

The Suburban Paradox of Conviviality and Racism in Postcolonial Britain

Katharine Tyler

University of Exeter, GB

Taking my cue from work on relations of interethnic conviviality in super-diverse cities across the globe, this paper examines the ways in which conviviality co-exists with racism as found in a suburban British town. My argument is that ethnographic attention to the proximity of interethnic relations of conviviality to racism is necessary to guard against overly celebratory accounts of conviviality that downplay everyday manifestations of racism. By situating my study of conviviality in a suburban town, my account begins to unpack the characteristics of convivial relations formed in suburban neighbourhoods as opposed to super-diverse cities often studied by ethnographers in this area of inquiry. I examine manifestations of interethnic relations between British Asian Muslims and white British residents of this town. By contrast to the mainstream images that depict British Asian Muslims as a potential threat to neighbourhood stability and national security, some white and British Asian Muslim residents formed neighbourly relationships of trust, care and mutual recognition with each other across ethnic, racial, religious, gender, class and generational differences. Yet my analysis of these convivial relations reveals some paradoxical ways in which individuals' experiences of interethnic relations co-exist with their xenophobic, racist and Islamophobic attitudes.