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## THE ENGLISH RIOTS OF SUMMER 2011

### CAN AN ETHNOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE BE JUSTIFIED?<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT** The aim of the paper is to analyse the English riots of summer 2011 and reflect on the questions of race and ethnicity – will they add significantly to our understanding of these events? The paper presents the timeline of social unrest, its dominant actors and events (starting from the manifestation organized by Mark Duggan's family and friends), as well as the main theoretical themes and analytical perspectives present in British debate on the riots. The author argues that while the ethnocultural perspective cannot be seen as a leading one, in order to properly understand the events of August 2011 the links to previous riots and the history of racial tensions between police and members of certain communities should be unfolded and explored.

**Keywords:** English riots, race, ethnicity

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The structure of the paper is as follows: first, the author presents the general context of the English “riots” that happened in the summer of 2011, with the overview of the main actors, places, and events. Secondly, the paper covers the summary of the main theoretical frameworks and lenses through which these social disturbances have been analysed. Finally, the question of applicability of an ethnocultural perspective including issues of race<sup>2</sup> and ethnicity is addressed.

## THE EVENTS OF SUMMER 2011

The event that triggered social unrest was the death of Mark Duggan, shot by police in Tottenham Hale, London, on Thursday, 4 August 2011<sup>3</sup> during a failed attempt to arrest him. The incident was subsequently reported to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC).<sup>4</sup> It is generally<sup>5</sup> believed that the police mishandled this case, not only neglecting to inform family about his death before the media did so,<sup>6</sup> but also being unable to properly react to the initially peaceful manifestation organized by Duggan’s friends on Saturday, 6 August. The protesters demanded to be met by the senior officer and were unsatisfied with the police representatives present on the spot.

<sup>2</sup> The paper does not cover the complexity of the concept of race (compare M. Kułakowska, ‘Kategorie “etniczności” oraz “rasy” in Ł. Krzyżowski, S. Urbańska (eds.), *Mozaiki przestrzeni transnarodowych. Teorie, metody, zjawiska*, Kraków 2010), taking it to be a social construct, yet with a significant social impact, especially in the British context.

<sup>3</sup> *5 Days in August. An Interim report on the English riots*, Riots Communities and Victims Panel, London 2011, pp. 40-41, at <<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121003195935/http://riotspanel.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Interim-report-5-Days-in-August.pdf>>, 4 July 2013.

<sup>4</sup> As the IPCC *automatically investigates all fatal shootings by police officers* – Home Affairs Committee – Sixteenth Report, *Policing Large Scale Disorder: Lessons from the disturbances of August 2011*, House of Commons, December 2011, p. 5, at <<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhaff/1456/145602.htm>>, 10 July 2013.

<sup>5</sup> See L. Bridges, ‘Four Days in August: the UK Riots’, *Race & Class*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (2012), p. 2, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0306396812446564>>; *5 Days in August. An Interim Report...*, p. 41.

<sup>6</sup> On this fact there are confused accounts: L. Bridges writes about *the failure of either the police or the IPCC to directly contact and inform Mark Duggan’s parents of his death in the days immediately following his killing* (p. 3), D. Briggs mentions rumours *that Duggan’s mother found out her son had died when she watched the news that evening* (D. Briggs, ‘Frustrations, Urban Relations and Temptations: Contextualising the English Riots’ in idem (ed.), *The English Riots of 2011. A Summer of Discontent*, Hook 2012, p. 36), while the *Interim Report* states that *on the evening of the 4th August members of the family that had attended the police cordon were informed of the death of Mark Duggan by family liaison officers for the Metropolitan Police* (p. 40). There has been a separate investigation of the IPCC following Mark Duggan’s family complaint on the lack of proper contact which upheld the complaint, though also admitting mismatching accounts on behalf of the police forces and some of the Duggan’s family members. See *Statement by IPCC Commissioner Rachel Cerfontyne in relation to Duggan family complaint*, IPCC, 29 February 2012, at <[http://www.ipcc.gov.uk/news/Pages/pr\\_290212\\_duggan.aspx](http://www.ipcc.gov.uk/news/Pages/pr_290212_duggan.aspx)>, 11 July 2013.

After a few hours of negotiations and waiting, rumours of a teenage girl confronting the police line began to spread. Soon the violence broke out.

The tense situation following Mark Duggan's death was worsened by the confusion over the actual incident. The initial media reports informed about the exchange of fire, with an active participation of Duggan himself.<sup>7</sup> It was not until Tuesday, 9 August that the IPCC stated that the two shots on the scene were fired by the policemen.<sup>8</sup> On Friday 12 August, after the riots ended the IPCC openly admitted that they might have misled the journalists in suggesting the exchange of fire between Duggan and the police.<sup>9</sup>

Shortly after Saturday, rioting started to spread across the country, reaching various parts of London (from Sunday on), and subsequently affecting other towns and cities in different parts of England (from Monday on). The main regions and cities affected (apart from London) were Birmingham, Bristol, Greater Manchester, Leicester, Liverpool (Merseyside) and Nottingham.<sup>10</sup> The last event (in terms of rioting) mentioned in the Interim Report of the Riots, Communities and Victims Panel (called from now on the Interim Report) took place on Thursday, 11 August in Banbury (Oxfordshire).<sup>11</sup> It is estimated that altogether 66 local areas were affected, with 31 of them reporting more than forty crimes each.<sup>12</sup> During this period more than 5 thousand crimes were committed, the majority of them (68%) taking place in London districts. There were 5 fatal casualties: Richard Mannington Bowes (died as a result of serious injuries in Ealing), Trevor Ellis (*shot in his car in Croydon*<sup>13</sup>) and Haroon Jahan, Shahzad Ali and Abdul Musavir (*run over by a car in Birmingham*<sup>14</sup>). The total cost of the riots was estimated to exceed half a billion pounds.<sup>15</sup>

Between 13 and 15 thousand people took part in rioting, while more than 4 thousand were subsequently arrested. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Justice,<sup>16</sup>

<sup>7</sup> J. Jones, 'August 2011: A Riot of Our Own', *International Socialism*, no. 132 (2011), at <<http://isj.org.uk/august-2011-a-riot-of-our-own/>>, pp. 1-32. See also D. Briggs, 'Frustrations...', pp. 36-38.

<sup>8</sup> Home Affairs Committee – Sixteenth Report, *Policing Large Scale Disorder...*, p. 5..

<sup>9</sup> *5 Days in August. An Interim report...*, p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> *An Overview of Recorded Crimes and Arrests Resulting from Disorder Events in August 2011*, Gov. uk, 24 October 2011, at <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-overview-of-recorded-crimes-and-arrests-resulting-from-disorder-events-in-august-2011>>, 11 July 2013; also D. Briggs, 'Introduction' in idem (ed.), *The English Riots...*, pp. 16-18. More information is presented in the chart in the Annex to this paper.

<sup>11</sup> *5 Days in August. An Interim report...*, pp. 20-23.

<sup>12</sup> These estimations are based on the Home Office data, counting the areas in which *10 police forces [...]* experienced 20 or more riot related crimes – *An Overview of Recorded Crimes...*, p. 24. See the Annex for the table presenting the list of those 31 areas along with the number of crimes.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Statistical bulletin on the public disorder of 6th to 9th August 2011 – September 2012 update*, Ministry of Justice, 13 September 2012, at <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/219665/august-public-disorder-stats-bulletin-130912.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219665/august-public-disorder-stats-bulletin-130912.pdf)>, 10 July 2013.

slightly over three thousand were actually brought before the courts.<sup>17</sup> It is only a fraction of all the rioters, yet we might assume that it gives valuable information on some of the most “active” ones. Most of them were male (89%) and relatively young, as 95% were younger than 40. Most of them (78%) had a previous caution or conviction, based on the data stored on the Police National Computer available for 91% of defendants (2 826 people).<sup>18</sup> Most of the defendants were from the London region (72%), 11% from West Midlands, 8% from Greater Manchester, 3% from Merseyside (Liverpool), 2% from Nottingham and 4% from other parts of England.<sup>19</sup>

It is important to bear in mind the character of these riots in terms of the committed crimes. Most of them were so called “acquisitive crimes”, including *burglary, attempted burglary, robbery, and theft and handling offences*<sup>20</sup>, which accounted for 50% of all the crimes. 36% were crimes involving criminal damage (directed at buildings and vehicles, including acts of arson), while 7% were constituted by violent offences. However, these proportions varied from one place to another, justifying the statements that *August riots were in fact different phenomena in different cities and even in different parts of the same city*.<sup>21</sup> In the three areas where most of the crimes took place, i.e. Greater London (area covered by the Metropolitan Police Service), West Midlands and Greater Manchester, acquisitive crimes were the most common, unlike in all the other (seven) areas where criminal damage dominated<sup>22</sup>.

## READING THE RIOTS

As underlined in official reports, *there was no single cause of the riots and there is no single solution*.<sup>23</sup> The link between deprivation and rioting has, however, been widely explored. The Interim Report pointed out that 70% of defendants brought to courts

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Justice gave the number of 3103 for all the people brought before the courts, out of which 457 persons were still awaiting the final outcome [data as of 10<sup>th</sup> August 2012], 508 have been dismissed or acquitted, and 2138 people have been actually sentenced. See *Public disorder of 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> August 2011 statistical tables – September 2012*, Gov.uk, 13 September 2012, at <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statistical-bulletin-on-the-public-disorder-of-6th-9th-august-2011-2>>, 10 July 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Some authors, however, warn against treating this data as a representative picture of rioters, stating that it might have just been “easier for police to identify and arrest those with prior convictions”. See B. Bradford, J. Jackson, ‘When Trust Is Lost: the British and their Police after the Tottenham Riots’, Books and Ideas, 8 November 2011, at <<http://www.booksandideas.net/When-Trust-is-Lost.html>>, 5 August 2013.

<sup>19</sup> *Public disorder of 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> August 2011 statistical tables...*

<sup>20</sup> *An Overview of Recorded Crimes...*

<sup>21</sup> Home Affairs Committee – Sixteenth Report, *Policing Large Scale Disorder...*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *An Overview of Recorded Crimes...*, p. 4. See table 2 in Annex for the presentation of the 15 local areas where the highest number of crimes happened, arranged by the type of crime.

<sup>23</sup> *5 Days in August. An Interim Report...*, p. 7. Compare with ‘A single explanation of the riots cannot be applied across all localities’ in G. Morrell et al., *The August riots in England. Understanding the involvement of young people*, October 2011, prepared for the Cabinet Office, NatCen, p. 25, at <<https://>

lived in the most deprived areas (postcodes) of England,<sup>24</sup> with young defendants also coming *disproportionately from poorer households*.<sup>25</sup> Out of 66 local areas that were affected by rioting, thirty were in the top quarter of the most deprived English areas.<sup>26</sup> In addition, researchers commented on exceptions such as Bradford or Sheffield<sup>27</sup> that are also among the most deprived areas, but were not affected by the riots, or St. Albans which is situated among the least deprived areas and still *experienced some form of disorder*.<sup>28</sup> The correlation between higher statistics in crime and problems with employment was also noted. Some scholars even seemed to blame the collapse of the welfare state for the anger and rage of the youth.<sup>29</sup>

The role of the police was also underlined, pointing out that the perception of police forces unable to contain rioting in Tottenham could have helped unrest to further spread out and encourage people to take part in riots.<sup>30</sup> Talking about the role of the police, it is important to distinguish two moments, the first one – before the riots, with the police involved in Mark Duggan's death and (mis)handling the communication with Duggan's<sup>31</sup> family, and the second one – during the riots, where the lack of feeling of police presence deepened the frustration and the feeling of abandonment of many communities. As we read in the Interim Report, *all the seriously affected communities felt that police numbers were not high enough and that the police did not act quickly enough to engage with the rioters*.<sup>32</sup>

Axel Klein<sup>33</sup> expanded on this view, analysing police services in 2011 in the perspective of spending cuts, announced by the government.<sup>34</sup> Though some criticised the de-

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[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/60531/The\\_20August\\_20Riots\\_20in\\_20England\\_20\\_pdf\\_\\_201mb\\_.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60531/The_20August_20Riots_20in_20England_20_pdf__201mb_.pdf), 15 July 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Data released by the Ministry of Justice stated that *64 per cent of 10-17 year olds for whom matched data were available lived in one of the 20 per cent most deprived areas whilst only three per cent lived in one of the 20 per cent least deprived areas* – *Statistical bulletin on the public disorder of 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> August 2011 – October update*, Ministry of Justice, 24 October 2011, p. 5, at <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/217807/august-public-disorder-stats-bulletin-241011.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/217807/august-public-disorder-stats-bulletin-241011.pdf)>, 17 July 2013.

<sup>25</sup> As measured by the higher eligibility for Free School Meals. See *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> *5 Days in August. An Interim report...*, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> What is interesting in the case of Sheffield, is that the local participants of the discussion groups led by G. Morrell's team, commented on differences "between rich and poor" which were less visible in Sheffield than in London, which might have stopped young local inhabitants from rioting. See G. Morrell et al., *The August riots in England...*, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> *5 Days in August. An Interim report...*, p. 60.

<sup>29</sup> T. Slater, 'From "Criminality" to Marginality: Rioting against a Broken State', *Human Geography*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (2011).

<sup>30</sup> *5 Days in August. An Interim report...*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> . Klein, 'Policing as a Causal Factor – a Fresh View on Riots and Social Unrest', *Safer Communities*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2012), pp. 17-23, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17578041211200074>>.

<sup>34</sup> According to the October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. More information on that can be found in British press, as well as in HMIC reports, such as *Adapting to Austerity. A review of police force*

cisions on cuts in police budget, using rioting as an example to prove their point, Klein raised concerns over inappropriate (rather than under-resourced) policing. He claimed that *riots break out when protesters feel that an established customary or higher right has been violated, particularly where they regard the social order as being inherently unjust*<sup>35</sup> and, in such a case, heavy policing would not have a calming effect. It is an interesting argument, taking into account Klein's controversial assumption that *all public violence is sustained by a legitimating discourse*<sup>36</sup> as the crowd is motivated by the feeling of injustice, happening on a regular, even systematic basis. Though Klein admitted that once the unrest breaks out, the primary intentions tend to lose their significance, *the violence that was raised to rectify the breach runs out of control, self interest takes over, and the prime motive become enrichment and entertainment*,<sup>37</sup> he posed an important question about the extent to which the feeling of injustice triggered by Mark Duggan's death or, in broader terms, police relations and activities, played a role in the August riots.<sup>38</sup>

Analysts emphasized the role of social media as well, as they proved crucial in facilitating people's self-organizing both for destructive and community-oriented actions. Stephanie Alice Baker commented on that issue, saying that certain commentators perceived new social media to be *the catalyst of the disorder*.<sup>39</sup> While she admitted the unprecedented scale and speed with which rioting spread across the country, the process undoubtedly accelerated by the use of social media platforms, Baker argued for the need of a thorough analysis of the question of how the media were actually used in order also to counteract the violence. She rejected the position of technological determinism, showing the examples of those who have consciously decided not to get involved into rioting and also those who organised themselves to resist the riots, as she wrote, *whether their involvement took the form of disseminating information, ensuring public safety, preventing others from rioting, fundraising, or in the clean-up operations that followed*.<sup>40</sup>

Another frequent analytical pattern was to blame the consumer culture. For instance, as we read in David Moxon's article, *in order to be properly comprehended, the "riots" of August 2011 must be located in the context of an increasingly consumerist society*.<sup>41</sup> What

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*and authority preparedness for the 2011/12-14/15 CSR period*, HMIC, July 2011, at <<http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/adapting-to-austerity-20110721.pdf>>, 30 July 2011, or *Policing in austerity: One year on*, HMIC, July 2012, at <<http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/policing-in-austerity-one-year-on.pdf>>, 30 July 2013.

<sup>35</sup> A. Klein, 'Policing as a Causal Factor...', p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>38</sup> Compare R. Prasad, 'The Riots Were "a Sort of Revenge" against the Police' in D. Roberts (ed.), *Reading the Riots. Investigating England's Summer of Disorder*, London 2011, Kindle Edition (*Guardian Shorts*).

<sup>39</sup> SA Baker, 'Policing the Riots: New Social Media as Recruitment, Resistance, and Surveillance' in D. Briggs (ed.), *The English Riots...*

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>41</sup> D. Moxon, 'Consumer Culture and the 2011 "Riots"', *Sociological Research Online*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2011), p. 2.



Moxon suggested is that rioting illustrated in fact *conformity to the underlying values of consumer culture*.<sup>42</sup> Although he noticed similarities between the events in Tottenham and the previous outbreaks of social unrest motivated by the *long-standing racial tensions between London residents and the Met* [Metropolitan police]<sup>43</sup> (the theme which is further explored in the third part of this article), when he discussed later “moments” of the rioting, called respectively an “acquisitive” and a “nihilistic” one, Moxon stated clearly that they should be explained *in terms of consumer culture*.<sup>44</sup> The acquisitive moment was characterized by massive looting of stores with electrical goods, sports equipment and clothing, and was accordingly labelled as an angry response of those socially deprived simultaneously showing *their thorough inclusion in the consumerist dream*.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, goods that were sought after were seen as a symbol of high material status, hence a sign of a desired identity. The nihilistic moment *characterised by general disorder*<sup>46</sup> was analysed by Moxon also in relation to the consumer culture, as according to him rioters sought “*fleeting consumer “experiences”*”<sup>47</sup> and excitement via creating mayhem.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, the Interim Report distinguished between five types<sup>49</sup> of riots’ participants which were: (1) *organised criminals* [...] (2) *violent aggressors* [...] (3) “*late night shoppers*” [...] (4) *opportunists* [...] (5) *spectators*,<sup>50</sup> each type having different motivations and aims. Organised criminals seemed to be the most prepared of all the types, mainly interested in stealing high value goods. Violent aggressors, although smaller in numbers, were responsible for the most serious crimes *against the police and for cases or arson*.<sup>51</sup> “Late night shoppers”, also mainly interested in looting, were less organized, as they were directly reacting to the news obtained via social media platforms. Opportunists and spectators were brought into the event through *curiosity or a sense of excitement*,<sup>52</sup> yet later on opportunists turned into looters, possibly motivated by the lack of proper police response.

Respondents of the research undertaken by the Panel named several reasons that could have driven people into rioting, such as disillusion with the behaviour of politi-

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Moxon also explores the issue of antagonistic relations between people with similar social background and a level of deprivation, *rivals in the brutal competition for scarce resources and status*, calling this phenomenon *a Hobbesian war of all against all*, yet this theme goes beyond the scope of this paper. See *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> These were more of the “ideal type” characters as it is noted in the Interim Report itself that *many rioters fit into more than one of the types of rioter [...] and some may have moved from one type to another during the course of a riot or several riots – 5 Days in August. An Interim report...*, p. 35.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 36-37.

cal elites (referring to *the issues of Bankers bonuses and MPs' expenses*<sup>53</sup>), or tensions between police and some of the communities (mostly Black and Asian men) around the issue of "stop and search".

Another piece of research into the involvement of young people in the riots has been completed by Gareth Morrell, Sara Scott, Di McNeish and Stephen Webster.<sup>54</sup> There we find an alternative typology of young people from the areas affected by riots, who were divided into four broad categories: (a) "watchers", (b) "rioters", (c) "looters", and (d) "non-involved". It varies from the typology discussed two paragraphs above as it includes people who did not get involved in the riots themselves.

Researchers from Morrell's team analysed motivational factors, in an attempt at answering the *core question* [...]: "*Why did young people get involved in the riots?*"<sup>55</sup> They listed three main factors: firstly, rioting was perceived as *something exciting to do*;<sup>56</sup> secondly, there was *the thrill of getting* [so called] *free stuff*<sup>57</sup> – as the riots created the opportunity to get hold of high technology equipment that some of those teenagers could not have afforded otherwise; finally, it was *a chance to get back at police*,<sup>58</sup> whether it was motivated by the death of Mark Duggan (in Tottenham and other parts of London) or was more generally related to local anti-police sentiments and grievances.

Still, as mere motivational factors were not sufficient to push people into rioting, researchers examined other situational and societal factors. Thinking of a situation in a given location, much depended on the context: whether a particular young person could see others looting shops and *getting away with it*,<sup>59</sup> or how her or his friends (or other significant others) were behaving at that time. It was also important to include more personal factors: previous criminal history, *attitudes towards those with power and authority*<sup>60</sup> and individual prospects and aspirations, the feeling of *having something to lose*<sup>61</sup> like a job or educational achievements. The importance of family and community links was emphasized. Finally, the material circumstances were mentioned, as it ap-

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 12. More information on these issues can be found in British press. See 'Bank Bonuses "To Run to Billions in 2011"', BBC News Online, 7 January 2011, at <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12131092>>, 6 August 2013, and (on MP's expenses scandal from 2009) 'Cabinet Expenses under Scrutiny', BBC News Online, 8 May 2009, at <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/8039108.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/8039108.stm)>, 6 August 2013.

<sup>54</sup> The research included interviews with 206 young people in five affected areas (Tottenham, Peckham, Clapham Junction, Birmingham and Salford), as well as discussions and focus groups both in affected and non-affected areas (Firth Park, Sheffield and Poplar, East London) in which 105 people took part. See G. Morrell et al., *The August riots in England...*, Technical Appendix, pp. 55-63.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 7.



peared that many of those young people seemed to be struggling in order to maintain themselves, being affected by the recent cuts in youth services provision. Exposed to all these factors, young people needed to make a decision whether to get involved in rioting or not. According to the research quoted, at least some of them helped themselves by asking two fundamental questions: about the ethical dimension of their actions and about the risks such actions were connected with.

## THE QUESTIONS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY<sup>62</sup>

Certainly, the ethnocultural perspective has not been a dominant one. Most scholars and commentators (including politicians) talked about the consumer culture, deprivation and alienation, criminality, and new ways of communication (social media). However, as stated by John Solomos,<sup>63</sup> it is important not to lose sight of the questions linking the issues of race and ethnicity with the events of August 2011. Solomos argued that although *the lens of race alone*<sup>64</sup> cannot be considered sufficient to analyse the riots, there are certain links and similarities between the events in Tottenham and the previous outbreaks of social disorder that point to issues of race and policing.<sup>65</sup>

It should not be forgotten that Tottenham has had the history of tensions between police and the local communities that often lead to social unrest, as it happened in 1985, when *a black woman, Cynthia Jarrett, [...] died of a stroke after being pushed over by the police during a search of her home*.<sup>66</sup> In a striking analogy with events of August 2011, after her death local members organized a protest at the very same police station, in Tottenham, and a violent confrontation took place. David Lammy, a local politician, Member of Parliament for Tottenham, when talking about troubled history of this area, also mentioned<sup>67</sup> Joy Gardner, an illegal immigrant from Jamaica who died in 1993 after the police raided her flat in order to deport her along with her son in

<sup>62</sup> This article does not cover the complex questions of cultural factors that might or might not have influenced the decision to take part in rioting, limiting its scope to the questions of race and ethnicity. It should be however underlined that any attempt at identifying belonging to any particular ethnic group with belonging to (or having) any particular culture cannot be read as in line with opinions and statements expressed in this paper.

<sup>63</sup> J. Solomos, 'Race, Rumours and Riots: Past, Present and Future', *Sociological Research Online*, Vol. 16, No. 4, (2011), pp. 1-6.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> He also mentions the relevance of questions about race in context of issues of poverty, unemployment, education, as well as political inclusion and exclusion. See *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>66</sup> L. Bridges, 'Four Days in August...', p. 2. Other reports say that she had a heart attack – see L. Fekete, 'Total Policing: Reflections from the Frontline', *Race & Class*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (2013), p. 67, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0306396812464159>>.

<sup>67</sup> D. Lammy, 'Statement Q 253', quoted in: Home Affairs Committee – Sixteenth Report, *Policing Large Scale Disorder...*, p. 6. It is important to note that David Lammy distanced himself from highlighting analogies between the riots of 1985 and 2011. On that issue, see L. Bridges, 'Four Days in August...', pp. 4-5.

Crouch End, North London<sup>68</sup> (Haringey, the same borough as Tottenham), and Roger Sylvester,<sup>69</sup> a black man, who died in Tottenham in 1999 after being restrained by the police officers.

Furthermore, it might be also valuable to look at the ethnicity of those who took part in these events. However, one has to be cautious when interpreting this data, as they reflect the ethnicity only of those who were brought to court (3 103 people) and in 13% of cases ethnic belonging was neither stated nor recorded.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, some commentators point to the fact that ethnic minority members *are more likely to be arrested than others*.<sup>71</sup>

41% of those arrested and brought to court were identified as White, 39% as Black, 12% as belonging to the mixed ethnic group, 7% as Asian, and 2% as Chinese.<sup>72</sup> Given the ethnic composition of England and Wales, as revealed in the last Census,<sup>73</sup> there is a visible overrepresentation of “rioters” from Black and Mixed communities. However, two additional factors must be taken into account: local levels of ethnic diversity in the areas affected by the riots, and different age structures of various British ethnic groups. Looking at the local areas most affected by the riots, we might say that generally they are more ethnically diverse than the average population. Out of 15 areas with the highest number of crimes, 11 had less than 65% of inhabitants belonging to the White category.<sup>74</sup> Linking that to the scale of deprivation mentioned earlier, we might assume that some of the communities from which the rioters recruited might have felt alienated from the mainstream, relatively more prosperous society.

<sup>68</sup> More information on Joy Gardner’s story can be found in British press, see for example, N. Cohen, ‘Why Did Joy Gardner Die?: It Should Not Surprise Anyone that an Illegal Immigrant’s Death Can Cause a National Scandal’, *The Independent Online*, 23 October 2011, at <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/why-did-joy-gardner-die-it-should-not-surprise-anyone-that-an-illegal-immigrants-death-can-cause-a-national-scandal-nick-cohen-reports-1459872.html>>, 26 July 2013.

<sup>69</sup> More information on Roger Sylvester’s story can be found in British press, see for example, ‘No Punishment for Sylvester’s Death’, BBC News Online, 8 August 2007, at <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/london/6937410.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/6937410.stm)>, 26 July 2013.

<sup>70</sup> *Public disorder of 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> August 2011 statistical tables...* Table 1.12 shows that the ethnicity of 395 persons was neither stated nor recorded.

<sup>71</sup> H. Muir, Y. Adegoke, ‘Were the Riots about Race?’ in D. Roberts (ed.), *Reading the Riots...*

<sup>72</sup> *Statistical bulletin... September 2012 update*, p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> 86% of the population of England and Wales was constituted by White (British and non-British), 7,5% by Asian, 3,3% by Black and 2,2% by people from Mixed Ethnic Groups. See Proportion of ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom population, *Census 2011: KS201EW – Ethnic group*, at <<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS201EW/view/2092957703>>, 26 July 2013. More information on ethnic categories used in the United Kingdom can be found in M. Kułakowska, ‘Rozwiązania dotyczące przynależności etnicznej i narodowej przyjęte w spisach powszechnych Polski i Wielkiej Brytanii’ in S. Jackiewicz (ed.), *Kwestie spisowe a tożsamość etniczno-kulturowa autochtonicznych mniejszości na pograniczach*, Białystok 2012. From the perspective of this paper, the differences in ethnic categories between those used in Census 2011 and those used by the Ministry of Justice (eg. the Chinese treated as a separate group vs. including them within the Asian group) seem to be negligible.

<sup>74</sup> NOMIS Official Labour Market Statistics Website provides data on ethnicity for chosen local areas. See <<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks201ew>>.

The theme of policing was analysed briefly in the second part of this article, but it is worth mentioning here, in the context of the tensions between ethnic minority groups and the police, one of the concerns raised in the context of the August riots, which is the police practice of “stop and search”.<sup>75</sup> In the Interim Report we read that *these powers are regularly used inappropriately, referencing [...] the regularity of searches and the circumstances in which certain people are targeted*.<sup>76</sup> A formal investigation was launched by the Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), with a report being published on 9 July 2013.<sup>77</sup> The HMIC was critical about the examined practices, stating in its official press release that *the police use of stop and search powers is too often ineffective in tackling crime and procedurally incorrect, thereby threatening the legitimacy of the police*.<sup>78</sup> What seems crucial from the perspective of this article, are the significant discrepancies in the perception of fairness of “stop and search” between the members of certain communities. While 51% of the respondents agreed that *the police’s use of stop and search in their county/city makes them feel safer*,<sup>79</sup> such an opinion was expressed by 53% of those from the white British group and only 40% of the black and minority ethnic groups. 70% of the researched group agreed that *certain groups of people in society are likely to be stopped and searched more often than others in the UK*<sup>80</sup> (which matches the data from the official statistics<sup>81</sup>), and while only 31% of those who agreed believed that to be due to police discrimination against these groups, this number increased to 55% among non-white respondents.<sup>82</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The question of the applicability of an ethnocultural perspective – as analysed in this paper – could be paraphrased in another way – “were these race riots?”

<sup>75</sup> More information on that practice, including when and how it can be used, can be found at the governmental website – see *Police powers to stop and search: your rights*, GOV.uk, at <<https://www.gov.uk/police-powers-to-stop-and-search-your-rights>>, 25 July 2013.

<sup>76</sup> *5 Days in August. An Interim report...*, p. 71.

<sup>77</sup> See *Stop and Search Powers: Are the police using them effectively and fairly?*, HMIC, 9 July 2013, at <<http://www.hmic.gov.uk/publication/stop-and-search-powers-20130709/>>, 25 July 2013; see also the main findings summary captured in *Stop and Search Report*, April 2013, HMIC, at <<http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/media/stop-and-search-survey-summary.pdf>>, 25 July 2013.

<sup>78</sup> *HMIC Press Release #020/2013*, at <<http://www.hmic.gov.uk/news/releases-2013/0202013-hmic-finds-the-police-use-of-stop-and-search-powers-is-too-often-ineffective/>>, 25 July 2013.

<sup>79</sup> *Stop and Search Report...*, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>81</sup> Statistics show for example that *Black people were stopped and searched 7 times more than White people in 2009/10* – *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2010. A Ministry of Justice publication under Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991*, Ministry of Justice, October 2011, p. 38, at <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/219967/stats-race-cjs-2010.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219967/stats-race-cjs-2010.pdf)>, 5 August 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Out of those who have agreed with the discussed statement.

Looking at the official reports, they are quite unanimous in denying this explanation. In the Interim Report we read that the authors *do not believe that these were race riots*,<sup>83</sup> *as they differed considerably from riots in previous years such as 1981 and 1985*.<sup>84</sup> The authors also stated openly that – apart from the events that took place in Tottenham – *the primary motivation for rioting was theft*.<sup>85</sup> The previously discussed research into the involvement of young people<sup>86</sup> likewise did not devote much consideration to the question of race; instead the authors mentioned family, community and cultural factors.

However, *Reading the Riots*, prepared by Guardian and London School of Economics, contained one article devoted directly to this issue, with Hugh Muir and Yemisi Adegoke asking ‘Were the Riots about Race?’<sup>87</sup> The first point they made is that the events of August 2011 were *not disturbances resulting from conflict between races*.<sup>88</sup> Still, they quoted black people – respondents of the interviews<sup>89</sup> conducted by the research team – referring to the feelings of discrimination, unfairness and even hopelessness.

It seems proper to refer to one more piece of research, the article by Ben Bradford and Jonathan Jackson, ‘When Trust Is Lost: the British and their Police after the Tottenham Riots’,<sup>90</sup> where the authors analysed the detrimental effect that improper and unfair police behaviour has on the perception of the legitimacy of the police force within marginalized and excluded communities. Though the themes of legitimacy and, in broader terms, trust in British political system, go beyond the scope of this paper, it appears that the notion of police behaving fairly or unfairly towards certain communities is crucial in terms of proper understanding of the social disorder of August 2011. If we refer again to *Reading of Riots*, the article by Raekha Prasad,<sup>91</sup> it underlines exactly the same theme. 85% of the respondents (active rioters) interviewed within the Guardian/LSE research project<sup>92</sup> stated “policing” as an important factor contributing to rioting, and many called the whole riots “anti-police riots”. There had been recurring complaints about discriminatory policies such as the previously discussed “stop and search”, with many respondents feeling that *the police treated them like criminals regardless of*

<sup>83</sup> *5 Days in August. An Interim report...*, p. 13. The final report of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel, published in March 2012, focused more on *building social and economic resilience*, and preventing future riots than analysing the deep causes of the disorder, mostly referring to the Interim Report for data and the context information. See *After the riots. The final report of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel*, Riots Communities and Victims Panel, March 2012, at <<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121003195935/http://riotspanel.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Riots-Panel-Final-Report1.pdf>>, 30 July 2013.

<sup>84</sup> *5 Days in August. An Interim report...*, p. 55.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> G. Morrell et al., *The August riots in England...*, pp. 33-48.

<sup>87</sup> H. Muir, Y. Adegoke, ‘Were the Riots...’, pp. 47-50.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>89</sup> As mentioned before, researchers conducted 270 interviews with people who took part in the riots.

<sup>90</sup> B. Bradford, J. Jackson, ‘When Trust Is Lost...’

<sup>91</sup> R. Prasad, ‘The Riots...’, pp. 29-33.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

*what they have done.*<sup>93</sup> In this context, it will not be surprising that the highest level of mistrust was found among black respondents.

In conclusion, though it would be a mistake to label the social disorder of August 2011 as “race riots”, the complex ethnic and racial relations, mostly between certain marginalized communities and the police should be taken into account in order to properly understand the events of summer 2011.. The feelings of trust and fairness might need generations to flourish in view of the fact that antipathy and fear seemed to have been growing for decades.

## ANNEX

**Fig. 1.** Timeline of disorder by police force area: number of crimes recorded by the police<sup>94</sup>

Police force <sup>2</sup>	Sat 6th – Sun a.m.	Sun 7th – Mon a.m.	Mon 8th – Tues a.m.	Tues 9th – Weds a.m.	Weds 10th – Thurs a.m.	Total Recorded Crime
Metropolitan	278	433	2,315	348	87	3,461
West Midlands		5	238	237	15	495
Merseyside		6	85	94	10	195
Thames Valley		2	12	46	5	65
Avon & Somerset		4	37	17	1	59
Hertfordshire		4	5	21	3	33
West Yorkshire			17	78	4	99
Leicestershire			10	54	26	90
Nottinghamshire			8	24	2	34
Greater Manchester				581		581
<b>Total</b>	278	454	2,727	1,500	153	5,112
	100+ recorded crimes		20-99 recorded crimes		1-19 recorded crimes	

Notes:

- Each day covers recorded crimes which occurred between 07.30 and 07.29 the next day, apart from Saturday 6 August which covers the whole of the day through to 07:30 on Sunday 7 August.
- Data are shown for the ten police force areas where disorder was most extensive.
- As precise times are not available for all recorded crimes, in a small number of cases this may have resulted in the incorrect allocation of recorded crimes to the date on which they occurred.

**Table 1.** Local areas affected along with the number of recorded crimes<sup>95</sup>

Police Force area	Lower tier Local Authority	Specific areas affected	Total recorded crime
Avon and Somerset	City of Bristol	Bristol city centre, St Pauls	57
Greater Manchester	Manchester	Manchester city centre, Cheetham Hill, Harpurhey, Blackley, Gorton	386

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>94</sup> Source *An Overview of Recorded Crimes...*, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> Based on *Data Tables – An Overview of Recorded Crimes...* Own adaptation of the tables A1 and A5. The table includes crimes occurring between 00:00 on 6 August and 07:29 on 11 August and data are shown for areas within the ten police force areas where disorder was most extensive [Table A5 Description]. Areas with more than 200 crimes are highlighted in grey.

Police Force area	Lower tier Local Authority	Specific areas affected	Total recorded crime
Greater Manchester	Salford	Pendleton, Broughton, Eccles	188
Leicestershire	City of Leicester	Leicester city centre	90
Merseyside	Liverpool	Liverpool city centre, Toxteth, Wavertree	146
Metropolitan	Croydon	Croydon town centre, Thornton Heath, Addiscombe	430
Metropolitan	Southwark	Camberwell, Peckham	314
Metropolitan	Haringey	Tottenham, Hornsey, Wood Green	303
Metropolitan	Ealing	Ealing, West Ealing	279
Metropolitan	Lewisham	Lewisham, Deptford, Catford	213
Metropolitan	Lambeth	Brixton, Streatham, West Norwood	209
Metropolitan	Enfield	Enfield, Edmonton	182
Metropolitan	Hackney	Hackney, Dalston	172
Metropolitan	Greenwich	Woolwich, Eltham	156
Metropolitan	Newham	East Ham, West Ham	152
Metropolitan	Wandsworth	Clapham Junction, Tooting	150
Metropolitan	Waltham Forest	Walthamstow, Leyton, Chingford	129
Metropolitan	Tower Hamlets	Bethnal Green	103
Metropolitan	Bromley	Bromley town centre, Orpington	84
Metropolitan	Redbridge	Ilford	74
Metropolitan	City of Westminster	Bayswater, Marylebone	71
Metropolitan	Camden	Camden Town	59
Metropolitan	Islington	Holloway Road	58
Metropolitan	Barnet	Hendon	50
Metropolitan	Merton	Merton	48
Metropolitan	Barking and Dagenham	Barking	48
Metropolitan	Kensington and Chelsea	Portobello Road	48
West Midlands	Birmingham	Ladywood, Perry Barr	363
West Midlands	City of Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton city centre	81



Police Force area	Lower tier Local Authority	Specific areas affected	Total recorded crime
West Midlands	Sandwell	West Bromwich, Smethwick	46
West Yorkshire	Leeds	Chapelton	69
	Other local authority areas		136
Total			5 112

**Table 2.** Disorder-related recorded crime by local authority area, by type of crime [%]  
(for 15 areas with the highest number of crimes recorded)<sup>96</sup>

Lower tier local authority	Police Force Area	Total crimes recorded [>=100%]	Acquisitive	Criminal damage	Disorder	Violence against the person	Other
Croydon	Metropolitan	430	75	17	2	3	3
Manchester	Greater Manchester	386	48	39	3	6	4
Birmingham	West Midlands	363	58	36	2	4	1
Southwark	Metropolitan	314	75	18	0	6	2
Haringey	Metropolitan	303	51	37	1	8	3
Ealing	Metropolitan	279	46	39	5	5	4
Lewisham	Metropolitan	213	56	31	2	11	0
Lambeth	Metropolitan	209	62	21	1	12	4
Salford	Greater Manchester	188	41	29	2	26	3
Enfield	Metropolitan	182	32	53	2	5	7
Hackney	Metropolitan	172	49	30	1	12	8
Greenwich	Metropolitan	156	63	28	1	6	2
Newham	Metropolitan	152	51	32	5	9	4
Wandsworth	Metropolitan	150	59	33	1	4	2
Liverpool	Merseyside	146	16	73	8	3	1

<sup>96</sup> Based on *Data Tables – An Overview of Recorded Crimes...* Own adaptation of the table A1 and table 2. It includes crimes occurring between 00.00 on 6 August and 07.29 on 11 August. “Acquisitive” offences include burglary, theft, handling stolen goods and robbery. “Criminal damage” offences include criminal damage and arson. “Disorder” offences include violent disorder and public order offences. “Violence against the person” offences include murder, wounding, grievous bodily harm, assault and possession of weapons. “Other” offences include drugs offences, driving offences and a range of other miscellaneous offences [Table 2 Description]. Areas where acquisitive crime constitutes more than 50% of all the crimes recorded are highlighted in grey.

Table 3. Self-defined ethnicity of persons brought to courts<sup>97</sup>

Ethnicity	London		West Midlands		Nottin-gham		Greater Manchester		Mersey side		Other		Total	
	No	%*	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
White – British	503	26%	107	36%	22	35%	179	73%	67	73%	66	73%	944	35%
White – Irish	25	1%	2	1%	–	–	2	1%	–	–	–	–	29	1%
White – Other	109	6%	3	1%	1	2%	9	4%	–	–	3	3%	125	5%
Black – Caribbean	425	22%	65	22%	11	17%	5	2%	1	1%	8	9%	515	19%
Black – African	245	13%	17	6%	–	–	17	7%	3	3%	2	2%	284	10%
Black – Other	210	11%	18	6%	10	16%	4	2%	8	9%	2	2%	252	9%
Asian – Indian	21	1%	8	3%	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1%	30	1%
Asian – Pakistani	33	2%	20	7%	–	–	3	1%	–	–	1	1%	57	2%
Asian – Bangladeshi	22	1%	6	2%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	28	1%
Asian – Other	53	3%	7	2%	–	–	–	–	3	3%	–	–	63	2%
White and Black Caribbean	134	7%	30	10%	16	25%	15	6%	3	3%	6	7%	204	8%
White and Black African	30	2%	–	–	–	–	5	2%	–	–	–	–	35	1%
White and Asian	4	0%	3	1%	–	–	1	0%	–	–	–	–	8	0%
Any other mixed background	60	3%	6	2%	2	3%	1	0%	4	4%	1	1%	74	3%
Chinese	3	0%	–	–	–	–	1	0%	–	–	–	–	4	0%
Other	45	2%	4	1%	1	2%	2	1%	3	3%	1	1%	56	2%
Not stated/recorded	324		38		1		5		1		26		395	
Total	2 246	100%	334	100%	64	100%	249	100%	93	100%	117	100%	3 103	100%

\* Of all those whose ethnicity was recorded.

<sup>97</sup> Based on *Public disorder of 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> August 2011 statistical tables – September 2012...* Merged tables 1.9a and 1.9b.

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