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## Media Representations of Racism and Spatial Mobility: Young Muslim (Un)belonging in a Post-Cronulla Riot Sutherland

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### ABSTRACT

Young Australian Muslims living in Sydney have been influenced by the Cronulla riot. Online surveys ( $n: 76$ ) and interviews ( $n: 10$ ) reveal the impact on their engagement with the Sutherland region around Cronulla, detectable a decade after this event. The exclusionary intent of the rioters and their sympathisers was a racist form of spatial management that had both specific and general aims. The Australian news media contribute to the ethnic purification that was originally intended by the Cronulla riots. This reduces mobility among an ‘ethnic other’ in accessing spaces that have been portrayed as ‘racist’ – or, in the case of young Muslims, ‘Islamophobic’. Findings demonstrate the ongoing consequences of a wide-scale racist attack, like the Cronulla riot, on urban citizenship. Representations of the Cronulla riot are a repertoire of learning for young Sydney Muslims that rehearse what has been conceptualised as pedagogies of (un)belonging by Noble and Poynting [(2010). *White Lines: The Intercultural Politics of Everyday Movement in Social Spaces. Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 31, 489–505]. We have extended the application of this concept to a specific space and point to the means by which constructions of unbelonging are reinforced and made material. Processes of repetition and accumulations identified by Butler and Essed highlight how this enduring pedagogy of spatial unbelonging is maintained by media representations of places as Islamophobic.

### KEYWORDS

Racism; Islamophobia; spatiality; belonging; urban studies; urban citizenship; whiteness

### Cronulla – a place ‘I’d rather not go to’

Although I don’t go there, I’ve never been there, just based on what was seen in the media and what was the aftermath of the Cronulla riots I just feel like, ‘well look, it’s just a place I’d rather not go to’.

Sumaya, aged 25 years, currently living in Merrylands, a small Western Sydney suburb articulates an apprehension as a young Australian Muslim about visiting the Sutherland region, 10 years after the Cronulla riot. This riot was extensively streamed, debated, analysed, condemned, and in some instances ‘celebrated’. It was a day that not only unsettled the Australian nation, but it continues to shape the lives of some of those targeted in December 2005. Valuable inquiry on the riot has provided critical examinations of the potential causes, and the ongoing consequences of the riot. Suggested causes have included

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the role of media personalities, community relations between micro stakeholders, histories of gendered and racialised ‘place possessiveness’, and the structural context of white privilege (Strike Force Neil 2006; Dunn 2009; Poynting 2009; Shaw 2009; Wise 2009). However, there has been rather less discussion of the way this event has continued to regulate the *spatial* belonging or exclusion from Cronulla of Australian citizens. The immensity of the event, and the immediate attention, particularly from major news media outlets initiated a dramatic impact. Representations of Cronulla as Islamophobic may require continued repetition to generate a proscription of Muslims from that place.

The Cronulla riot was a blatant manifestation of Islamophobia – a form of the so-called ‘new racism’<sup>1</sup> – in the national public space (Dunn and McDonald 2001; Dunn *et al.* 2007). The rioters and their sponsors racialised the Muslim Other on the grounds of both religion *and* culture. Particular physical indicators (such as religious attire) were operationalised by ‘white spatial managers’ in the ‘national space’ (Gilroy 1991; Hall 1992: 256; Cole 1997) of Cronulla beach (Dunn *et al.* 2007). The embodied nature of the performance, and of the exclusion, may provide clues on the longevity of the riots’ effect.

Although the focus of the riot was directed to ‘Arab’, specifically Lebanese Australians, analyses have drawn our attention to the exclusionary anti-Muslim sentiment at the core of the riot, and its aftermath (see Kabir 2015). For example, the racist chants that were initially targeted towards ‘Lebanese’ Australians during the riot quickly took a shift towards the religion of Islam:

[...] some young men had stripped to the waist and painted obscene slogans about Allah [the Muslim name for God] and the Prophet Muhammad [Peace be Upon Him] on themselves and attacked people of Middle Eastern appearance (Overington and Warne-Smith 2005: 20, cited in Kabir, 2015). A male youth had this written on his singlet: Mohammed [Muslims’ Prophet Muhammad, PBUH] was a camel raping faggot (*The Australian*, 13 December 2005: 11). Some yelled, Love Nulla [Cronulla] fuck Allah, Wog-free zone, Lebs go home and Osama don’t surf (Evers 2008: 416). (Kabir, 2015: 272)

The religious inflection of the Cronulla riots was strong, and so the instructions sent to Australian Muslims about their welcome in Cronulla, and in Australia more broadly, were overtly asserted by the rioters.

## A Spatial Pedagogy of Un-belonging

In a highly mobile world, the ability to access, move between, and inhabit space is fundamental to citizenship and belonging (Noble and Poynting 2010). The ‘rights to the city’ (Lefebvre 1996: 174) have been identified as core to citizenship, what Isin and Wood (1999) refer to as urban citizenship. These rights include the ability to move, to be mobile and to use transport systems, to use and consume public space, and to ‘be in’ the various parts of the city. Belonging in space, indeed was one of the core issues at the heart of the Cronulla riot – where tensions around the ‘right to territory’ was written in the sand of the beach, and on the bodies of the rioters, who felt entitled to regulate access to ‘their’ territory. Cronulla beach, an ‘iconic Australian space’ was exclusively possessed as an artefact of white separatism (Jakubowicz 2009; Poynting 2009; Kabir 2015). To use Hage’s (1998) concept, the rioters were making an unambiguous claim as spatial managers, they were stating clearly who belonged in Cronulla, and who did not, and by extension, a statement on who belonged in Australia, and who did not. The

riots have been described as ‘a performance of Australian nationalism and white privilege (Dunn 2009) that sought to affirm *spatial* racial boundaries’ (Klocker 2014: 423, original emphasis). This direct action was a form of spatial ordering, crafting boundaries of separation between those who belong and who did not (Cresswell 1996; Nelson 2014). Geographers have long recognised that space can be racialised and can construct some cultural groups as in place and others as out of place (Sibley 1995). The rioters asserted territorial rights over who the beach belonged to, but also posed confrontational questions around the position of Arab and Muslim Australians in the ‘white’ national space (Kabir 2015). What continued success have the rioters’ had in their ‘place-defending’ intentions, 10 years on?

Influenced by Hage’s notion of spatial managing, and the geographers mentioned above, Noble and Poynting (2010) developed the concept of a ‘pedagogy of un-belonging’ to explain the process of an internalised perceived ‘exclusion’ among young Muslim Australians. Noble and Poynting (2010) drew on HREOC (2004) data to show how the experience of racism resulted in public spaces being associated with fear by Muslims in Sydney. Essed’s (1991) work demonstrated that it is the *accumulated* effect of everyday racisms that generates the most morbid effects on citizenship and belonging (see also Williams and Mohammed 2009). These include the daily, tedious small-scale racist incivilities, which are oftentimes ambiguously racist, and which in their accumulation have such strong effect. Butler’s (1990) queer theory provided insights into how subjectivities evolve through repetition to gain an apparent permanence. Cultural and religious identities are repeatedly performed, citing an essentialised archetype, and through this repetition substantive identities are concretised (Dunn 2005). Similarly, repeated incivilities that are experienced personally, vicariously, or via news media, could generate a conviction about the safety or not of public spaces for the members of some minority groups. Repeated statements on who is in, and out of, place may eventually be accepted as a truth. Drawing from Butler and Essed, a racist spatial imaginary may stem from this tedious everyday repetition, driving the internalised pedagogy of un-belonging among Australian Muslims inferred by Noble and Poynting (2010).

The public spaces of the racist encounters described by Poynting and Noble ranged from the street, shopping malls, driving, or on public transport, as well as places of leisure, such as parks, sports grounds, and beaches (Poynting and Noble 2004). The experiences included acts and threats of violence or abuse, which together ‘embodies the spatial regulation of cultural difference’ (Poynting and Noble 2004: 496). Avoiding spaces and transport modes that are perceived as unsafe is a low-risk strategy deployed by those from minority groups who are at risk of racist violence and incivility. Only a handful of disrupters take the risk of troubling such constructions. Poynting and Noble focused on the spatially limiting effects of these accumulated experiences, outlining their concern that Arab and Muslim Australians were limiting their use of public space and as a consequence were having their urban citizenship curtailed.

Beaches, as a ‘shared’, nationally symbolic space of belonging (Evers 2008; Taylor 2009) were identified as a site of ‘exclusion’ among participants in the HREOC inquiry (2004). Noble and Poynting (2010) observed that this exclusion *may* have intensified following the events of the 2005 Cronulla riots. To what extent was the riot part of a pedagogy that specifically excluded Arab and Muslim Australians from the Cronulla Beach and

surrounding areas? There has not been any empirical examination of this asserted relationship between a wide-scale racist attack, and the spatial mobility of Australian Muslims. Taha (2015) in an online piece provided insight into these possible implications of the Cronulla riot, emphasising the damaging effects of this attack on his personal sense of belonging and identity as an Australian Muslim:

Ten years on, the riots still have ramifications. I am 24 now, but as I grew up the riots affected my outlook, feelings and sense of belonging. It's difficult enough to navigate your way through life as a teenager with all the standard teen woes and problems. Add the complexities of racism, politics, media coverage and figuring out my identity and it can be very overwhelming.

Taha's (2015) testimonial reinforces the sentiment of exclusion and discrimination reported by participants in the HREOC *Isma* study (2004), as well as the young Australian Muslims recently interviewed by Kabir (2015). Abdel-Fatah (2017) in her recent opinion piece 'Burkinis and Belonging: It's this feeling the beach and Hijab don't mix', similarly reflected on the exclusion of Muslims, particularly women from the iconic space of the Australian beach that 'has always privileged a white sensory landscape. What looks and feels and sounds and smells as though it belongs is a function of power relations'. The potential exclusion of Australian Muslims from recreational spaces such as the 'iconic Australian beach' reinforces the way 'lines of whiteness' are being drawn around spaces, spatially regulating national belonging and cultural citizenship (Hage 1998; Noble 2009). Yet, the Cronulla riots were not an 'everyday or tedious event' (after Essed 1991), they were a spectacular pogrom that drew international attention and national condemnation. How can the riots be seen as a part of a pedagogy of un-belonging given that they were not an ongoing, everyday, tedious experience? What ongoing effects from the riots can we look to in order to explain an ongoing pedagogy? Drawing from Butler, there is a concrete understanding, or reality, that has emerged about Cronulla, from the riot and its media representation. One likely source of ongoing pedagogy are media representations of the riot, its history, and of Cronulla.

Our view is that we can use the concept of a pedagogy of un-belonging to explain how experiences of Islamophobia, like the Cronulla riot shape the 'spatial imaginaries' of Australian Muslims (see Driver 2005; Watkins 2015) by 'teaching' them to feel less comfortable, not just in the national space, but specifically in certain neighbourhoods. There has been less reflection on the spaces which have been constructed as safe or safer for Muslim Australians. Conversely, the pedagogies of un-belonging around Cronulla may carry a flip-side pedagogy of belonging in other parts of the city. This is interesting, as it could potentially trouble national discourses of un-belonging and place identity. Researchers have not yet provided contemporary, empirical evidence on the pedagogies of un-belonging as they effect Australian Muslims. Furthermore, the way mainstream media coverage of the events like the Cronulla riot can shape perceptions and spatial behaviour amongst an ethnic Other – in this case Australian Muslims – has yet to be empirically tested. This paper thus seeks to address the following three questions. First, 10 years after the Cronulla riot, how do young Muslims, living in Sydney, perceive and engage with Cronulla and the broader Sutherland region? Second, how do media representations of the Cronulla riot since the event influence these perceptions and willingness of

young Australian Muslims to visit Cronulla beach and the wider Sutherland region? This question is answered in relation to relevant literature on media and Islamophobia in Australia that is reviewed in the following section. Finally, in addressing the above aims, we extend Noble and Poynting's (2010) pedagogy of un-belonging to an iconic event (not everyday relations). We apply the concept to a specific place, rather than public mobility in general, and situate media representations of the riot as the source of that ongoing pedagogy.

## Islamophobia and Australian News Media

'New racism' literature on racialisation has increasingly problematised the role of media in Othering minority groups (Klocker and Stanes 2013), such as young Muslims, with Poynting *et al.* (2004) positioning the media's perpetuation of stereotypes as a form of Islamophobia in itself. A good deal of scholarship has connected western media representations of Islam and Muslims (Said 1981; Runnymede Trust 1997), to prejudicial treatment and everyday violence experience by Muslims in western countries like Australia. In Australia, surveys have revealed that both Muslims and also non-Muslims are of the view that Muslims are unfairly represented in media (El Matrah and Dimopoulos 2008; Dunn *et al.* 2015). These misrepresentations have been linked to substantive inequalities in having places of worship and private schools approved, as well as uneven access to scarce urban resources like housing and employment (Dunn 2001; Al-Natour 2010; Booth *et al.* 2012; Macdonald *et al.* 2016). These representations of Muslims in Australian news media may have contributed to the drawing of 'white lines' and to the ethnic purification of space (Sibley 1995), as the Cronulla riot intended (Noble and Poynting 2010; Nelson 2014; Norquay and Drozdowski 2017).

Klocker (2014) has drawn our attention to the way the media actively reproduces 'new racism' and the inherent stereotypes of cultural group traits or Othering of minorities within the national space (Gilroy 1991; Hall 1992; Cole 1997). The role of tabloid media in producing the racist discourses that fuelled and exacerbated the Cronulla riot was comprehensively examined by Poynting (2006, 2007, 2009) and Noble (2009). Recently, Nelson (2014) drew on the way Australian news media not only assisted with inciting the riots, but also that much of their coverage of the attack and its aftermath were largely sympathetic to the White Australian 'place-defending' rioters (see also Quayle and Sonn 2009). These discourses were predominantly centred on place identity and included promotion of the dominant groups' 'acceptable' beach performances (Nelson 2014), in contrast with the 'Lebanese community' – commonly labelled as 'Middle Eastern grubs' by far-right wing media outlets (Noble and Poynting 2010).

Australian news media discourses prior to, and following the riot, not only 'bolsters stereotypes and inflames community tensions, fear and moral panics' (Klocker 2014: 37), but also transforms the way individuals interpreted their social world (Hall 2000) and their *place in it*. Reflecting on foundational works of Zonn (1985) on media transmission of information about place, we must interrogate whether information shared by mainstream media outlets can characterise spaces as 'racist' or in the case of Australian Muslims – Islamophobic. In the case of Cronulla, Norquay and Drozdowski's (2017) media content analysis of four key newspapers,<sup>2</sup> found that 50 of the 224 articles analysed

had contributed to the construction of the Sutherland region as ‘racist’, ‘white’, and ‘Anglo’. Media coverage of the Cronulla riot provides an example of not only how the media can be a purveyor of ‘racist experiences’, but also the way it can construct spaces as racist and exclusionary, to ultimately dictate and regulate the use of these spaces by ethnic minority groups.

In this paper, we examine the way media representations of the Cronulla riot have *socio-spatial* implications on the way Muslims in Australia navigate public spaces. The representation of places like Cronulla, and specifically the Islamophobia attached to those places, could narrow the spatial opportunities of Muslims to experience everyday citizenship and belonging in urban spaces.

### Belonging and Exclusion in Cronulla

Geographers have demonstrated how ‘place’ is imbued with meanings, including nationalism, ethnicity, and religion (Bonnett 1996; Cresswell 1996; Dunn and Mahtani 2001; Dunn *et al.* 2007; Dunn 2009; Noble and Poynting 2010). The Cronulla riot was a first-hand manifestation of how unequal power relations can dictate the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of the ‘national space. Klocker (2015) argued that the continuing negative stereotypes of Cronulla after the riot had a substantial influence on ethnic and religious minorities; specifically those excluded from the space. The 2014 survey work of Norquay and Drozdowski (2017) on the ‘stereotyping of the Shire’<sup>3</sup> found that over 24 per cent of respondents described the Sutherland Shire as ‘racist’. These perceptions of the Sutherland Shire were directly attributed to the Cronulla riot. Notably, ‘57 per cent of non-residents and 89.3 per cent of Sutherland Shire residents agreed that the riots had affected public opinion of the community’s identity’ (n.p.). The collective spatial imaginaries generated by the Cronulla riots and subsequent reputation of the wider Sutherland Shire community as ‘racist’, verify the boundary-making intent and potential ongoing effect of the riot (Klocker 2015). Norquay and Drozdowski explained that this data set did not question survey respondents on their ethnicity, making it difficult to trace the impacts of the Cronulla riots on specific ethnic minority groups, such as Arab and Muslim Australians.

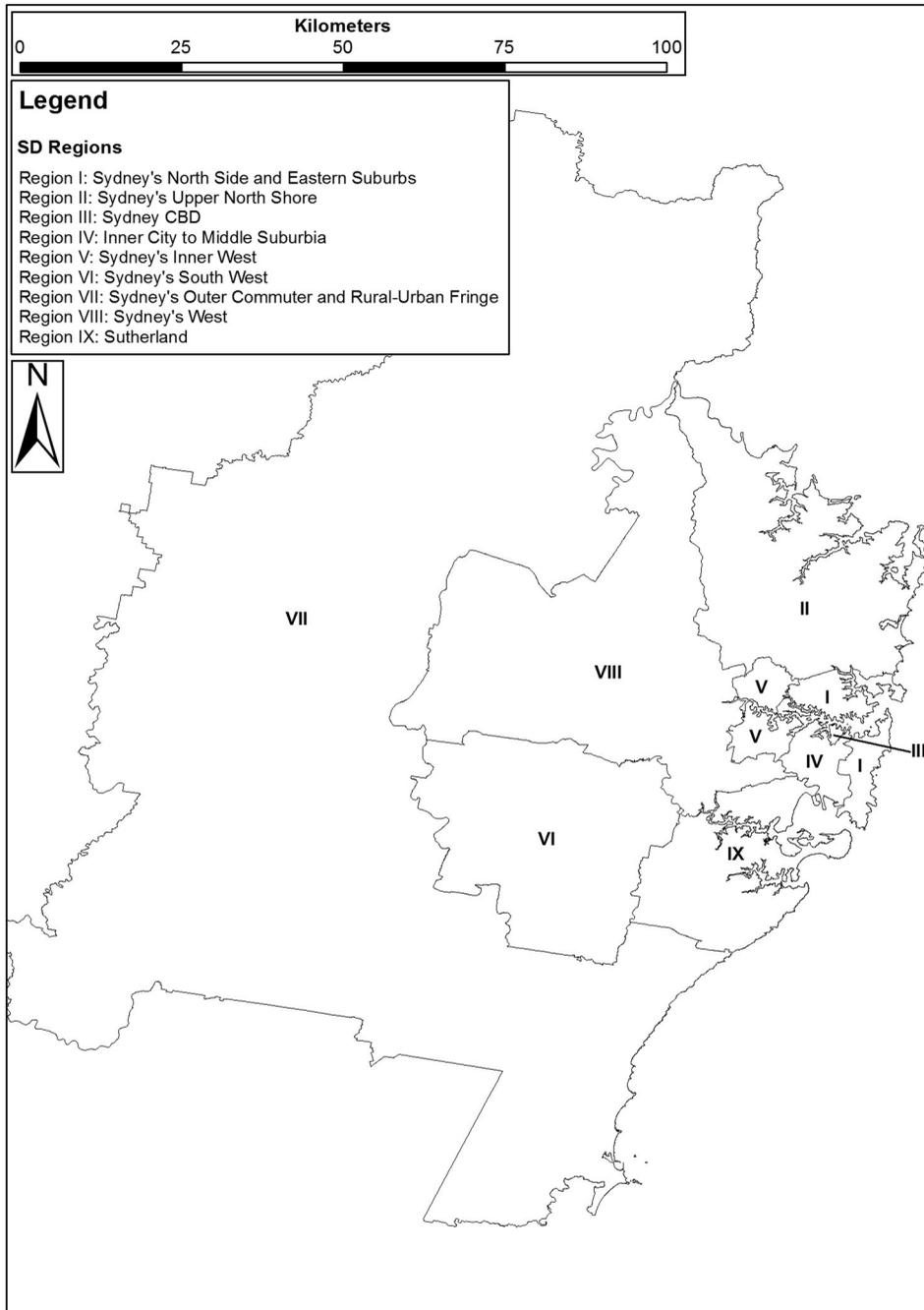
Researchers have examined the negative perceptions of Cronulla following the riot among young Muslims (Itaoui 2016) and Sydney residents generally (Norquay and Drozdowski 2017). Itaoui’s (2016) place-based analysis of how Young Muslims ‘map’ the spatial distribution of Islamophobia across suburbs of Sydney, provided a step forward in understanding the impact of the Cronulla riot on how the Sutherland region is perceived. Itaoui (2016) found that Sutherland was described by survey respondents as being the most Islamophobic region, followed by Sydney’s North Side/Eastern Suburbs, as well as the North Shore. There is an anticipation of racism in Cronulla, by Australian Muslims, and generally by ‘non-residents’ of the Sutherland Shire (Norquay and Drozdowski 2017). This suggests that mediated constructions of racism might shape the spatial imaginaries and mental maps of belonging, inclusion, and citizenship across the Australian public space, and we test for that relationship in this paper. Furthermore, the impact of media reporting of the Cronulla riot on how young Muslims – the targeted Other – engage with the Sutherland region, and Cronulla beach today, is an unexplored area that we also address here.

## Method

A mixed-method case study was undertaken in July 2014 to empirically examine the impacts of Islamophobia on the spatial mobility of young Muslims in Sydney. This involved a quantitative analysis of a web-based survey that captured how young Muslims map Islamophobia across Sydney (see Itaoui 2016), supplemented by an analysis of semi-structured interviews that explored how such perceptions impact the way respondents engage in regions across the city of Sydney. Utilising both purposive and snowball sampling, the web-based survey was distributed by the Islamic Sciences Research Academy (ISRA), a community education facility for Muslims in Western Sydney, and posted on Facebook groups targeted at young Muslims aged 18–30 years living in Sydney. These Facebook groups included ‘Y factor radio show’, ‘Sydney Muslim Youth’, ‘Muslim Trading Post Aus’, and ‘Muslim Student Association’ pages for the following universities: Western Sydney University (WSU) Bankstown, Campbelltown, Penrith and Parramatta Campuses, as well as University of Technology Sydney, University of New South Wales and University of Sydney. Seventy-four surveys were completed between the 12th and 30th of July, and resulted in 10 face-to-face, follow-up interviews.

Overall, the survey sought to capture how young Muslims perceived various regions across Sydney. The regions were categorised according to the findings in the 2001 Forrest and Dunn (2007) study on the ‘geographies of racism in Sydney’ (see Figure 1). The Sutherland region was included as an additional spatial category to those of Forrest and Dunn. The survey captured a series of demographic data including age, gender, level of education, and place of residence. It also questioned respondents on the suburbs of Sydney where they felt their Islamic identity was most or least accepted. This paper will exclusively report on the section of the survey that employed semantic differential (SD)<sup>4</sup> scales to facilitate the ‘ranking’ of perceived Islamophobia across Sydney’s regions. SDs are a simple and effective tool for measuring the average group perception of urban areas (Winchester and O’Neill 1992). These scales consisted of word pairs that represented the opposite ends of a construct, which in the case of the survey included: multicultural/mono-cultural, tolerant/intolerant, welcoming/racist, comfortable/uncomfortable, or safe/unsafe (Itaoui 2016). Survey respondents were then required to comment on how likely they were to engage in each region based on the SD scale rankings they assigned to each region. Relevant data were manually coded in geographical units, in accordance with the regions prescribed by Forrest and Dunn (2007) and analysed using statistical analysis computer program SPSS 22.0, by calculating the mean average ‘overall score’ of the ranks assigned to all five variables. This ‘overall score’ facilitated a comparative analysis of how regions of Sydney were perceived by young Muslims in Sydney.

In-depth, follow-up interviews took place from the 31 July 2014 to the 13 August 2014, with 10 of the survey respondents in various public locations in Sydney. Interviewees were recruited using a purposive selection process, drawing on the contact details respondents provided at the conclusion of the survey. Participants were selected because they held a range of demographic characteristics of interest to the study, including an equal diversity of gender, age, and residential locations across Sydney. The resulting participant sample represented a gender breakdown of 5 males and 5 females, aged 20–29 years, living across a range of suburbs in Sydney. The interviews explored the way that participants



**Figure 1.** Spatial distribution of SD regions across Sydney.

experienced Islamophobia, and how these experiences affected their perceptions of, and engagement in public spaces, across Sydney. A thematic coding scheme was developed from the key findings that emerged from statistical analysis of the survey data. This mixed-method approach provided a deep insight into not only the way young Muslims

map Islamophobia across Sydney, but also how they rank Sutherland in comparison to other regions. This quantitative map of Islamophobia was supported with the personal insights of young Muslims provided throughout the interviews. Together they facilitate a deeper exploration of the connections between the Cronulla riots as an ‘Islamophobic experience’, perceptions of Cronulla and subsequent mobility of young Muslims in the Sutherland region.

### Mapping Perceptions of Islamophobia in Sydney

As outlined in Itouai (2016), and depicted in Figure 2, a geographic analysis of survey responses to the SD scales reveals a clear spatial variation in how young Muslims perceive the spatial distribution of Islamophobia across Sydney. The respondents had positive perceptions of Sydney’s Western suburbs and neutral perceptions of inner-city or suburban areas. However, the Sutherland, North Side/Eastern Suburbs and the North Shore of Sydney were ranked most negatively, achieving an overall SD average score of  $-1$  to  $-2$ . Sutherland was allocated the lowest overall score, with the following SD scale responses attributed to the region. The scores in Table 1 show that young Muslims consistently placed a negative score against the Sutherland area. The Sutherland area, which surrounds the Cronulla Beach, is therefore a no-go zone for young Muslims. A pedagogy of unbelonging has generated this contemporary racist spatial imaginary.

The SD scales allocated by respondents to Sutherland in Table 1, illustrate that young Muslims associate the region with being highly ‘mono-cultural’, as well as relatively ‘intolerant’ and racist. Furthermore, a general discomfort in this region was accompanied by lower levels of perceived safety than for other regions of Sydney. In one of the field interviews, Thaalia provided a sense of how strongly felt this construction was, by herself and her peers.

Cronulla, even if it was a nice beach, just again based on what happened years ago, so for me **that’s really ingrained in my mind**. (Int. 6, Female, 29, Strathfield) (my emphasis).

This suggests that the specular and sensational event of 10 years ago is the key driver of unbelonging. Others made clear that these perceptions were generating alternative, more onerous, spatial decisions. These included avoiding Cronulla or driving further afield to different beaches. These give a sense of the tedious and everyday outcomes of a pedagogy of unbelonging.

Some of my Arab friends didn’t like to go to other beaches other than like the whole La Perouse, Brighton circuit ... That’s just because they didn’t want any trouble and stuff like that ... after the Cronulla riots. (Ali, Int. 5, Male, 25, Greenacre)

**Table 1.** Young Muslim characterisation of Sutherland (SD scales).

SD word pair	Average score
Multicultural/mono-cultural (Anglo)	$-1$
Tolerant/intolerant	$-0.76$
Welcoming/racist	$-0.80$
Comfortable/uncomfortable	$-0.72$
Safe/unsafe	$-0.46$

Note: Case study survey data.

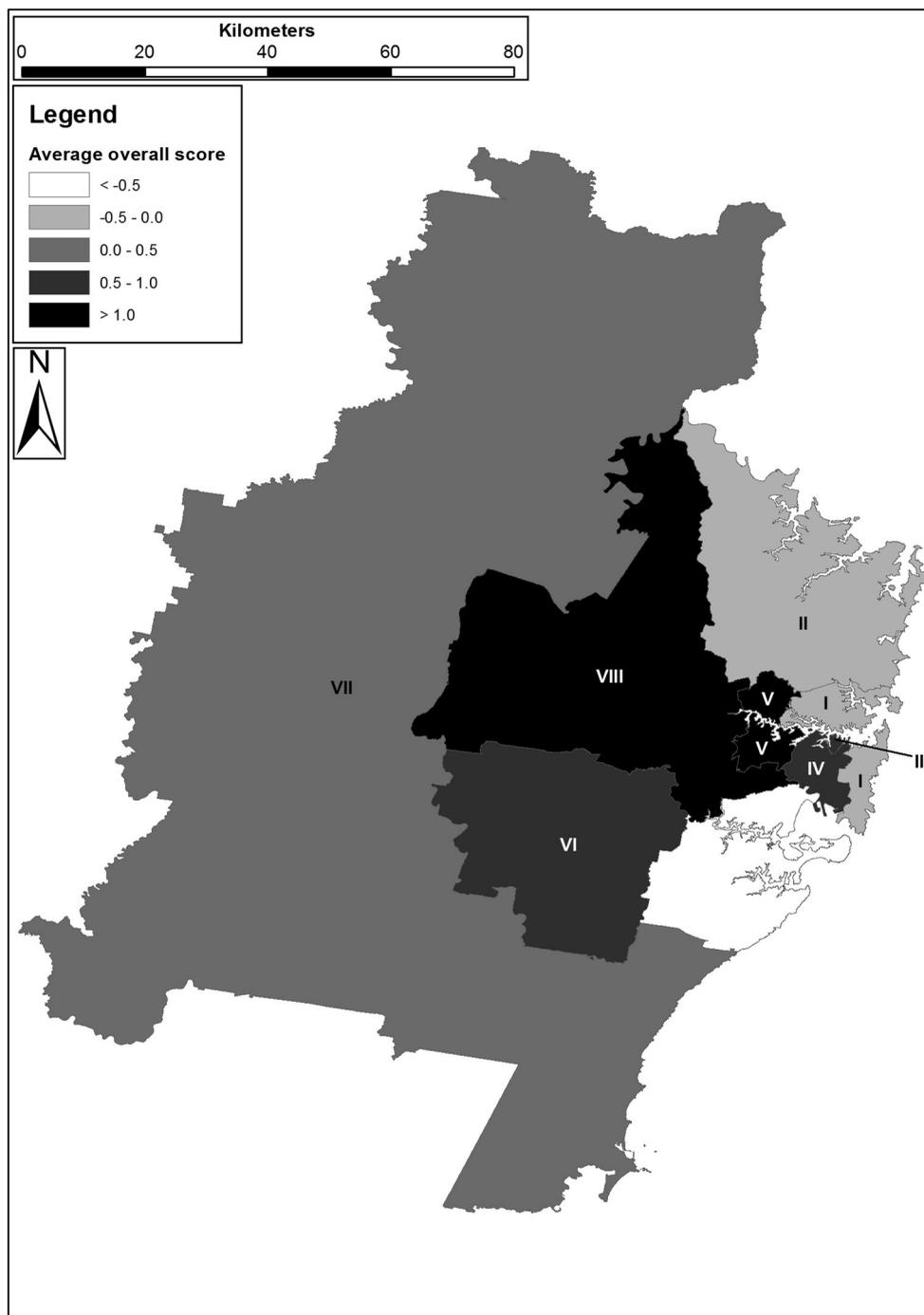


Figure 2. Spaces of Islamophobia: overall SD scores by SD region.

Post Cronulla riots those that would have gone to Cronulla beach, I find just based on observation and talking to people, that they will drive a little bit further and go toward, go toward a beach in the National Park, rather than go to Cronulla Beach, because I think it's just, I know it's been so long, but ... it's also very raw because it was a direct attack ... directed at a community and a certain faith. (Khadija, Int. 9, Female, 25, Merrylands)

Interestingly, Khadija's account sheds light on not only the impact of this media coverage on how she perceives Cronulla today, but also the way this beach is 'avoided' by her wider social network who now choose to visit alternative beaches instead Cronulla. These are examples of the substantive and disabling impacts of these constructions. Furthermore, her emphasis on the ongoing impacts of this event despite it 'being so long', provides significant insight into the long-lasting pedagogical impacts (Noble and Poynting 2010) that racist incidents can have on the ethnic Other who is being taught where they do or do not belong in the national space. Also, this repeated behaviour would reinforce the pedagogy of un-belonging and feed into a continuing spatial proscription.

### Repeated Confirmations of the Perception of Sutherland

In-depth follow-up interviews provided young Muslims with the opportunity to account for and rationalise the 'geography of Islamophobia' that the survey data had indicated. Nine of 10 interviewees made explicit references to the Cronulla riots to justify their view that Sutherland was an 'Islamophobia hotspot'. Khaled, for example explained:

When people think of Sutherland, they think, it might not be the right, but I still do judge the entire Sutherland on Cronulla suburb and hearing about Cronulla now, I just can't help but think back to the Cronulla riots ... You come to think of Cronulla as not a very accepting suburb. (Male, 21, Greenacre)

A reflexive link between perceptions of Islamophobia across space and patterns of (dis-)engagement from various public spaces highlights the deeper spatial implications of racism on ethnic minority groups such as young Muslims. Based on the low overall score allocated to Sutherland, 62 per cent of survey respondents indicated that they were to some degree, unlikely to use public spaces in this region, with 11 per cent undecided, and the remainder of participants (27 per cent) indicating they were only somewhat likely to engage in the Sutherland region. This purification of space is shown through the informants' comments, leading to an overall reluctance to visit the suburb of Cronulla by the wider Muslim community. Nadim pointed to how acts of violence and racist incivility, beyond those of just the riot, had repeated the pedagogies of un-belonging.

Since then [Cronulla riots] you feel not so comfortable going to those areas because you know for a fact of previous incidents that have occurred in areas similar to Cronulla and Cronulla in general. (Male, 25, Granville)

As depicted in Table 1, Sutherland was associated with the lowest rates of comfort, belonging and subsequent engagement among young Muslims, receiving the lowest overall score of all regions. Informant discomfort, fear, frustration, and anger around the Cronulla riot draws our attention to the ongoing effect of this event on the way Muslims perceive themselves as 'outsiders' within this suburban space.

There was a common perception of un-belonging among the informants, and a subsequent disengagement from the Sutherland region. A common theme in most accounts was that although the respondents had never personally visited Cronulla beach, or the wider Sutherland region, there was a collective understanding of being ‘unwelcome’ as a Muslim in the Sutherland region. Sumaya drew direct links between her physical Muslim identity – that is, the wearing of the *hijab* (veil) – and her symbolic exclusion from Cronulla beach.

Nah not Cronulla, never there ... No never, it's just a feeling I've got especially after the incident that happened there ... **I haven't been there personally myself but I have developed this fear** that if I go there, there will be something like you know, they definitely will do something wrong, so I won't go there ... but yeah like Cronulla Beach I said that I, I've never been there but just because you know **my community perceive it as a non-friendly beach for Muslims and Hijabis** I avoid it, like I don't go there. (Female, 28, Merrylands) (my emphasis)

Nadim was also aware of the symbolic exclusion of hijab-wearers from Cronulla beach and explained that ‘If I went on my own [to Cronulla] I'd be okay, but I wouldn't feel comfortable going with family members that are covered’ (Male, 25, Granville).

Based on this repeatedly ‘taught’ perception of un-belonging, respondents were now reluctant to engage in spaces within the Sutherland region. This points to the self-sustaining and reflexive links between the racist riot and the rehearsed spatial imaginaries of exclusion among the Muslim community. As we show in the next section, this is a mediated pedagogy.

## The Mediated Constructions of Cronulla – 10 Years On

Central to interview informants’ accounts was an emphasis on the role of media coverage in producing a perception of Sutherland as being Islamophobic. This perception pertained even among young Muslims who were not physically present in Cronulla during the riot and who were not old enough to have been able to independently visit Cronulla in 2005. Thalia highlighted the way media representations of the Cronulla riots formed her understanding of the event and her subsequent perception of Sutherland as a region:

Seeing it on the TV and news and the aftermath from there ... I put it [Sutherland] in this extreme category but I never go there. Just simply because ... my perspectives of the riots, the Cronulla Riots like all those years ago till today will still make me think, do I really want to go to Miranda shopping centre? What's it going to be like if I go there? (Female, 29, Strathfield)

The informants stated that their perception of the riots was formed exclusively by repeated media reports of the riot on TV or in newspapers. There was a conscious association made by participants between their mediated experience of the Cronulla riot to how these young Muslims now perceive the entire region. Interviewees attributed their low scores for Sutherland, their negative perceptions of the region, to Australian news media coverage of the December 2005 Cronulla riots.

For example, Khadija explained the way media coverage of the Cronulla riot led to her disengagement from the suburb, and an overall avoidance of Cronulla beach, along with her young Muslim peers:

Although I don't go there, I've never been there, just based on what was seen in the media and what was the aftermath of the Cronulla riots I just feel like, 'well look, it's just a place I'd rather not go to' ... post Cronulla riots those that would have gone to Cronulla beach, I find just based on observation and talking to people, that they will drive a little bit further and go toward, go toward a beach in the National Park, rather than go to Cronulla Beach, because I think it's just, I know it's been so long, but it's always, it's also very raw because it was a direct attack ... directed at a community and a certain faith. (Female, 25, Merrylands)

Nadim, who had previously alluded to his discomfort in visiting Cronulla, explained the explicit connection between media reporting of the riot and his subsequent reluctance to engage in the Sutherland region:

I haven't gone to experience it. But at the same time the Islamophobia presented from that region to the media has altered ... and it just sorta leaves a mark there, where you think oh, I'm just not gonna bother. (Male, 25, Granville)

These perspectives on the direct impact of media reporting around this event on disengagement from the Sutherland region demonstrates how continued everyday media reporting of the event not only played a vital role in the construction of place (Norquay and Drozdewski 2017), but actively reproduced the 'ethnic purification' of the Sutherland region catalysed by the Cronulla rioters (Noble, 2009; Noble and Poynting, 2010). Khadija's quotation is also evocative of other core aspects of a pedagogy of un-belonging, including the naturalised status of the construction of Cronulla as Islamophobic. Repeated and everyday constructions of a 'racist Cronulla' in both the riot, and media reminders of the event give rise to a concretised representation of Cronulla – acting as teaching tools for a pedagogy of unbelonging. Khadija also articulates the direct and unambiguously anti-Muslim message that was carried in this pedagogy and the subsequent personal mobility costs of avoidance that have ultimately impaired the Muslim 'right to the city', and overall urban citizenship.

## Conclusion

The primary objective of this paper was to explore the reflexive link between racism, spatial perceptions of (un)belonging, and the use of public space. In examining the 'pedagogical impact' of the Cronulla riot, we have demonstrated how the media representation of this racist event shapes young Muslims' maps of Islamophobia and limits their engagement with the wider Sutherland region. The case study survey and interview data analysed in this paper bring to light the active role of Australian mainstream media reporting of racist incidents or events in contributing to a 'pedagogy of unbelonging' (Noble and Poynting 2010). This pedagogy generates spaces of exclusion from which young Muslims actively disengage.

Reflecting on our first question, our findings indicate that the Cronulla riot had explicit impacts on how young Muslims living in Sydney, perceive and engage with Cronulla and the broader Sutherland region today. First, young Muslims' awareness of being the primary targets of the riot signifies the way that the racialisation of the Muslim in the Australian imaginary has continued the exclusionary work of the rioters – the catalytic white spatial managers. Furthermore, negative perceptions of Sutherland and a general reluctance to access this region highlights how Muslims' rights to mobility, and to the city, have been impaired (Cresswell 2006). These impacts of the riot on the spatial imaginaries

(Driver 2005; Watkins 2015; Itaoui 2016) and behaviours of young Muslims reinforce the boundary-making effect of the place-claiming riot (Nelson, 2014; Klocker 2015; Norquay and Drozdowski 2017). Indeed, the boundaries drawn 10 years ago persistently exclude Muslims from Cronulla beach today. These findings emphasise that anticipation of racism (caused by the riot) not only produces spatial imaginaries of exclusion, but also translates into patterns of (dis)engagement in public spaces, and to the Muslim community rehearsing of exclusion. We have shown the everyday tedious impacts of the riot in producing an immobile Muslim – further entrenching, rather than challenging the exclusionary politics of racism.

Our second question concerned the role of the media in impairing mobility of an ethnic other. Both our survey and interview data reveal a link between media constructions of Cronulla Beach as an Islamophobic space and young Muslims' responsive disengagement from this beach and the surrounding suburbs. Young Muslim interviewees disclose the *dual* role of Australian news media in producing disadvantage. First, the media perpetuate labels and stereotypes fundamental to the construction of Australian Muslims as an out-group in the national space (Gilroy 1991; Hall 1992: 256–258; Cole 1997; Noble and Poynting 2010; Klocker 2014). Australian news media coverage not only transmits information about place (Zonn 1985), but it repeatedly shapes spatial imaginaries of exclusion and mobility. Everyday geographies of (un)belonging are directly shaped by media reports of racist events, acting as reminders to construct and 'purify' place.

Finally, we return to Noble and Poynting's (2010: 500) conceptualisation of the racialised pedagogy of space, where they question: 'how some Australians acquire the capacity to act on their sense of belonging in racist ways, and how other Australians acquire the sense of not belonging'. The perspectives of young Australian Muslims discussed in this paper address the latter. The notion of a pedagogy of unbelonging helps conceptualise exclusion from the national space. Our analyses draw on this framework to examine how Australian Muslims acquire, internalise, and reproduce this sense of not belonging in specific spaces – Cronulla beach and the Sutherland region. Interviewee accounts on the 'practical' impacts of the Cronulla riot on socio-spatial feelings of (un)belonging affirm the way racism teaches the Other to feel less comfortable in a specific neighbourhood (Noble 2005). Noble and Poynting's (2010) 'pedagogy of unbelonging' sheds light on how the 'direct action' (Nelson 2014) of the Cronulla rioters acted as a catalyst for a pedagogic process around rights and access to public space, that has 'managed' the movement of young Muslims, and thus, their capacity for civility and citizenship in urban spaces. Over a decade after the riot, we highlight that this pedagogy is sustained through repeated proclamations that the space is not Muslim friendly. Ordinary members of this religious group reinforce this message in their everyday discussions and considerations. Drawing from Butler's ideas on repetition and sedimentation and Essed's everyday racism, we have shown how such pedagogies are sustained. The apparent stability and force of the pedagogy depends on the sedimentation of that idea.

Taken together, the perspectives of young Australian Muslims discussed in this paper demystify a reflexive link between racism and mobility – serving as a base for future studies exploring the impacts of the socio-spatial effects of new racism. The direct association drawn between Australian news media and its contribution to the spatial ethnic purification of Sutherland highlight the need for more critical constructivist investigations into the role of the media in (re)producing racism across space. Such investigations must

undertake empirical work, with a large sample of various ethnic minorities to comprehensively explore these connections. Considerations must move beyond preliminary discussions of how news media can perpetuate the othering of out-groups and examine its role in producing specific spatial exclusions and motility. As comprehensively articulated by Noble and Poynting, the implications of this ‘pedagogy of unbelonging’ are extensive (2010: 500–502). Our findings provide empirical evidence of these implications, verifying the way rejection from and anticipation of racism across the national space produces inventories of fear that reduce mobility capacities and engagement in public spaces. Young Muslims in our case study emphasised the practical consequences, and they highlighted the anticipated impacts of racism if they engaged in certain public spaces. More deeply, racist events and their media coverage feed into socio-spatial exclusion and a broader limitation on national belonging and citizenship. However, constructing spaces as Islamophobic does existentially open up the prospect that other parts of the city are Muslim friendly. This possibility may or may not assuage national unbelonging, as some space is then preserved for the excluded minority. The affirmative possibilities of such usurpatory claims to space are worthy of future nuanced research.

## Notes

1. For a detailed overview of social constructivist understandings of Islamophobia as a form of ‘new racism’, see Itaoui (2016), Dunn *et al.* (2007), Poynting and Noble (2004), and Poynting and Mason (2006).
2. Media articles analysed were published from December 1997 to December 2013 from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Australian*, and the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*. Articles were searched for reference to key terms including ‘Sutherland Shire’, and ‘the shire’, ‘reputation’, ‘stereotype’, and ‘identity’ in the *Sutherland Shire Leader*.
3. ‘The Shire’ is a common short-hand term used to refer to the Sutherland Shire, a Local Government Area (LGA) in Southeast Sydney where the suburb of Cronulla is located.
4. ‘SD’ is used in the paper when referring to the semantic differential scale questions in the survey.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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