)

Ajay's experiences demonstrate how the Asian community is homogenized but also how he responded by calling for better education about ethnic and religious diversity. Many of our participants, like Ajay, recalled encounters with others where they were called "Paki" and subjected to racial abuse and misrecognition. Implicit within this, it is clear that the term "Paki" was synonymous with Muslim and some of those who participated claimed that these were used interchangeably.

Some of our Sikh participants explained encountering misrecognition as Muslim being the responsibility of their own religious community. These participants felt that their experiences were the result of the Sikh community not being active enough in promoting understanding of its unique beliefs and values. Consider the views of Satnam and Darvesh:

Yes, a very easy target, because it was, we were so visibly prominent, and because as a community we'd never really done enough in any area to really project our independent thought, our independent ideology, and our unique novelty for our community we'd never really properly, effectively shared that within the communities we were in. So when it came to a time where all the eyes were on the Asian community, that's what people saw it as, they saw it as an Asian community, and predominantly Muslim as well, and so for that reason people's ability to distinguish was very limited and so that's why we faced a lot of negativity (Satnam, twenty-two to twenty-five, Sikh, Glasgow)

People who don't, who are not sure, people might not be ignorant or malicious, but they instantly think I'm Muslim because, because Sikhism doesn't have that kind of attention that, you know, I have to say Islam has, you know. And so I'm instantly branded with that brush in my opinion. (Darvesh, twenty-two to twenty-five, Sikh, Aberdeen)

What is most concerning here is the ways in which these two young Sikh men effectively hold their own communities responsible for the ways in which they encountered misrecognition as Muslim. We contend that the persistence of these young men's experiences of misrecognition is such that it has been normalized for them to the extent that they now feel that their own community is responsible for this. This points to the worrying consequences of persistent misrecognition in that it can lead people to hold their own communities to account for the racist misrecognition they experience from others.

## Conclusions

This article has explored the ways in which ethnic and religious minority young people in Scotland encounter misrecognition as well as how they respond to such misrecognition and offer explanations for why this happens. Our participants' experiences of encountering misrecognition varied in intensity and nature; however, all involved racist readings of the bodies of our participants that incorrectly associated them with being Muslim. Encountering misrecognition by being mistaken for being Muslim involves a process whereby the participants in this study are subjected to racist and exclusionary readings of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds and embodied practices. By way of conclusion, we offer four sets of observations that connect the findings of our research to broader debates.

First, this article has explored experiences of encountering misrecognition, including where these encounters take place, how they are responded to, and how we might explain why they happen. As noted by Leitner (2012), spaces of encounter offer insight into important aspects of everyday geographies, including around the ownership of space, national belonging, and relationships among different communities. Wilson (2016) provided a comprehensive overview of geography and encounter, with a key theme being diversity, difference, and borders; we contribute directly to such debates in social and cultural geography and, in particular, we have demonstrated the need for work that explores experiences of misrecognition and takes such forms of misidentification seriously given the impact that they have on senses of citizenship, belonging, and personal well-being. Moreover, the significant burden that regular experiences of encountering misrecognition places on individuals and communities and the ways in which they respond to these—as evidenced in this article—represent a significant contribution to debates in this area.

Second, in exploring young people's experiences of encountering misrecognition, this article offers important insights into changing geographies of race and ethnicity. We have witnessed the complex intervention of religion into debates about race and ethnicity (Dunn, Klocker, and Salabay 2007) and are also continuing to experience the problematic homogenization of ethnic groups connected with a lack of awareness of the religious and cultural practices of different ethnic and religious minority groups. Significantly, in demonstrating the ways in which young people experience Islamophobia in being mistaken for being Muslim (Puar 2007; Mansson McGinty 2012; Hopkins 2016), we point to the importance of being cautious and critical about the categories we use and how they are applied to specific groups; as our analysis makes clear, it is not only Muslims who experience Islamophobia, as a range of other minority ethnic and religious groups are often mistaken for being Muslim and so might be the targets of Islamophobia. At the same time, our analysis points to the continuing politicization of what it means to be a Muslim and the dominance of this "transnational folk devil" (Morgan and Poynting 2012, 1) in the public imagination.

Third, in our investigation of encountering misrecognition, we have contributed to understandings of the everyday geopolitics of young people from diverse ethnic and religious minority backgrounds (e.g., Barber 2015b; Mills 2015; Benwell and Hopkins 2016; Botterill

et al. 2016). In particular, we have explored how young people encounter misrecognition and the responses, strategies, and understandings they have in relation to such experiences. Although our participants demonstrated agency in response to encountering misrecognition, their narratives also reveal implicit defenses that often deflect the impact of racism; this involved downplaying or appearing to accept the racist undertones and ignorance involved in their encounters with difference. This is concerning because it shows the complex ways that young people narrate their own differences relational to normative power structures that are subsequently reproduced through this—perhaps unintended—tolerance of racism. Our work demonstrates the need for social and cultural geographers to take the issue of misrecognition more seriously (Taylor 1994). Although we have focused specifically on young people's experiences of being misrecognized as Muslim, future work could usefully focus on the complex ways in which different identity categories—whether these be associated with gender, sexuality, class, disability, or age—are misread and misrecognized in different spaces and with varying consequences for those who experience this. The variation in the nature and intensity of being misrecognized—and how this is shaped by place-based stereotypes and normativities—will provide a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of everyday sociospatial relations.

Fraser (2000) noted that “redressing misrecognition means replacing institutionalized value patterns that impede parity of participation with ones that enable and foster it” (115). As such, “redressing misrecognition” means “changing social institutions” (Fraser 2000, 115). Young people's experiences of encountering misrecognition as Muslim will only change, therefore, if social institutions such as schools, colleges, universities, and government departments also change. Increasing education about ethnic and religious diversity—including at schools, colleges, and universities, as well as in youth work and community development—could enable people to develop the necessary vocabulary to be able to discuss such issues in a more sophisticated manner (Davie 2015) and afford different groups the recognition they deserve (Ahmed 2000). In addition to this, additional sensitivity when it comes to equality and diversity policies is needed as discrimination that is traditionally understood to affect one group (i.e., Islamophobia affecting Muslims only) could indeed have an effect on a range of other social groups as a result of misrecognition.

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