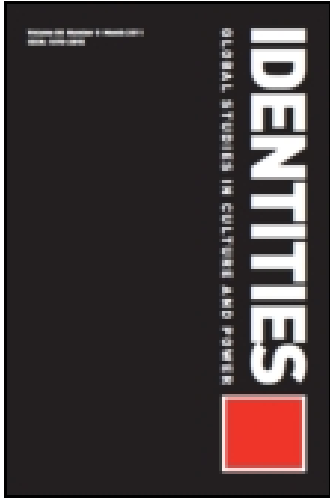


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“Why Can’t You Say You Are from Bangladesh?”: Demographic Anxiety and Hindu Nationalist Common Sense in the Aftermath of the 2008 Jaipur Bombings

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This article examines the feedback loop between governmental technologies of enumeration and surveillance and Hindu nationalist common sense that creates and sustains what I call “demographic anxiety” about Bangladeshi immigrants and Indian Muslims in the north Indian city of Jaipur. A series of bombings in 2008, rapidly and erroneously attributed to Bangladeshi infiltrators, brought to light the role of these forms of knowledge in struggles over city space and possible urban futures in Jaipur, as well as an incoherent but widespread construction of the demographically aggressive Muslim. I argue that “Bangladeshi” has thus become a mobile signifier that catches up disparate ways of “knowing” local populations. Drawing on personal and research experiences in Jaipur City and newspaper and other media accounts of the bombings, I track the mobilization of this signifier and its material consequences, particularly as they pertain to the fate of Jaipur’s “Bangladeshi Basti,” which became the site of intense police scrutiny in the aftermath of the bombings. I pay special attention to the ways in which the limits of governmental practices of legibility, such as identity documentation, produce both the will to statistical knowledge and a widespread reliance on common sense that reinforce one another.

Key Words: Bangladeshi immigration, urban India, demography, documentation, surveillance, common sense

“Terror Strikes Pink City”¹

At around 7:30 on the evening of May 13, 2008, nine bombs strapped to bicycles exploded in crowded parts of the walled city of Jaipur, capital of the north Indian state of Rajasthan, killing 67 people and injuring an additional 300. The fatalities occurred across caste, class, and religion: worshippers visiting popular local temples, schoolchildren, a bangle seller, and two policemen were among the dead. A popular tourist destination in which Indians and foreigners alike can discover the romance of the “real India,” Jaipur was not previously seen as a potential terror hub.² Despite the fact that there have been three major bursts of inter-religious violence in the city (in 1989, 1990, 1992),³ the self-perception of this provincial capital, and Rajasthan more generally, is that it is a peaceful place where the contentious communal relations that mar

public life in nearby Gujarat, or more distant Kashmir, are not an issue. Many residents and onlookers publicly mourned the city's entrée to the club of terror strike sites. Something had changed dramatically, they claimed, and it threatened the very nature of this harmonious place.⁴

As has become routine in such cases, government officials, news outlets, and religious political leaders pointed across the border to a menacing, but invisible, foreign hand. Only this time, despite Rajasthan's long border with Pakistan, they pointed to the east, at Bangladesh. According to such sources, the blasts were an almost inevitable outcome of the ever-growing, though hardly brand-new, problem of the illegal immigration of "Bangladeshis" to the city.

Supposed links to the Bangladeshi militant group Harkat-ul-Jihadi Islami (HuJI) emerged throughout the following day. Even when an e-mail from a previously unknown group calling itself the "Indian Mujahideen" arrived at television stations in Uttar Pradesh, a large state abutting Rajasthan, claiming responsibility for the bombing—and containing footage of the bicycles that were used to deliver the bombs *before* they were mangled by the blasts—local media and officials in the Hindu-nationalist state government persisted in stressing possible links to Bangladesh. Various kinds of evidence were marshaled to prove the link, among them the assertion by a Jaipuri bicycle vendor that the men who purchased the bicycles spoke Hindi with a Bengali accent and the presence of five cigarette butts of Bangladeshi make at one of the bomb sites.⁵

At the national level, the possible Bangladesh connection translated into calls by the Hindu nationalist opposition party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), for increased border control and the reenactment of the now rescinded Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) that was repealed in 2004 and that had given the state wide latitude in pursuing so-called terror suspects (in a manner akin to the United States Patriot Act).⁶ Vasundhara Raje, the chief minister of Rajasthan and member of the BJP, even questioned the authenticity of the e-mail videos that had been sent by an ostensibly Indian group to claim responsibility, saying they might have been sent to mislead investigators; her claims ceased only when a serial number on one of the bicycles in the film clips was matched to one in the bombing wreckage.⁷ What Rajasthan and India needed, Raje told reporters, was a "stronger law like POTA."⁸ L. K. Advani, a senior BJP party official, called the reintroduction of POTA the "need of the hour" and harshly criticized the Centre's Congress Party-led coalition for having withdrawn the legislation.⁹

Throughout the city of Jaipur, a different kind of border control program was pursued. City residents identified as “Bangladeshi”—whether they were in fact from Bangladesh, Indian Bengali speakers, or simply Muslim—were detained, beaten, and held without their families being informed about their welfare or the charges brought against them.¹⁰ At least 116 people were sent to Judicial Custody. The arrests continued in earnest for about a week, though they did not yield any significant information about the bombings or their perpetrators. Of special concern for police was a relocation camp, some fifteen kilometers outside the city, called Bagrana, which had become home to many of Jaipur’s Bengali-speaking residents after the razing of Gopalbari Basti,¹¹ a long-established “Bangladeshi” slum, in 2003; it is also thought to be a center of crime in the city.

Demographic anxiety, common sense, and a note on method

In the aftermath of the Jaipur bombings, the official, national-level response focused attention on issues of international border security, cross-border terrorism, and the need for domestic surveillance, as we can see in the calls by Raje and Advani to revive POTA. In this article, I argue that, rather than reproducing this official rhetoric of borders and external threats, the bombings and their aftermath need to be seen in the context of a Hindu nationalist common sense—and an attendant anxiety—about the demographic behaviors and proclivities of Indian Muslims. When we look at the ways in which this common sense is articulated to struggles over city space and possible urban futures in Jaipur, the targeting of Jaipur’s Bangladeshi community appears to be as much about the management of the internal nation-space of India as it is about border control. The attitude of many Jaipuris toward “Bangladeshis” in the city crystallizes notions of Indian Muslims as “enemies within,” a discursive collapse that is enabled by Hindu nationalist common sense about masculinity and the reproductive strategies of Muslims in South Asia to alter the demographic status quo. In Jaipur, demographic anxiety centers on the figure of the “Bangladeshi.” My use of scare quotes around the term (they will not be inserted hereafter) is intended to highlight that Bangladeshi is not, in Jaipur, a sociohistorical identity that refers to one’s provenance on the eastern side of the Indian border. As I hope to show, it is rather a mobile signifier that catches up disparate ways of “knowing” local populations and diffuse, but widespread, concerns about perceived changes in this rapidly growing city.

We might see the response to the 2008 bombings, then, as an instantiation of a broader anxiety around border issues that shapes (inter)

national politics in South Asia, one that is at times more demographic than cartographic (see Krishna 1994). Borders are not simply about marking insides and outsides. Rather, as Ranabir Samaddar argues, the border “exteriorizes the interior and interiorizes the exterior” in an effort to secure centers of power (1999: 20). One of the main ways in which the process of exteriorizing the interior and interiorizing the exterior happens is through the mobilization of interior and exterior in public debates about supposed immigrant communities far from the geographical border. In these spaces in the “center,” to use Samaddar’s model, interior and exterior are demographic questions: How many people? From where? Reproducing how quickly? Thus, crises of the exterior in the interior seem to call for the mobilization of those governmental apparatuses (e.g., statistics) described by Michel Foucault as primarily targeting problems of the population, but have as their “essential mechanism” the “apparatuses of security” (1994: 219).

A number of studies in history, anthropology, and other allied fields over the last two decades have shown the deep relationship between imaginaries of the state and the more mundane practices of such governmental projects. Attending closely to the colonial contexts in which many of these strategies emerged, these studies have shown how technologies, like censuses, which seek to enumerate and classify, work to render “native” or otherwise “deviant” populations knowable, comparable, and administratable (e.g., see Appadurai 1996; Kapalgam 2000; Dirks 2001). Such strategies are, in short, what Veena Das and Deborah Poole identify as state practices of “legibility,” which consist of “the documentary and statistics-gathering practices of the state” that are intended to “consolidate state control over subjects, populations, territories, and lives” (2004: 9).

As Das and Poole note, however, legibility is perhaps more a structure of aspiration than an accomplished fact. Often “the state is continually both experienced and undone through the *illegibility* of its own practices, documents, and words” (10; emphasis in original). Akhil Gupta makes a similar point about governmentality in India, noting that,

when one disaggregates the state and analyzes the workings of individual bureaucracies and programs . . . it becomes more difficult to conceptualize a coordinated, systematic institution that can exploit the data collected by its various apparatuses. In fact, the level of coordination between agencies and bureaucracies of the state implied by the term surveillance, with its connotation of linkages between data collection and repression, suggests capabilities that the state may not possess (2001: 88).

Unexpected circulations, the vagaries of social "data collection," alternative sites of local power, possible falsifications, and, as I will argue below, other ways of knowing simultaneously secure and undo the state and state-recognized identities. Thus, I argue that, in addition to concerns over (imagined) demographic trends themselves, the aftermath of the bombings throws into relief the extent to which concerns about "outsider" populations are also about the *limits* of those administrative technologies, such as censuses, surveys, and registries, that are supposed to capture and predict demographic behavior and secure national identity. Therefore, in addition to seeing demographic knowledge as a site of discipline and surveillance, we must also see it as a site of intense anxiety about the limits of discipline and surveillance. Another way of saying this is that documentary evidence often does more to provoke questions about the possibility of its own veracity than to provide proof of anything. Because censuses cannot count everyone, because official documents can be faked or expire, and because the strength of common sense can override the kinds of evidence demanded by projects of governance, questions about demography and the documentary regimes produced to answer them can rarely be settled; they are therefore open to myriad interpretations and purposes.

In this article, I argue that the kinds of documentary, demographic knowledge that are produced—or not produced—about Jaipur's Bangladeshi residents exist in a kind of feedback loop with what, following Pradip Kumar Datta, I am calling "Hindu nationalist common sense." This common sense is, like rumor or myth, another source of knowledge that is often operationalized precisely when the limits of administrative technologies appear to be reached. Like Datta, I take my basic understanding of common sense from the work of Antonio Gramsci, for whom common sense is a "chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions" in which one can find "anything one likes" (1999: 422). In contradistinction to good sense, common sense cannot be ascertained—or, we might add, represented—in terms of a coherent worldview. It is fractured, mobile, and not always articulable; as Gramsci remarks, it "cannot be reduced to unity and coherence even within an individual consciousness, let alone collective consciousness" (326). This does not mean, however, that it is singular or independent. Rather, in his view, common sense continually transforms itself and is always in dialogue with other ways of knowing, including science and philosophy (326 n.5) or, as in the case I describe below, projects of political economy like demography. I will have more to say about this below. For now, I want to note that common sense is diffuse and shifting, yet it gets traction from the many other forms of knowledge that it takes into itself.

This insight has implications for methodology in terms of the study of common sense. If common sense by definition cannot be articulated as a worldview, then the stuff of much of ethnographic research (e.g., individual and aggregated testimony) will not necessarily move us toward a better understanding of it. Surely echoes of common sense—pieces, fragments, and reworkings—are likely to appear in the speech of many individuals and the lines of many newspaper columns, but the very incoherence of common sense means it must be pieced together from fragments of utterances from many sources. To talk about common sense, a methodology for a more dispersed field of exploration is necessary.

My methodology in this article is shaped by the recognition of this incoherence and dispersion, as well as the simple fact that I was not in Jaipur when the blasts occurred. I have not conducted research specifically on Jaipur's Bangladeshi or Muslim residents, though I did talk to local political figures who were organizing with displaced Bangladeshis and visited a community of squatters identified as Bangladeshi after the razing of Gopalbari Basti. The impetus for this article was precisely that in the aftermath of the bombings much of the media coverage led me to harken back to other statements—often off-the-cuff, as-an-aside comments—I had heard while conducting dissertation research in the city that was *not* about these issues directly. It seemed that I already had a framework for hearing the statements that were made about the bombing—that I had imbibed enough of this common sense in oblique ways to hear its traces. In 2002–2003 and on several subsequent visits, I conducted ethnographic research on state-sponsored women's empowerment programs in Jaipur District, including in Jaipur City itself. Reproductive and child health figure prominently in state outreach for women, and thus the site of my longest-lasting and most intense engagement was another urban *kacchi basti* that housed a small women's health post. My contact with health workers and another of the city's "slum" groups—a small, urban Scheduled Tribe called the Dhanka with whom Bangladeshi migrants may be in competition for jobs—forms part of my ethnographic "data" in what follows.¹²

I also remembered learning about the common sense and anxiety surrounding Bangladeshi communities in Jaipur several days after Gopalbari Basti was demolished in 2003. I was accompanying a group of middle-class friends to one of Jaipur's new restaurants to have dinner, enjoy the air-conditioning, and relax; on our way, we drove past the former site of the slum. Having just visited some of the squatters living on the road across from the former site of Gopalbari Basti, camped over the open sewers, I commented to the others in the car, "I sat with

those people recently. It was a very moving and difficult day for me. The girls told me that a rat bites their toes at night . . ."

One of my friends interrupted before I could go on, "Oh, you mean the Bangladeshis?" Eager at having been asked about my work, I continued, "No, actually. What is fascinating is that even though this area has been called Bangladeshi Basti for a long time, they're actually drum-makers from Uttar Pradesh." My explanation was cut short by an overlapping series of responses from everyone sitting in the car: *Of course they're Bangladeshis*, my friends said. *They must have lied. Did you see their IDs to prove that they're Indians?* someone asked. *All Indians have IDs, and if they didn't show one, that means they were lying. They come here to get our services for free and are responsible for a lot of crime.* I answered in return that I believed the squatters, upset that my friends did not trust my skills as a researcher and hurt by their insistence that, as a non-native Jaipuri, I was so gullible as to be completely fooled. The subject was more or less dropped when it became clear that the debate was threatening to spoil what was supposed to be a fun outing, but its effects on my thinking about the issue have lingered. My dinner companions were all secularists who have a broad and diverse social circle, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and others. They are not, in other words, Hindu nationalists. And, in retrospect, they may have been correct about the people with whom I had spoken. I had not verified their story in any documentary way. What interests me is not the truth of either claim, but the common sense status of my friends' response. Clearly, there was something at stake in the question of whether or not squatters on Station Road were from Bangladesh. Common sense—with or without direct contact with these groups—held that they were.

In what follows, then, I move between conversations during fieldwork, unexpected chats with longtime friends, newspaper and other media sources, and a visit to the former site of Gopalbari Basti to unpack what I mean by "Hindu nationalist common sense" in this rapidly changing city. This common sense does not emerge fully formed from any one of these sites, and it is not reproduced as a coherent ideology by most local residents, but when a mosaic of statements are taken together, we begin to be able to map the logics and illogics that made the swift and decisive turn against Bangladeshis in Jaipur after the 2008 bombings almost inevitable and that make Hindu nationalist common sense increasingly insidious in Indian political life: even those Jaipuris who do not hold to a particularly BJP platform mobilize its fragments, confirming Thomas Blom Hansen's argument that the "high-profile communal discourse of the Sangh parivar has left a large number of traces in everyday discourse" (1999: 207). We can track the

relationship between this pervasive but evanescent common sense and the administrative practices of legibility that are supposed to convert unknowable dangers into demographic trends. We can also gain some insight into the kind of will to knowledge that is at play in South Asian foreign policy today.

The demography of Hindu nationalist common sense

In his insightful reading of early Hindu nationalist tracts on the Indian census, Pradip Kumar Datta describes a dense, intertextual “common sense” that was consolidated in the early twentieth century around a perceived threat to the Hindu majority posed by a demographically aggressive and organized Muslim minority. Datta suggests that one of the “primary sources of communal power,” reflected in the fragmented trajectories of such tracts, is that communal stereotypes become forms of common sense that can be reiterated “without necessarily sounding repetitive” and “without appearing to be ideologically interested” (1993: 1305). Following Gramsci, he argues that “[t]he disjointedness of common sense naturalises ideology by providing a form of thought that does not encourage a testing of orientations, precisely because questions of interestedness are made redundant” (1316). Hindu nationalist discussions of the census thus became a “constellation of significations” (1305) that can shift to include or reorient new elements as historical conditions change.¹³

I take two important insights from Datta’s historical analysis and his reading of Gramsci. The first is that we can expect to see the common sense of communal demography across variegated sites in public discourse in contemporary India. Ideas about differential population growth between communities are put to novel and unexpected uses because they are especially potent anchoring points for creating the difference of communal identity—and creating that difference as threat—itself. The second insight that I take up below is that we need to examine the particular constellation of ideas that constitute common sense on a specific issue at any given moment, because it is always mobile, shifting, and disjointed. In other words, it is important to map out some of the different fragments that are brought together in this common sense as it is applied to an event such as the 2008 bombings in Jaipur.

Here, I gesture toward three different assumptions that guided responses to the bombings and placed concerns about Bangladeshis in Jaipur at the center of the aftermath. Each could be, and has been, the subject of its own study. I present them here to stress my point that the events in May 2008 in Jaipur need to be seen not only through the lens

of international relations—as an issue of borders and migration—but also, and more importantly, as part of the broader terrain of demographic anxiety related to Muslims within the Indian nation-state in which the feedback loop of governmental forms of knowledge and common sense is continually being reinforced.

Assumption 1. Muslim men are inherently aggressive. They are thus overly reproductive and prone to violence. This proclivity is both natural and religious. Muslims are also engaged in an effort to enlarge their population and outnumber Hindus, which is an effect of vote bank politics and "appeasement."

As many commentators have noted, a widespread belief among Hindutva proponents is that Muslim men channel their natural (i.e., racially derived) virility and aggression into a demographic strategy: produce more children to, eventually, outnumber Hindus (Baber 2004; Anand 2007; see also Bacchetta 1999). Their view, summarized by Dibyesh Anand, is generally that,

Islam is backward and regressive in its attitude towards reproduction: the Qu'ran exhorts adherents to produce children; the Prophet set a personal example; there is a prohibition on birth control; and most importantly, it allows/encourages Muslim men to have four wives (2007: 260).

Muslim men are, in this analysis, both helplessly fanatical and entirely calculated. Despite much evidence to indicate that polygamy is no more common among Muslims than Hindus, that Muslim birth rates in India are falling, and that girl children fare better in terms of general life chances in Muslim families, this view of Muslim demographic behaviors and proclivities prevails across a wide swathe of Hindu castes and classes (see Hansen 1999: 178).¹⁴

I encountered this form of common sense in discussions with reproductive health workers in Jaipur. My own (albeit unscientific) comparison of statistics from two adjoining neighborhoods in Jaipur (one Scheduled Tribe Hindu and the other Muslim) showed that family size was related more to income level than to religion, with ST Hindu and Muslim families of roughly the same income having roughly the same number of children. (How the ST Hindus felt about the habits of their neighbors, reproductive and otherwise, is a separate issue to which I return below.) My comparison is in keeping with the findings of many demographers (Jeffrey and Jeffrey 2000). Yet it was a widely held opinion among health workers—even those who worked in both Hindu

and Muslim areas daily—that Muslim men were sexually rapacious, opposed to birth control (and modernity), and, therefore, overly reproductive. (This belief often maps onto party politics such that a major accusation of the BJP toward the Congress Party is that it encourages Muslim overreproduction to capture votes.)

For example, in November 2002, I conducted an interview with a medical officer in a D-Health Post located in a Muslim-majority part of the city. During the interview, he repeatedly referenced his Muslim patients' resistance to hygiene and family planning because, he said, it was against their religion. After the interview, the doctor and I were walking toward his motor scooter when rather out-of-the-blue he commented that "these people are notorious." When I asked him what he meant, he said that the area where the health post was located was one of the worst in Jaipur because it was largely occupied by Muslims, commenting that they were not just poor but "a vote bloc." The doctor continued that residents of the area were Congress Party supporters when "all the educated people go for the BJP." He lamented that this state of affairs had given the Congress a "thumping majority" in Rajasthan and repeated his opening statement that the residents were "notorious." While this is a particularly offensive and extreme version of this common sense assumption, the link between Muslims' lack of commitment to family planning and efforts to maintain themselves as a voting power was something that recurred in my conversations with Hindu health workers in the city, whether or not they were posted to Muslim areas.

Assumption 2. Most Bangladeshi immigrants are Muslim and, therefore, their demographic aggression is twofold: through immigration and through reproduction. The main aim of this aggression is to usurp the benefits of the Indian welfare state.

Elements of (1) become incorporated into concerns about Bangladeshi immigrants in India. The term "demographic aggression" comes from a Hindutva tract published in the 1990s that describes the arrival in India of a "Muslim avalanche from Bangladesh" (Rai 1993 cited in Ramachandran 1999: 244). According to Sujata Ramachandran, this aggression has three main foci: the eviction of Hindus from Bangladesh, the uncontrolled fertility of Bangladeshis in India, and the "infiltration" of migrants seeking economic opportunities and welfare benefits (1999: 239). Thus, perceived threats from within, in the form of concerted reproduction, are supplemented by threats from without such that all Muslims are discursively conjoined in opposition to all Hindus and a Hindu nation-state.

The conjunction makes the space of the transit camp an especially fraught and mobile symbol. Consider that, several months before Gopalbari Basti in Jaipur was razed, the chief minister of Gujarat, Hindu fundamentalist firebrand Narendra Modi, caused a national uproar when discussing the fate of Muslim Gujaratis displaced by post-Godhra riots.¹⁵ He reportedly incited a large crowd by asking, “What should we do? Run relief camps for them? Do we want to open baby-producing centres? *Hum panch, humare pachees* [We are five, we (will) have twenty-five].”¹⁶ In this infamous speech, Modi twisted the well-known family planning slogan of the 1970s, “*Hum do, humare do* [We are two, we have two]” to conjure the specter of uncontrollable population growth putting a strain on public resources.

An opinion column in early 2003 summarized this view of Bangladeshi immigration:

‘pull factors’ like job opportunities, access to public distribution system, social security benefits, free education, easy acquisition of immovable property, enlistment as voters and, above all, a congenial socio-cultural atmosphere attract Bangladeshi migrants to India. The high stakes of some political parties in captive immigrant vote banks, unbridled corruption in the BSF (Border Security Force), and organised rackets on both sides of the border promote cross-border infiltration on a *massive scale* (emphasis added).¹⁷

In such accounts—and one could hear similar explanations of Bangladeshi immigration in Jaipur—no mention is made of the deplorable conditions under which many Bangladeshis, Bengali-speakers, and Indian Muslims live in north India cities. Poverty is erased, and the image that emerges is one of a wealthy, thriving diaspora preying on the largesse of the Indian state. Reference to the “massive scale” reinforces other imagery of avalanches and invasions that threaten to completely overpower the communities encountered along the way. “Massive” is enormous but uncountable, therefore unknowable, and extremely threatening.

Assumption 3. Because illegal immigrants are difficult to document, estimates of Bangladeshis living in India are greatly underestimated. Further, because unscrupulous politicians have used Bangladeshis as a vote bank and secured fake ID and ration cards for them, documents of citizenship are irrelevant. Whether it is obtaining false documents or worse, Bangladeshis are likely to be criminals.

The actual number of Bangladeshis living in India has been a subject of intense debate in recent years. In February of 2003 (again,

shortly before Gopalbari Basti was razed) a group of migrating performers were stranded in the liminal border zone between Bangladesh and West Bengal for a period of weeks. The incident provided occasion for a series of calls to deal with the increasing threat of infiltrators from the east. Then Deputy Prime Minister L. K. Advani called on Bangladesh to take back the 213 men, women, and children and used the opportunity to publicly warn that there were 15–20 million Bangladeshis living in India who posed a security threat.¹⁸ His estimate, 15–20 million, was perhaps based on a statement by the home ministry that 20 million illegal Bangladeshi immigrants would be deported,¹⁹ but no source was ever cited. In fact, in none of the public statements was any particular study or survey ever cited for the numbers, though the Intelligence Bureau apparently based their claim that the number was 16 million on a mysterious report that was not made public in the debate. For their part, Bangladeshi officials replied that the stranded migrants were not Bangladeshi citizens at all, but Indians, echoing their rather bizarre and oft-repeated claim that there are no illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in India. The refugees were allowed to cross the border into Bangladesh after one week.²⁰

How many immigrants are there? The problem of not knowing numbers is intimately linked to the problem of documentary evidence and one cannot be resolved through the resolution of the other. Much as my friends insisted that I had been talking to Bangladeshis because I saw no Indian IDs, the governmental response to the problem of not knowing is to stress the need to produce documentary evidence, to help produce real numbers. But documentary evidence is not trusted because, in a twist of no little irony, politicians in cities like Jaipur have used Bangladeshi numbers to secure vote banks, registering many and perhaps doing so “illegally.” Common sense now holds that documents held by Bangladeshis are not proof of anything. Much like crime statistics, as described in the case of South Africa by Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (2006), there is a “paradox of dis/trust” around national identification in India. While crime statistics and identity documents “constitute a widely cited measure of social order, they tend also to be *distrusted*, largely because of their susceptibility to abuse. They are, in short, at once a fetish and the object of a lively hermeneutic of suspicion” (2006: 22; italics in original); following Das and Poole, we might say that they undo the possibility of their own legibility.

We must consider that, as communities viewed as outside the fold in north Indian cities, Bangladeshi immigrants are induced, as Sharat Lin and Madan Paul argue, to “search for every avenue of legitimization of residency, including winning the patronage of top religious leaders and politicians, acquisition of ration cards, construction of

authorized permanent housing, or the community attaining status as a registered society” (1995: 12). Historically, this search has made the link between population and city life powerfully literal: one of the main paths to plot regularization in the 1970s was through sterilization, which Bangladeshis were more willing to undertake than native Indians because of their overall vulnerability (9).²¹ Thus, we might see the efforts on the part of Bangladeshi immigrants to obtain documentation less as a scheme to obtain welfare services—though they might accrue via the documents—and more as an effort to secure footing in a hostile urban environment. Yet the notion that Bangladeshi communities have access to, and receive benefits from, the Indian state is an essential piece of Hindu nationalist common sense.

The “local man” and the “Bangladeshi” in Jaipur

While immigration from Bangladesh has largely been treated as an issue confined to border zones like Assam and West Bengal, many north Indian cities have seen a steady, if punctuated, flow of immigrants since 1971. Refugees who settled in places like New Delhi, Lucknow, and Jaipur were allowed entrance because of Indira Gandhi’s support for Bangladesh; they came to India in part due to the belief, which prevailed until 1975, that she was going to help open the border between the two countries (Lin and Paul 1995).

Starting in the 1980s, most migrants left Bangladesh for economic reasons and arrived in north Indian cities looking for better sources of livelihood than were available in the rural areas they had left. The majority are Muslim, but there are also a significant number of Hindus (Lin and Paul 1995). Since the early 1990s, however, there has been a decided shift in how these new arrivals are characterized by the Indian state, with support for refugees morphing into fears about “infiltrators.” As Willem van Schendel notes, while the discourse of infiltration really began around Bengali-speaking immigrants in Tripura and Assam in the 1960s, it has since broadened to refer both to those who seek to “demographically attack” India and to criminals and terrorists who pose a national security threat (2005: 195–197). Bangladeshi, then, refers not only to migrants in national discourse but to those who seek, in ever-increasing numbers, to avail themselves of the generosity of the Indian state and who simultaneously threaten security.

As mentioned above, the term Bangladeshi in Jaipur does not refer simply to groups of people from Bangladesh. It is often used to refer to any Bengali-speaker or Bengali-speaking Muslim, sometimes simply to refer to Muslims, and occasionally to refer to any

non-Rajasthani. One also often hears Bangladeshi as part of a conjoined chain: Bangladeshi-Bengali-Bihari. Sometimes these labels are used interchangeably. Bangladeshi, then, is a shifting constellation of meanings that may or may not refer to particular groups of people who may or may not actually come from Bangladesh. While at least one recent study reported that most migrants (81 percent) living in squatter settlements in the city come from within Rajasthan itself (Goyle et al. 2004), the idea remains among residents of the city that in-migrants are Bangladeshis who have changed the urban dynamic for the worse.

There are several Bengali-speaking communities in the city. Bengalis have long visited Jaipur because one of its most famous religious icons, the Shila Devi of Amber, is originally from Jessore in East Bengal. It is thus a popular pilgrimage site for Hindu Bengalis, part of a well-worn path between eastern and western India. Economic migrants from West Bengal, more common since the 1980s, have come mainly for domestic work, construction, and rag-picking.

Cooch Beharis, who also speak Bengali, have settled in the city since the arrival of Maharani Gayatri Devi, erstwhile Princess of Jaipur, who is herself Cooch Behari and continues to visit the region where she is still known as “Ma.”²² Men from Cooch Behar often work in construction, particularly roofing (PUCL 2008: 5). Many women from Cooch Behar labor as domestic workers and child caregivers; they are mostly Hindu, though some Muslim women also take up such work. One Bengali domestic worker residing in Jaipur told me that it was widely believed among her community that they would be persecuted immediately upon the Maharani’s death, but that, until that time, she served as patroness for the migrants and protected them.

Bangladeshis from Bangladesh officially number 10,000 in the city and 20,000 in Rajasthan as a whole, though these numbers are reported with the inevitable caveat that the real number may be significantly higher (PUCL 2008). Many of Jaipur’s residents who are from Bangladesh came as refugees of the 1971 war, fleeing the Pakistani Army. Local lore has it that these newcomers were welcomed initially because they were seen as destitute victims of forces beyond their control who had no choice but to move and nowhere else to go; attitudes have changed, however, since the common sense of demographic aggression and the specter of criminality in a burgeoning city has grown. They continue to arrive in the city with the assistance of border-runners, known as *dalals*, who help potential migrants bribe border guards and enter India. The majority of these immigrants are Muslims seeking better economic conditions in India, but there are also a considerable number of Hindus.²³

It is important to keep in mind that, whatever the number of immigrants, all migration to Jaipur is part of the amazingly rapid growth of the city over the last fifty years. In 1951, the population of Jaipur was 300,000; in 2001, it was 2.3 million. According to the Jaipur Municipal Corporation, in the last decade alone, the population increased by 800,000 people (Government of Rajasthan 2006: 2.1.1). The effects of the expansion are visceral. Not only has the city-as-built-environment far outstretched its former boundaries, engulfing what were once villages in the surrounding environs, the city-as-idea has also grown. What was once a rather sleepy provincial capital now ranks eleventh in the list of Indian “mega cities” (Government of Rajasthan 2006: 2.1.1). Local narratives of change over time often explicitly link this growth—and an attendant erosion of the quality of life, particularly a rise in violent crime—to the arrival of ever-greater numbers of Bangladeshis.

It is also important to note that ideas about Bangladeshis in Jaipur are not simply held by the upper-caste Hindus who comprise the BJP’s main supporters. I frequently encountered references to Bihari-Bengali-Bangladeshis while conducting research with the Dhanka, who have historically supported the Congress Party. Dhanka men, who often blame “outsider” migrants for their own rising levels of unemployment, drew stark distinctions between themselves and these outsiders despite their own subordinate status in the city. Outsiders are also blamed for the population growth that has led to crowding and crime in the city. One young man told me,

Before [the city] was good. Now it’s not good. Because before only Jaipuris lived here. That’s how discipline was maintained. Now Biharis and Bengalis have come, and the law and order is destroyed. Say a man from Jaipur will do some work for 2000 rupees. The Bihari will take it for 1500.

Though he references the vulnerability of in-migrating laborers who have to take work for lower wages to survive, this young man sees Bengali-speakers—who are always implicitly Muslim—as competition and a threat to a way of life. An elder of the Dhanka community echoed this young man’s sentiments when he told me,

These people [who come for contract work] are thieves. You see the names of these people in the newspapers. The *local man* [in English] who is from here will never steal anything because he is afraid of being caught when all his relatives live here. He will not be engaged in *criminal* activity. These outsiders live together, 4–5 people in a single room, so it becomes very economical for them.

This elder's reference to the newspapers is important because it points to the extent to which crime reporting, as a mode of "generalizing the singular" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006) creates social facts. Indeed, as Charu Gupta and Mukul Sharma show, newspapers have been integral to the shaping of Hindu nationalist common sense by using anti-Muslim tropes and pursuing selective reportage (1996).

In addition to attributing crime and social deterioration to non-locals, the Dhanka elder's narrative calls up images of overpopulation ("4–5 in a single room") that reinforce the idea that immigration is pushing the city beyond its boundaries and the common sense assumption that Muslims contribute more to population growth than Hindus because of a kind of inherent hyperreproductivity.

What emerges from such statements taken together is a non-elite view that is strikingly similar to that held by doctors and other health workers about deterioration and growth in the city. A Jaipuri identity, even if it is one with which Scheduled Tribe groups have a fraught relationship, is established by drawing the distinction between the "local man" and the Bangladeshi. In this formulation, the local man is implicitly Hindu—not demographically aggressive. The non-local is implicitly Muslim (and male) and, therefore, the object of demographic anxiety. His numbers trouble: too many people in a room, working for too little money.

From Gopalbari to Bagrana

The Gopalbari slum was known as Bangladeshi Basti in reference to the many Bangladeshis who resided there. Some were among the original refugees of the 1971 war and recognized as such by the Indian state; there were, in other words, many slum residents from Bangladesh whose children had subsequently been born in India and who had documents showing their residence in India for over twenty years. Covering about five *bighas*²⁴ of land in a prime location near the Jaipur railway station, this slum was a feature of the Jaipur landscape for nearly three decades. Its residents survived as "rag-pickers": informal workers who survive by picking through garbage, gathering plastic, waste paper, and glass bottles to sell to local buyers for small sums of money.²⁵

In the spring of 2003, all of the residents of Gopalbari were ousted and their homes were bulldozed by the Jaipur Development Authority (JDA). This was only the most recent in a series of efforts to rid the city of unofficial Bangladeshi residents that began in earnest in 2001. That was the year that a Congress Party-led state government decided to repatriate 3,500 illegal migrants after police clashes with Gopalbari

residents. The clashes began after police tried to arrest two young men who were suspected of attacking people with knives.²⁶ The spring of 2003 offered an opportune moment to reclaim incredibly valuable land, the worth of which was growing exponentially as Jaipur's tourist industry grew throughout the 1990s.²⁷ Located less than a kilometer each from the railway station, the bus depot, and the chief minister's house, Gopalbari had been marked for demolition in many local minds for a long time. If Jaipur was going to, as the JDA suggested in its Master Plan for the city, improve its international image by strengthening "a strong environment friendly economic base to the region through tourism" (1995: 31), then the large, unsightly slum that was each visitor's first encounter upon alighting at the train station had to be removed. Since, according to the JDA, one third of all foreign tourists visiting India pass through Jaipur, and tourism accounts for a considerable percentage of the state's income, the issue was a matter of broad concern.²⁸

The main problem facing those responsible for slum "resettlement" was the nature of residents' work as garbage scavengers. Members of the local Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPI(M), and the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) had convinced the city to resettle basti residents and provide basic services to them. JDA therefore gave each family a piece of land 15 kilometers outside of Jaipur City, along the Agra road. They also gave them 20 kilograms of grain, 100 rupees, and a tent. Provisions were supposedly made for water and electricity and an estimated 250 families, or 1,500 people, were relocated. Their camp became known as Bagrana transit camp. But in the new settlement, there was no garbage. Recently moved residents began to complain that they now had to travel back and forth to the city to scavenge and were earning less money because they lost time and had to spend on transportation. The *Hindustan Times* quoted one individual, whom it identified as a "scrap dealer," as saying "Water and power is all very well, but that is not what we want most. What we want is to be as close to the garbage dumps as possible."²⁹

The Bangladeshis seemed to provoke anxiety in their new neighbors from the outset. One man who lived near the transit camp threatened to jump off a water tower unless the Bangladeshis were removed.³⁰ On 3 April, villagers of Kanota blocked the Jaipur-Agra highway in protest of the new settlement; police registered their upset by promising increased surveillance.³¹

The almost overnight disappearance of Gopalbari Basti in April 2003 was alarming. What had once been one of the most visible landmarks in the city upon arrival via train was now a gaping, debris-strewn hole.³² Concerned, I asked a member of the local CPI(M),

Ashraf Ali, to talk to me about what had happened because I heard he had been involved in the struggle to guarantee displaced residents the right of resettlement.³³ According to him, the demolition of the slum was not a recent decision, nor did it represent the culmination of new tensions. The city had been nervous about Gopalbari all along because the residents were *communist* Muslims from Bangladesh, refugees from the 1971 war, who “flew the red flag.” Ashraf believed it was their political consciousness, more than anything else, that made the refugees seem dangerous to the city.

Ashraf agreed to take me to talk to some of the people with whom he was working along Station Road and who lived across from the demolition site. These squatters had made their homes in stick and tarp tents above the sewer. Ashraf was welcomed like an important uncle, and I was allowed to ask questions. We all spoke in Hindi, though Ashraf would occasionally make a side comment to me in English. With passion and mild affectation, Ashraf, a man already in his seventies, took the lead in the conversation. He asked a handsome gray-haired father a series of questions that, I was to later discover, addressed the concerns of Hindu nationalist common sense and that foreshadowed the very questions that would arise after the 2008 bombings. He began by simply asking the squatters where they were from, to which a man answered that they were from Uttar Pradesh. “Not from Bangladesh?” Ashraf continued. “No,” he replied.

Ashraf then asked a younger man “How long have you been married?” The young man replied that he had been married for four and a half years. “And how many children do you have?” “Just this, my daughter, Hasina,” replied the man. Ashraf then asked all the men sitting nearby listening to our conversation “Do you people have a lot of children?” The men replied that some had two, others had seven, but it was unusual. Ashraf smiled at me. He had made his point: these squatters were not from Bangladesh at all, but Indians; they did not uniformly have, nor want, huge families. They were just poor migrants who were Muslim and sympathized with communists—this is why they were vulnerable to aggressive tactics by the city.

In their telling, the 56 families who lived along Station Road were Sheikh Muslims from Fatehpur, in Uttar Pradesh. They made their living as drum [*dholag*]-makers and traveled from place to place as nomads. They reported that their movement was somewhat impeded by the “passport system,” but Ashraf called them gypsies. Four or five generations ago, they worked with animals, keeping oxen. Their ancestors transported people on ox carts before there were trains. They traveled widely. But the trains arrived and made their work more costly and less necessary. Without land, they had few options. The Nath

community asked them to make drums. In those days, the drums sold for 3–4 rupees. Now they go for 400 rupees to the tourists who flock to Jaipur.

Life along Station Road, as one might imagine, was very hard. Water was a constant worry, as was eviction from their temporary camp—they sat facing the remnants of the Gopalbari slum. Young girls told me that a rat bit their feet at night. Men worried that their daughters had to keep *purdah* with their eyes because there was no privacy. They could not be sent to school because there was no school for girls; they picked garbage instead.

It was this conversation with the squatters on Station Road that prompted my comments to my friends in the car on the way to dinner, which ended so unexpectedly. Again, while I believed and continue to believe the account of the people I met that day, I have realized that I was also participating in a predictable exchange around the problem of common sense. Ashraf knew the kinds of questions that would arise around the Station Road residents and posed them in such a way that each stereotype—that slum dwellers in Jaipur are all from Bangladesh, that Muslim men have many wives and children—was proven wrong. Yet neither a convincing history nor, as we shall see, documents supporting such histories make for sufficient evidence in struggles compelled by demographic anxiety.

"Cops turn eye on Jaipur's Bangladeshi enclave"³⁴

Police began arresting Bangladeshis in Jaipur almost immediately after the bombings in May of 2008. The crackdown was dramatic and visible, prompting a team from the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) of Rajasthan to visit local Bangladeshi areas and interview residents. Bagrana transit camp was of special concern to the police, the PUCL, and to the reporters who flocked to the area to file stories on the bombs. In its later report, the PUCL reported that 25 people were picked up from Bagrana, which they described as a "hell hole" and a "sub human environment" where water shortages, dehydration, and hunger prevailed (2008: 6–7). These conditions had been exacerbated in the days following the bombing because residents had been confined to the camp, barred from leaving by the police, who had set up a separate police post to monitor movements and check identities (7–8). People were detained and held without being allowed to contact their families and without being given access to lawyers to defend them (15).³⁵ The PUCL report also noted that it was not simply Bangladeshis who were taken into custody, but "anybody and everybody who is a Bengali Muslim," extending "in some cases to all

non-Rajasthani migrants” (4), thus echoing the conflation of various identities (Bangladeshi-Bihari-Bengali-oustider) we saw among the Dhanka.

Because of the possible legal implications, the PUCL team tried to ascertain the real national identity of Bagrana residents. It reported that 350 families were Bangladeshi, with 315 in possession of a transit camp slip (meaning they had been officially resettled from Gopalbari) (6). But the team also noted that the basti, with a population of 15–18,000 people, also contained Rajasthanis, Biharis, migrants from Uttar Pradesh, as well as groups of local Muslim construction workers who do not mingle with those from Bangladesh (6). They further discovered that most of those they interviewed *held documentation proving their legal residency status*. This finding did have important legal implications. Those arrested from Bagrana were held in violation of Section 109 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which gives an executive magistrate the right to demand a bond for good behavior from those suspected of hiding their identity with the intent to commit harm. The PUCL held that if the Bangladeshis in question had been booked under the Foreigners Act, as would have been appropriate for illegal foreign nationals, the cases would have been under judicial scrutiny (15). As it was, those detained remained in custody without access to legal representation.

For their part, the police involved in the arrests told the PUCL members that they only targeted those “whose body language was not right” and who were loitering outside the boundaries of the camp (8). Residents reported, on the contrary, that the police had targeted community leaders who had nothing to do with the blasts. In addition to the arrests themselves, however, the police’s main task was to determine and verify national identity; in other words, like the PUCL, the police spent a great deal of energy trying to document the number and citizenship status of Bagrana residents. Anyone wanting to leave or enter the camp had to be counted and accounted for.

Identity documents, then, were extremely important. Shortly following the blasts, the BJP state government had given Rajasthani District Collectors thirty days to compile lists of Bangladeshis living in the state to prepare for widespread deportation. The parliamentary affairs minister was quoted as saying that “District authorities have been issued orders to compile data on the Bangladeshis in their areas. They have also been directed to initiate the process for retrieval of ration cards of those who have managed to get them [and to] cancel their names from the voters list.”³⁶ But how was anyone to tell the difference? What made some documents good and acceptable as evidence and others suspect? How could data be compiled?

To further complicate the problem, the JDA began to argue that documents legitimizing residency in the transit camp were proof only of the city's generosity towards the poor—not that they in fact had any legal rights to be in Jaipur. In one of the many reports on Bagraana that appeared in the days after the bombings, the *Times of India* quoted an additional commissioner of the JDA as saying, "They were allowed to stay at the transit camp on humanitarian grounds . . . the JDA never promised them, either verbally or in writing, that the land occupied by them is theirs."³⁷ In other words, city officials effectively denied the ability of their own documents to prove what they had been distributed to prove, producing a desperate situation for Bagraana residents. While residents assured the *Times of India* reporter that no one had ever questioned the validity of their documents before—with politicians sometimes helping them to procure ration cards and IDs—they were now caught in an impossible trap, a painful outgrowth of the paradox of dis/trust: *You must produce documents to stay in the country/The documents given to you by the government are not proof of anything but the state's charity.*

Media attention, too, became fixed on Bagraana and attempted to solve the problem of documentary evidence by appealing to first person testimony—much as Ashraf had done on my earlier visit to Station Road. One NDTV report, "Bangladeshis: Outsiders in Jaipur," was especially illustrative of how quickly the limits of this exercise are reached. In the voice-over of the piece, journalist Radhika Bordia begins by explaining that, with investigators linking the blasts to Bangladesh, local Bangladeshi neighborhoods in Jaipur had been put under increased surveillance. Noting the "intense scrutiny" of Bangladeshi areas by the police, Bordia introduces the issue of Bangladeshis in the city: "Over the years the numbers of these migrants has grown as have the ghettos raising fears of crime and perhaps even tacit support to radical groups."³⁸ Again, links between population growth, changes in the city, and, in a new twist, "radicalism" (read radical Islam) are drawn with little effort, pointing toward the common sense of the associations. Without once mentioning that the majority of those harassed by the police were Muslims, such references perform the conflation, so essential to Hindu nationalist common sense, of Bangladeshi and Indian Muslim that allows the projection of enemies within: (Bangladeshi) migrants = ghettos = crime = radical groups (all Muslims).

Bordia's report continues on location in Bagraana. Her message is reiterated: "In the past few years the numbers of Bangladeshis in and around Jaipur has risen. Several incidents of crime in the city have been traced to the Bangladeshis." Eliding the fact that the majority of

crimes in the city are not, by her own accounting, tied to Bangladeshis, the reporter again relies on the viewer's common sense understanding that it is the growing number of these outsiders that leads to crime. Civic disorder and demographic aggression are tied together.

In good journalistic form, however, Bordia offers voices from the other side of the debate. She notes that Bagrana residents were "quick to point out that it is the JDA or Jaipur Development Authority who have checked their details, given them this land in an attempt to relocate them from their earlier bastis in the city." In other words, Bagrana residents again made the case that in addition to their documents their very residence in the camp was proof that they were legally settled. This was not a squatter's colony, after all, but a government-sponsored resettlement project. Bordia is then heard asking local residents a series of questions:

Bordia: From where have you come?

Man: Calcutta.

Bordia: Bengal or Bangladesh?

Man: It is the same thing. [Eki bat hai]. Now they are two separate nations [but before they weren't].

Bordia: Why can't you say you are from Bangladesh?

In the official transcript of this interview that appears on the NDTV website, the man replies "Due to fear. Ever since there have been bomb blasts we have not moved out of here." In the web-posted video version of the report, however, Bordia's questions "Where are you from?" and "Why can't you say you are from Bangladesh?" fade out as the man turns away from Bordia and looks at his feet in what appears to be an effort at evasion. Indeed, what comes through in the television report is not the possibility that there are other, legitimate, understandings of India's eastern border in which Bengal and Bangladesh are *not* in separate "countries," but that residents of Bagrana refuse to recognize their own nationality—either out of fear or artifice. All efforts to ascertain demographic knowledge through documents, even the state's own documents, encounter their own end in just this kind of possibility. Not only do they not always reflect the truth they are intended to reflect (because they can be faked, produced illegally, or because the state can simply change its mind about those who have received them), but their very foundation, especially in the case of ongoing political struggles over murky border regions, is unstable.

Who are Jaipur's Bangladeshis? Where are they from? How many are there? These are the questions raised by the limits of demography. The idea that those limits might be exploited by Bangladeshi

immigrants looking to profit from the Indian welfare system, here represented by the space of the Bagrana transit camp, blends almost seamlessly with a Hindu nationalist common sense that the number of Muslims is always growing in ways that threaten the security of the nation-state. Thus, the Jaipur bombings, though treated as an issue of international politics and border security, in another set of framings look much more like familiar anxieties that are largely internal to India.

Taking official rhetoric of border security at face value does little to get us at the depth of far-reaching communal common sense, which *relies* on the undecidability between exterior and interior and exists in a feedback loop with the limits of governmental techniques for the production of knowledge about such populations.

Demography is essential to Hindu nationalist common sense. The example of the aftermath of the Jaipur bombings in Bagrana shows that fears about growing numbers of Bangladeshis/Muslims are based on statistics that are impossible to verify and extremely contentious. Under nation-state logic, the way to answer these fears is through recourse to the documentary regimes that produce "reliable" demographic knowledge and prove legal residency. Yet the documents themselves are troubling because of the possibility that they might be procured illegally or, in an even more bizarre turn, because officials turn around and claim that the documents do not mean what they, in fact, say. Because the problem of documentary knowledge loomed so large, the Jaipur bombings were seized upon by political parties and in the media as a moment to retool and rearticulate ideas about borders and immigration that rely heavily on demographic common sense. Many questions—Why Jaipur? Why then? Why blast sites related to the jewelry trade and commerce?—were simply set aside in favor of a bigger, more predictable story about the embattled Hindu nation and its enemies, within and without.

Conclusion and implications for practice

By the time authorities seem to crack the case of the Jaipur bombings in September 2008, the narrative of the blast had already been fixed: it was perpetrated by Bangladeshis in the city. And so it hardly registered that the eleven individuals who allegedly planned the explosions came from Delhi and Rajasthan, not from Dhaka. They were identified as members of the banned group SIMI (Students' Islamic Movement of India) and linked to the Indian Mujahideen, which had gone in a few short months from being seen as a possible ploy to being a real network in the world to which one could have "connections." Many of

the suspects, who were between twenty and twenty-two years of age, were from the same school in the Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, India.³⁹

It is important to note that, to date, there is a great deal of controversy about these arrests as well, and many remain unconvinced that the bombers have as yet been identified. But what is clear is that the effort by disparate parties, such as the PUCL, the police, and the media, to fix the identity of Bagrana residents and the continual reiteration of the limits of statistical knowledge and documentary evidence—How many? From where? Will we ever know?—speaks to the centrality of demographic anxiety about Muslim Indians in the aftermath of the Jaipur bombings. As I have argued throughout, Bangladeshi is a mobile signifier that brings together several streams of Hindu nationalist common sense and therefore reaffirms this common sense. And it is the feedback loop between common sense and the statistics of censuses, surveys, and registers that we need to see as context for the treatment of Jaipur's Bangladeshis in the aftermath of the bombings. As I have tried to show, demographic knowledge quickly meets its own limits, and the regimes of documentation designed to overcome these limits are always subject to a deep paradox of dis/trust.

There are two important implications of this insight that I see for other studies of demography, identity, and the governmentality of borders. First, nationalized discussions of borders may often, as was the case here, be as much about the internal management of populations as they are about the protection of actual geographical borders. On one hand, borderlands turn out to be inherently ambiguous. On the other hand, the emotive qualities of border rhetoric, when interiorized as demographic anxiety, give new purchase to the policing of marginalized and suspect groups. We would want to ask, therefore: What groups of people are linked together in discussions of immigration? What is the common sense that enables their linkage? How is this achieved in public fora like newsmidia? What are its everyday instantiations? Such questions are very important for understanding contemporary politics in South Asia. An area for further research would be how the borders that were drawn in South Asia at Partition were related to demographic discourses and anxieties. Willem van Schendel, for instance, suggestively points to the lack of identity between the border and what were taken, based on surveys and censuses, to be "Muslim majority" areas in Bengal (2005).

Second, rather than seeing demography and its artifacts as simply producing political conditions that (dis)allow the formation and movement of particular communities, we must also consider that it is precisely the gaps in demographic knowledge that are seized

upon in a moment of crisis. Ideas about the differences between populations—censuses are, after all, comparative exercises (Gupta 2004)—are formed in this space of not-knowing, this space of common sense, rather than in a space of minute surveillance. Numbers are not always proof of what they purport to show: people lie, counting procedures are inaccurate. Hindu nationalist common sense about Muslim demography is an example of, as Gramsci says of common sense more generally, "a conception which, even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential" (1999: 419). The fragmentary and incoherent nature of common sense is precisely the source of its mobility, making it an effective anchor for many different threads and driving the will to knowledge that demands the use of those governmental techniques designed to apprehend a population.

Surely at moments common sense is willful interpretation. Thus, it could be that even *after* specific suspects were identified in October, a leader of the student wing of the BJP, Sunil Bansal, could declare erroneously in a rally in Jaipur that the May 2008 bombings were the work of Bangladeshi immigrants and identify Bagrana by name as a hub of terrorist activity. His comments, inevitably, pointed toward the community as demographically aggressive: "[t]hese immigrants are utilizing our resources like power, water, land and above all hitting our economy by making our youths jobless."⁴⁰ The party's request to the state government: identify them and deport them before the polls.

Notes

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1. Title of article from *Hindustan Times*, 14 May 2008.
2. The widely held view that Rajasthan is one of the best places to experience “authentic” Indian culture derives, at least in part, from the historical fact that the region was not under direct British control; it has been seized upon by local businesses and city officials as an important aspect of marketing the state. The notion that Jaipur is the real India is one of the reasons for the city’s popularity as a tourist destination for both Indian and non-Indian travelers (others are discussed below).
3. See Mayaram 1993 and Social Policy Research Institute, Jaipur 1991.
4. It is interesting to note that very similar claims were made when communal violence erupted in the city in the early 1990s. A 1991 report by the Social Policy Research Institute on communal riots in Jaipur, for instance, noted that “[t]he reputation of Jaipur, a city known as the paradigm of communal harmony (sic) is lost and sullied” (i).
5. See “Cops turn eye on Jaipur’s Bangladeshi enclave,” <http://www.rediff.com>, 16 May 2008; “The Politics of Terror,” *Tehelka*, 12 October 2008. Another key piece of evidence, according to an anonymous police source, was that the suspects bought the bicycles without bargaining. See “Jaipur blasts suspects spoke Bengali bought cycles without bargaining,” <http://sify.com>, 16 May 2008.
6. It is important to note that the BJP’s opposition at the Centre, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), campaigned heavily on its intention to repeal POTA. See V. Venkatesan, “POTA in disguise,” 2008, *Frontline*, 25(17).
7. “Rajasthan begins crackdown on Bangladeshis staying illegally,” *The Hindu*, 17 May 2008.
8. IBNLive, “Raje talks tough, says revive POTA,” 15 May 2008.
9. “Bring back POTA, says Advani,” *The Hindu*, 15 May 2008.
10. See “The Jaipur Terror Scapegoat: The Poor Bengali Muslim Migrant,” People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) Rajasthan Report.
11. “Basti” is usually translated into English as “slum,” though there is a wide range in the kinds of neighborhoods and camps to which this can refer, from stick and tarp squatter settlements to more established areas with cement houses and electricity.
12. Scheduled Tribes are those tribal groups listed by the Indian Constitution as deserving of special measures for their collective uplift. Considered outside the caste system, and therefore of low status, tribal groups in India have historically suffered from high rates of poverty, low literacy, shorter life expectancy, etc. Originally defined in part by their non-Hindu, non-Muslim religious beliefs, many have converted to Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and other syncretic movements in the twentieth century. The Dhanka, who consider themselves Hindu, are unusual in that about half of their population in Rajasthan reside in urban areas.
13. While Datta’s analysis is exhaustive and nuanced, it leaves open the question of whether there is something about issues of demographic behavior—in his case, as reflected in interpretations of census data—that make it especially available as a form of common sense. It seems to me that this may be the case and that the topic is especially ripe for feminist analysis, as part of a larger project on reproduction in the consolidation of discourses and technologies of population. However, the issue is beyond my scope here.
14. See C. Rammanohar Reddy, “Religion and fertility behavior: canards and facts,” *The Hindu*, 10 November 2002.
15. In 2003, a train compartment carrying Hindu nationalist activists was set on fire in Godhra, Gujarat, killing many who were trapped inside. The incident was seen as an act of communal aggression by Gujarati Muslims, and violence, in which many more Muslims than Hindus were killed, ensued across the state. Indeed, many reports

- concluded that killings had the tacit support of police and officials. See Human Rights Watch Report, April 2002, "We have no orders to save you: state participation and complicity in communal violence in Gujarat."
16. Charu Gupta and Mukul Sharma note this slogan in a VHP pamphlet, *Chetavani - 2: Desh Khatare Mein* (1996: 6). As far as I know, the link between Modi's speech and this earlier text was not mentioned at the time.
 17. Opinion piece by Bibhuti Bhushan Nandy, "Space Invaders," *The Hindustan Times*, 14 February 2003.
 18. T. V. Rajeswar, "Problem of Bangladeshi migrants: Politico-economic study in historical context," *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, 17 February 2003.
 19. "India plans migrant crackdown," 8 January 2003. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2638297.stm
 20. "Bangladesh accepts 213 illegal immigrants," *The Times of India*, 6 February 2003.
 21. I have not heard of any cases of this *quid pro quo*, documented by Lin and Paul in Delhi, having occurred in Jaipur, but it seems probable that such cases exist. The settling of Gopalbari Basti in the 1970s, and oral histories of how its residents fared during the emergency, are important topics for further study.
 22. See "Interview with Maharani Gayatri Devi," <http://quillem.com/interview-maharani-devi-0>.
 23. It has been reported that many of the Hindu migrants arriving in India are fleeing communal violence against them in Bangladesh (see Lin and Paul 1995: 7).
 24. The bigha is a locally established unit of land measure; in Rajasthan, it is equal to about 2/5 of an acre.
 25. Bangladeshi migrants in Indian cities often take up such work because it is increasingly seen as below the dignity of local laborers (Lin and Paul 1995: 12).
 26. *Outlook*, 27 August 2001.
 27. The PUCL also speculates that this move was a response to the post-Godhra violence in Gujarat, though I have not seen this position elaborated elsewhere, nor did I hear this argument at the time of the slum's destruction.
 28. The state of Rajasthan ranks 5th among all Indian states in both foreign and domestic tourism, according to the Ministry of Tourism's *India Tourism Statistics, 2007*. Because Jaipur has the best infrastructure connections, tens of thousands of visitors pass through the city each year.
 29. *Hindustan Times*, 3 April 2003.
 30. *Hindustan Times*, 4 April 2003.
 31. "Bangladeshis," *The Press Trust of India*, 3 April 2003.
 32. At the time of writing, nothing has actually been built on the site.
 33. A pseudonym.
 34. www.rediff.com, 16 May 2008.
 35. There was one woman among those arrested, which bears noting because the community saw her arrest as an act of vindictiveness on the part of the police, who were punishing the woman for wedding a Hindu who converted to Islam for the marriage (PUCL 2008: 9).
 36. "India: BJP seizes on Jaipur bombing to promote communalism and social reaction," www.wsws.org, 20 May 2008
 37. "Pukka houses come up at transit camp," *Times of India*, 19 May 2008.
 38. Transcript available at www.ndtv.com, Thursday 15 May 2008.
 39. "Rajasthan Govt. hopeful of cracking Jaipur blasts case," *The Hindu*, 23 September 2008.
 40. "ABVP launches tirade against Bangladeshis," *The Times of India*, 16 October 2008.

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