Active citizenship, dissent and power:

The cultural politics of young adult British Muslims

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Abstract

*We need to stop being afraid and realise that as individuals we have power and that power is the ability to use your own reason and just try and look beyond this. (**Saif, 27, male, academic activist**)*

This thesis presents findings from an ESRC-funded doctoral study on the cultural politics of young adult Muslims who participate in political and civic activism within British civil society. Based on ethnographic research in the Midlands area, it offers an empirically informed understanding of how these forms of activism relate to themes of political participation, citizenship, security and governance in Britain today. The thesis argues that the diverse mobilisations examined by the research collectively constitute a social movement to resist the marginalisation and stigmatisation of Muslim identities in a post 9/11 context. The war on terror, in response to the international crisis of militant Islam, has placed Muslim citizenship in many Western liberal democracies under fierce scrutiny, prompting uneasy and hard to resolve questions around issues of security, diversity, cohesion and national identity. In Britain, as in Europe, political and public responses to these questions have precipitated a climate of fear and suspicion around Muslims, rendering their citizenship contingent and precarious and undermining their ability to identify with the nation and participate in its political processes. This thesis reveals how young Muslim activists negotiate these challenges by engaging in a range of activities typical of social movements, not only in terms of distinctive modes of action but also with respect to their transformative social and political visions and imaginaries. Muslim activists engage in cultural politics to demand a more inclusive and post-national notion of citizenship, by seeking to turn negative Muslim differences into positive ones. Participants' engagement in democratic processes through political repertoires commonly adopted by other progressive social movements challenges the moral panic engendered by the exceptionalism ascribed to Muslim identity politics.

This thesis argues that these cultural politics constitute a British Muslim social movement to contest Islamophobia through resistance to two dominant forms of power in contemporary Western societies. Firstly, this movement is a response to the multiple technologies of power articulated by Foucault's concept of 'governmentality', which are difficult to distinguish and confront due to their imperceptible and socially dispersed nature. Secondly, cultural politics is

necessitated by direct threats of force that Foucault described as a 'relationship of violence' and which are discernible in the rise of the securitisation of citizenship in the wake of 9/11. The nature of resistance from Muslim activists suggests that their cultural politics are not only a strategic but also a less risky political response to both these prevailing forms of power. Foucault's argument that the nature of power can be deciphered from the forms of resistance it provokes suggests responsive rather than reactive political strategies by young Muslims. The thesis concludes that these cultural politics represent forms of active citizenship premised on a more equal, participatory and radically democratic social contract than nationalist and neoliberal forms of governance presently concede.

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Contents

Chapter 1: Researching Muslims after 9/11

Introduction

This thesis set out as an exploratory research project to uncover, understand and give an account of the political and civic activism of young adult Muslims in Britain who have come to personify a number of key concerns around security, diversity, social cohesion and citizenship after 9/11. As such this study is as much about political participation as it is about citizenship because the two not only anticipate each other but are necessary conditions for the other to flourish. The process of conducting this research has also raised several other key conceptual, empirical and theoretical questions and insights related to the topic which position this work within an interdisciplinary domain that is primarily situated within political sociology but also intersects with politics, cultural studies, anthropology, social policy and discourse studies.

Immigration and cultural diversity have routinely provoked anxieties about social and cultural atrophy in the West (Vertovec, 2011) but since the Rushdie Affair Muslim citizenship has become particularly prone to fomenting moral panics over the feared loss of national identity and erosion of liberal values (Kundnani, 2014; McGhee, 2008; Modood, 2010; Parekh, 2008). Previously seen through the lens of 'Asian passivity' (Saeed, 2007:452) as a relatively 'peaceable, law-abiding, successful' (Alexander, 2000:5) community, the pictures of Muslims taking to the streets in vociferous and sometimes violent protests came as something of a shock to the British political establishment. If the Rushdie Affair put Muslim political consciousness and assertiveness on the map of British politics then 9/11 marks the moment when Muslim identity politics become synonymous with a number of pathological tendencies, from radicalisation and terrorism to self-segregation and dangerous cultural separatism (Brown, 2010; Hickman et al 2011; Kundnani, 2007; Modood, 2003, 2007). At a domestic level in Britain, 9/11 followed a turbulent summer of 2001 when clashes between the police and Asian youths on the streets of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham instigated a new crisis of integration. Although Western vilification of Islam has a long and troubling history (Kumar, 2012; Said, 1997), the positioning of Muslims as the 'new social and cultural pariahs' (Alexander, 2000:13) has intensified after 9/11, making Muslim citizenship in the West one of the most contentious and

divisive political issues of our times. The topic of Muslim citizenship raises perturbing questions which defy quick or simple answers and invokes debates across disciplinary lines focused on migration, class, gender, religion and geography. However, there are two key dimensions which dominate the political and public imagination; namely the issues of security (radicalisation, terrorism, extremism) and nationalism (integration, social cohesion, diversity, identity). In terms of security Muslim citizenship has become inexorably linked with the threat of militant Islam and the ever-present risk of terrorism. In relation to national cohesion there is a 'perception that Muslims are making politically exceptional, culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands upon European states' (Modood, 2010:33). Responses to these critical issues have been consequential for the meaning and practice of citizenship and political participation for all British citizens but with a disproportionately detrimental impact on Muslims, as elaborated in Chapter 2.

Given the centrality of Muslims to these long-standing and fierce political debates in Europe and the surfeit of literature in the wake of 9/11, this thesis felt like an ambitious project. As there is hardly any aspect of Muslim citizenship that has not been prodded and poked at from multiple angles this study faced a rather daunting task of narrowing down 'how' to approach the topic and 'what' to focus the empirical gaze upon.

This necessitated examination of extant representations of Muslim politics and citizenship. A common thread running through dominant discourses on Muslims, in the years following the Rushdie Affair, is the tendency to accentuate the alterity and exceptionalism of Muslim migrants and minimise their affinities and belonging to their countries of settlement. A great deal of what has been said about Muslims, in the media, in the political sphere, in the public domain, as well as in many academic studies and reports, has effectively done little to diminish the 'absolute Otherness' (Semati, 2010:257) of Muslims rooted in a long Western history of treating Islam with suspicion and fear (Kumar, 2012; Said, 1997). Since 9/11 the most pressing questions about Muslims have centred around issues of radicalisation and terrorism, integration and social cohesion and cultural difference and national identities, which draw upon an existing 'racialized all-purpose framework' of 'ready-made pathologies' in relation to Muslims (Alexander, 2000:xii). Little attention has been paid to aspects of Muslim citizenship which might contradict this disturbing spectre of an alien body that threatens to ostensibly undermine or reverse Europe's valued traditions of

liberalism and secularism. While Muslim contributions to British economy, society and culture sometimes receive lip service from politicians and the media such token gestures of acknowledgement are a tiny murmur compared to the clamour of anti-Muslim sentiment that fills the public sphere. This state of affairs not only risks representing a partial and misguided view of the social world it also constitutes a glaring injustice since the consequences are a radically decontextualized image of all Muslims as the 'enemy within' (Fekete, 2009:44). Approaching a study of Muslim citizenship from the vantage point of the experiences, perspectives and attitudes of young Muslims, active in civil society, presents itself as an area of study which can turn this established view on its head by inverting the gaze inside out.

A study of political participation and citizenship can be framed in a number of different ways, it may focus on any number of categories, from class and gender to the state and public policy, to political party involvement, local council representation or lobbying and interest groups. However, as Dalton (2008:xv) says:

> We understand the nature of democracy and its citizens not by watching talking heads on television, but by talking to the public, learning how they think about politics, and learning how they act on their beliefs.

A study of Muslim citizenship does not necessitate a focus on activism. However, since it cannot be taken for granted that all citizens are interested in or cognizant of the political dilemmas surrounding this topic, those who publically register an interest in politics by being engaged in activism arguably make for a better informed and potentially more promising and rich source of data as research participants. This study therefore sought to hear from such politically engaged individuals from a Muslim background who may be better placed to provide answers to some of the hotly contested questions about Muslim citizenship. To be clear this is not a study of religious politics or the politics of faith but rather it is a study of the politics of Muslims, framed in this research as a marginalised social group rather than a predefined religious group, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The answer to the question of what the study should fix its gaze upon came from a need to move beyond the two binary positions that appear to epitomise Muslim politics. Focus on Muslim politics has either been through a lens of deviance looking at extremism and risks of terrorism or the lens of traditional

politics exploring the role of Muslims in elections and voting, with few studies attempting to examine participation beyond these two ends of the spectrum. Where a handful of studies have examined ethnic minority politics from alternative perspectives the established view of Muslim disengagement and propensity for violence has begun to unravel (Ansari, 2009; Home Office, 2005; Mirza et al, 2007) to reveal political features and choices reflecting a changing cartography of citizen participation in democracy (Beck, 1997; Dalton, 2008; Leftwich, 2008; Hay, 2007; Marsh et al, 2007; Norris, 2002, 2003, 2011; Putnam, 2000). As Back et al (2009:3; original emphasis) explain these studies highlight the need to re-examine existing categories for understanding political engagement:

> Having started with an investigation that was about the participation of minority groups in mainstream British politics, the ethnography rapidly demonstrated that both the actions that qualified as *participation* and the arenas that qualified as *the political* were over time being rapidly changed.

Such studies have identified the new spaces for political participation (Back et al 2009) as well as 'new *institutional forms* recognising alternative political agendas' (Solomos, 2005:2; original emphasis). These revelations signal the emergence of 'new political subjectivities' that are 'characterised by a preference for forms of direct, hands-on political engagement' (O'Toole and Gale, 2013:7). These new sites, forms, institutions, agendas and subjectivities mark the empirical topography of the present research. This study's focus on activism within the domain of civil society, on activities loosely associated with what theorists have referred to as the area of 'subpolitics' (Beck, 1997) or social movements (Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Melucci, 1996; Nash, 2010) operating outside mainstream electoral channels, is based on a number of considerations.

- Ignoring this area of participation perpetuates the belief that Muslims are disengaged because their faith ostensibly encourages separation from democratic secular politics, or that Muslims are only interested in violent forms of action inspired by the innately militant faith of Islam.

- Existing knowledge about these forms of engagement among Muslims is limited. A great deal of attention has been devoted to new social movements of the 1960s and more recently the Arab Spring (Castells, 2012), Occupy (Maharwal, 2013), the global justice movement (Nash,

2010), anti-austerity movements (Della Porta, 2013) or anarchist activism in the US (Portwood-Stacer, 2013) in efforts to understand the distinctive historical features and demands of such politics and their role in redefining notions of political participation in modern democracies. As far as this research is aware, this body of knowledge has not been applied to Muslim citizens due to a mode of exceptionalism that assumes their politics are determined by religion (Kundnani, 2014; Roy, 2004; Sen, 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2005).

- As marginalised, demonised and suspect citizens young Muslims face exceptional barriers to inclusion in mainstream political processes (O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012) making alternative means of political participation a promising and fruitful area to explore the political subjectivities of young Muslims.

- While studies about Muslims have been prolific since 9/11, there is a notable absence of engagement with those who are at the sharp receiving end of the War on Terror, as identified by Garner and Selod (2015:10) who state there is a 'relatively weak presence of fieldwork-based studies (particularly those in which Muslims are the subjects of interviews and/or ethnographies)'. A great deal of research has examined the problematic and threatening nature of Muslim citizenship from the majority's perspective (Brown, 2010; Mythen, 2012) and as Spalek and Lambert (2008:263) point out: 'In a post 9/11 context it seems that a large volume of work is being produced around Muslim identities and perspectives, however, in-depth qualitative work that seeks to engage critically with the social world, in both academia and other arenas, appears largely to be missing.'

This study addresses the need for such research by focusing attention on the political and civic activism of 34 young adult Muslims based in the Midlands region of the UK. The study is based on interviews with 34 male and female participants, aged from 17 to 37 years, currently resident in the Midlands region, who engage in a range of activities defined as non-electoral or 'subpolitical' activism, including campaigning on anti-war, anti-fascism and Palestinian issues, religious and cultural education, charity work, youth work, blogging, photography and poetry. The research employs a multi-sited ethnographic approach using mixed methods including interviews, observations and documentary evidence in

order to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the complex social and political context in which these young people mobilise. The aim is to gain a more balanced picture of Muslim citizenship in Britain at the current historical juncture by going beyond the surface of appearances and seeking depth through more comprehensive methods that gain greater proximity to the lived social experience.

Research questions

Based on the aims and objectives described above the following research questions frame this study:

1. What is the nature and range of political and civic activism by young adult Muslims within British civil society outside mainstream political channels?

2. How is activism conducted through different modes of action and what are the targets and desired outcomes?

3. How do young Muslims perceive available democratic spaces to express political agency and how does their activism relate to traditional/electoral politics?

4. What is the scope for national citizenship within the political and civic activism of young adult Muslims in this study?

Contribution to knowledge

This study makes a distinct contribution to knowledge through the following achievements:

- Addresses a gap in knowledge on Muslim citizenship engendered by the exaggerated emphasis on security and deviance and the relative lack of engagement with Muslims who have been at the sharp receiving end of a whole gamut of political and policy responses in the War on Terror.

- Brings to light a lesser known area of Muslim politics by exploring the cultural politics of a new generation whose political priorities and

subjectivities are likely to be distinct from older generations, particularly in the wake of 9/11.

- Presents a contemporary case study of activism to add a new dimension of understanding to social theory in the areas of social movement studies, cultural politics, citizenship and political participation.

- Applies the work of Michel Foucault to a new case study of citizenship, politics and resistance, demonstrating the continuing importance of his work in understanding contemporary societies.

- Offers important insights into both the normative framing and practical experience of citizenship and political participation for young adult Muslims, which is a valuable resource for scholars, policy-makers and other stake-holders interested in addressing concerns around youth disengagement, integration, security, social cohesion and citizenship.

- Makes a contribution to methodological debates on combining ethnography and discourse analysis by presenting a substantive case study to demonstrate their mutually corroborative strengths.

Outline of chapters

Chapter 2 provides a succinct history of Muslim political participation and citizenship in Britain, eliciting momentous events and developments in the evolution of a British Muslim civic consciousness and political profile. Muslim engagement in governance and the politics of racism and identity conveys the picture of a migrant community settling into Britain and making increasingly assertive demands on the nation. This history unfolds against shifting generational dynamics as well as the socio-political context in Britain in which 9/11 and the ensuing war on terror marks an intensification rather than break from past responses to politics of difference and diversity. This sets the context for examining the political subjectivities of young adult Muslims as a new generation of minority citizens emerging from the shadows of past mobilisations into the light of future possibilities.

Chapter 3 explores the conceptual and theoretical parameters of this study. Contemporary and changing forms of political participation through 'new citizen

politics' are elaborated in order to contextualise Muslim politics within broader social patterns in Western liberal democracies, which direct attention to cultural politics and social movements as a promising and constructive framework to study the topic. The chapter also devotes a great deal of attention to Michel Foucault's theories of power, knowledge and governance which underpin this study's focus on cultural politics as well as offering a sound theoretical link between bottom-up processes of political contestation and top-down structures of domination embedded in contemporary power relations in society.

To clarify how these findings are generated Chapter 4 details the research design and practice and the study's epistemological and methodological commitments. This chapter outlines the interpretive epistemology of the research based on a subtle realist ontological approach to knowledge production. This stresses belief in an objective social reality but acknowledges that there are limits to how this reality may be accessed, which makes the findings discussed in this thesis provisional and reliant on interpretations that are mediated by the cultural, historical and ideological position of the research participants and the researcher. However, it is argued that the adoption of mixed methods using interviews, participant observations and documentary evidence to gain a comprehensive view of the research field generates confidence in a more rigorous and credible explanation compared to single methods or reductive quantitative approaches. This research combines a multi-sited ethnography with discourse analysis techniques as a guide and sensibility to gain insights that go beyond the 'content' to also interrogate the 'form' of texts and talk. Foucault's interest in discourse as a 'system of representation' (Hall, 2010:72) which produces objects in the social world is of greater interest to this analysis than the internal structures or dynamics of language itself. This focus complements the study's interest in cultural politics as a framework to study activism.

Foucauldian theory is returned to in the penultimate chapter where the main findings of the study are re-examined from a macro level explanation of social power relations but in order to reach this point the thesis has to first expound the nature and range of activities that constitute a social movement and elaborate the conflictual relations in which it operates. These micro levels of activism in their local and quotidian iterations and their enactment on the meso plane of social and historical contingencies in the war on terror provide building blocks in chapters 5 to 8 for the concluding arguments in chapters 9 and 10.

Chapter 5 highlights the distinctive features of the political and civic activism of young adult Muslims in this study to demonstrate how these correspond to the definition of social movements described in Chapter 3. The findings discussed in this chapter highlight different dimensions of activism that are closely interrelated and constitutive of each other, foregrounding lifestyle politics and individualised modes of activism in response to the perceived lack of efficacy and credibility of established institutions, with an almost ubiquitous dismissal of mainstream mass media. This necessitates reliance on dense informal networks to organise and share resources to mobilise and foster solidarity. This brings into sharp relief the important role of networking through local and online social media platforms to disseminate and consume authentic knowledge and ideas which are the mainstay of cultural politics. These distinctive features reveal the affinities between the repertoires of action of young adult Muslims and other progressive social movements by marginalised groups seeking equality and justice. They also resonate the model of cultural politics outlined in Chapter 3 and described by Nash (2010:88) as: 'non-instrumental…[ ]…suspicious of institutions, oriented towards changing public views, concerned with aspects of culture, lifestyle, organised loosely in flexible ways, highly dependent on mass media.'

Chapter 6 brings into focus two further essential dimensions in the constitution of a social movement by revealing the active processes of collective identity production and the conflictual relations that structure them. This chapter describes the tensions and conflicts through which collective identity is decisively constructed by participants in response to endogenous and exogenous pressures and provocations. The complexity and ambiguity of constructing a unified Muslim identity alludes to the political importance of subsuming multiple individual identities into a primary collective unit. Internal struggles which contradict and complicate the production of a unified collective identity are highlighted to reveal how coherence is achieved through agency and choice. The salience of faith is demystified by revealing malleability and inventiveness in the variable modes of religiosity among participants who reject dogmatic conformity to tradition and interpret faith through personalised and reflexive idioms. These understandings of collective identity and the role of faith are put into a broader context of the political imperatives operating on participants' need to defend stigmatised identities post 9/11 through various forms of civic engagement aimed

at turning negative difference into positive difference as argued by Modood (2007; 2010).

While individually the features of activism described in Chapters 5 and 6 may not amount to a comprehensible picture of collective action, particularly in light of the tensions and conflicts that hamper unity, when viewed as a whole these multiple sites of resistance constitute a social movement to counter the insidious and ubiquitous threat of Islamophobia. The presence of distinctive social movement features of activism, active processes of collective identity construction and a distinct social conflict to which it directs itself brings the diverse activities of participants in this study within the scope of a social movement.

Chapter 7 begins to locate the dynamics of the social movement discussed in the previous two chapters within a broader framework of extant political structures to examine some of the reasons why political agency is expressed through cultural and identity politics outside mainstream electoral processes. This chapter highlights the failure of traditional electoral politics to provide an avenue for political participation as well as the high costs of protest politics oriented towards the state, which makes cultural and identity politics a strategic choice to pursue political ends. Participants' adoption of cultural politics, through various modes of action including lifestyle, art, education and charity work, are premised on an underlying argument about public apathy and passivity as a major factor in the failure of politics to meet citizens' needs. This echoes a common trait among social movements to reject representation and mediation as the norm of political participation in traditional politics and to prioritise cultural forms of dissent and resistance based on direct action and intervention in the social domain (Melucci, 1996).

Chapter 8 explores the aims of cultural politics by examining the way in which participants' conceptions of citizenship challenge the hegemony of dominant models, particularly the resurgence of nationalism and neoliberal notions of active citizenship promoted by British governments in recent decades. The struggles and contradictions involved in identifying with Britishness reveals the continuing presence of structural and symbolic constraints that impede the inclusion of Muslims into British society. Activists resist dominant neoliberal notions of citizenship based on individual profit and success by adopting strategies of active citizenship informed by ethical, faith-based and humanist

values, where civic and political efforts are directed towards educating, enabling and empowering other citizens to become agents of change. Two models of activism are identified, one marked by 'explicit resistance' and the other revealing 'implicit resistance', both constituting active citizenship to defend against Islamophobia and make British politics and society inclusive of Muslim identities and values.

The findings discussed in chapters 5-8 are recontextualised in Chapter 9 by applying the theories of Michel Foucault to make a concluding argument about the nature of Muslim cultural politics and its relation to existing social structures. This argument draws on Foucault's theorisation of power, knowledge and governmentality, as well as theories of securitised citizenship in the wake of 9/11 (Brown, 2010; Fekete, 2009; Hyatt, 2011; Mavelli, 2013; McGhee, 2008; 2010; O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012; Pentazis and Pemberton, 2009; Vertigans, 2010). It is argued that the participants in this study respond to the prevalence of historically specific and particular relations of power in contemporary society which were made perceptible by Foucault (1978; 1980; 1988; 1994a,b,c; 1995) and which render cultural politics an inescapable but also tactical form of resistance to marginalisation and exclusion. The political discourses and grammars of action demonstrated by activists in this study not only presuppose such a model of power but also deploy the technologies of power that constitute it in order to subvert its' rationalities and operations.

In conclusion Chapter 10 summarises the key themes of the thesis, discusses its implications and future research prospects, and offers some tentative reflections on the scope of such politics for social transformation and democratisation of society.

Chapter 2: British Muslim politics and citizenship

Introduction

This chapter sets the context for a study of political and civic activism by focusing on important historical and conceptual developments in the area of Muslim political participation and citizenship in Britain. The first three sections are devoted to tracing the background and theoretical concerns related to Muslim politics starting with the history of mainstream politics and followed by civil society activism. After this issues that have been central to Muslim identity politics and the debates around these are described.

The latter three sections of this chapter turn to the concept of citizenship as an important and relevant sociological category that is both consequential to political engagement as well as one of its outcomes. These discussions frame the wider social context in which Muslim political and civic participation is located, as well as the complex ways in which ideas of citizenship, belonging and the relationship between the citizen and the state are shifting and how this impacts on political participation. Three broad dimensions are highlighted: the resurgence of nationalism, securitisation and the shifting balance between rights and responsibilities.

Electoral and party politics

Primary causes of anxieties around Muslim citizenship in the West are related to the assumed disengagement and disaffection of Muslims from British society because these are considered to be high risk factors for radicalisation and terrorism (Cantle, 2001; Home Office, 2005; Martin, 2011; Maxwell, 2010; Mirza et al, 2007; O'Toole and Gale, 2013). These fears are based on a questionable premise of Muslim disengagement which is difficult to substantiate as most of the research on minority participation in politics has focused on 'ethnic' rather than 'religious' groups, making it hard to separate Muslims from other groups. There is also a tendency to use Pakistanis and Bangladeshis as a proxy for Muslims since they comprise the largest Muslim population in Britain

(Ansari, 2009). Due to the different parameters and variables employed to study the role of ethnic minorities in politics, it may be challenging to pinpoint the precise level of Muslim engagement but there are reasons to doubt the gloomy picture of mass disaffection and disengagement. Muslims have been active in voting, membership of political parties and contesting elections, albeit the latter has been primarily at a local rather than national level due to the residential concentration of minorities in particular urban areas (O'Toole et al, 2013). Recent research has revealed that ethnic minority electoral turnout in the 2010 elections surpassed the average white voter (Sobolewska et al. 2011 in Dobbernack et al, 2012; Sanders et al, 2014) and it is also claimed that Muslims have a much higher level of trust in the government compared to Christians, indicating a greater likelihood to engage politically (Maxwell, 2010). While exact levels of engagement are difficult to prove, there is also no compelling evidence to suggest Muslims have a lower level of participation in British politics compared to the majority white population or other ethnic minority groups (Ansari, 2009; Heath and Khan, 2012). What is clear is that despite being seen as disloyal citizens who place their religious identity above national loyalties (Adamson, 2011; Parekh, 2008; Pew, 2006) Muslims have often voted on the basis of their class rather than religious identity. This is evidenced by the fact that despite having more ideologically common ground with the Conservative Party, a majority of Muslims have voted for Labour because of its support for working class and anti-racism issues (Akhtar, 2012; Ansari, 2009; Modood, 2010; Purdam, 2001). Ansari (2009:240) states that:

> Successive general election results have shown that Muslims do not simply vote for Muslim candidates. For instance, conservative Muslim candidates have not been successful in Muslim areas even against white or other non-Muslim labour candidates.

This was witnessed in the Bradford West constituency with a 38% Muslim population, where the Respect Party candidate George Galloway swept the by-election of March 2012, defeating Labour candidate Imran Hussein by over 10,000 votes (BBC News, 2012). Galloway's success can be attributed to the perception, particularly among younger Muslims, that 'he is talking positively about Muslims: in a climate that many Muslims would view as anti-Islamic or Islamaphobic' (Akhtar, 2012:764). In the same constituency Sikh Labour candidate, Marsha Singh, beat Muslim candidates from other parties in four successive general elections from 1997, revealing that Muslim political choices

are not dictated by religious identification. This also accounts for why political parties set up exclusively for Muslims, like the Islamic Party of Britain, have had little success (Akhtar, 2012; Ansari, 2009).

Muslims have also been more directly involved in party politics and governance, which is seen as a 'measure of the integration of minority groups in equality terms' as well as 'the development of civic relations between the minority citizen and the state' (Michael, 2009:180). The first Muslim MP Mohammad Sarwar was elected in 1997 and since then the number of Muslims in parliament has doubled at the last election in 2010 to eight, with the addition of three female Muslim MPs (DeHanas et al, 2010). Muslim MPs have served as ministers in Gordon Brown's government and Baroness Sayeeda Warsi became the first Muslim female minister in David Cameron's government (O'Toole et al, 2013). At the local level it is estimated there were 208 Muslim Councillors in 2004 accounting for 1.1% of the population (Beckford et al, 2006). However, Muslims do remain underrepresented in government in relation to their population and Ansari (2009:244) suggests this is due to fears of a 'white backlash' that discourages parties from fielding more Muslim electoral candidates. There are also allegations that racism and discrimination against Muslims has hampered their chances of progress in political party structures (Ansari, 2009; Michael, 2009; Purdam, 2001) while others have blamed the highly centralised nature of the British political party system (Clark et al 2010 in O'Toole and Gale, 2013). Muslims have been increasing their representation on consultative and advisory bodies at local and national levels since the 1990s, but here too O'Toole et al (2013) caution against making generalisations since that the patterns of progress are varied across the country.

Muslim participation in mainstream politics is not without controversy particularly around the issue of *biraderi* or kinship politics whereby community leaders who gain political capital tend to favour members of their sect or family over others. This is often thought to be linked to early Muslim settlers maintaining close ties with politics from their home countries but others argue that *biraderi* politics evolved through the particularities of British political parties that engaged with minority groups through their designated leaders rather than communicating with them directly (Akhtar, 2012; Michael, 2004). While still carrying traces of subcontinental customs, *biraderi* politics is largely attributed to the way in which Muslim leadership was promoted by politicians reliant on gatekeepers to give them access to the ethnic minority vote (Akhtar, 2012; Michael, 2004). These

self-styled community leaders acted as 'brokers between the state and their communities, a role not dissimilar to that played by 'indigenous' leaders under colonial patronage' (Ansari, 2009:235). These leaders failed to gain the confidence of younger Muslims because of their pusillanimous co-optation into the state and the fact that *biraderi* politics not only has a reputation for being sectarian and gendered it is also unfavourable to younger constituents (Akthar, 2012; DeHanas et al, 2010; Lewis, 2007; Michael, 2004, Ouseley, 2001). Michael (2004) maintains that community leaders have marginalised younger Muslims because the arrangement of gatekeeping has served their own interests. Akthar (2012:762) echoes this view.

> This younger generation of Pakistani voter sees little value in the biraderi system, and does not identify with their community leaders, who very often do not engage in the issues which concern them.

According to a government report on tackling extremism the dominance of *biraderi* politics is also linked to radicalisation as 'Young Muslims are often doubly disaffected – (1) from wider society and (2) from conventional leadership roles and traditions within their own communities' (Home Office, 2005:12). Academics view the role of *biraderi* politics in the alienation of younger Muslims differently, placing a greater emphasis on politicians who rely on community elders as a conduit to reach other community members rather than direct communication (Akhtar, 2012). One of the consequences of *biraderi* politics has been that politicians have neglected some sections of the community, like youth and women, isolating them from the political system (Akhtar, 2012; 2013). While the promotion of selected leaders granted Muslims some access to political influence, the process offered little 'penetration of mainstream institutions' where real power resides (Ansari, 2009). The area of civil society, where this thesis focuses its attention, may for all the above reasons have had much greater purchase for Muslims seeking to make their political mark in Britain, as the next section explores.

Civil society and identity politics

While 9/11 marks a rise in the prominence given to Muslim politics in Britain it is not the definitive event it is often assumed to be. The Rushdie Affair more than a decade earlier is an equally iconic landmark 'identified in much of

the literature as a key moment in the development of British Muslim identity politics' (Choudhury, 2007:8). Prior to this Muslims were largely seen through the lens of 'Asian passivity' (Saeed, 2007:452) as a homogenous community that was relatively 'peaceable, law-abiding, successful' (Alexander, 2000:5). Where Muslim engagement in civil society transpired it was largely subsumed under class politics or black and anti-racist movements (Ansari, 2009; DeHanas et al, 2010; Malik, 2009; Michael, 2009; Modood, 2005; Ramamurthy, 2006; 2013). As already intimated Muslims have predominantly supported the Labour Party in line with their class interests (Ansari, 2009) but they have also organised over racism and cultural struggles 'around day-to-day issues they face as ordinary citizens of this country' (Khan, 2000:38). As Dobbernack et al (2012:2) inform us 'in the 1950s, initial mobilisations on an ethnic minority-basis were largely in response to local experiences of racial discrimination.'

Amongst early migrants, mostly labourers and unskilled workers, links with trade unions and leftist organisations in the sub-continent remained strong and this encouraged them to join forces with British trade unions and socialists. However, experiences of racism and a failure to gain support for ethnic minority issues from the British left compelled these early activists to seek alternative ways to organise politically (Ansari, 2009; Ramamurthy, 2006; 2013). Many set up their own organisations to meet the needs of ethnic minorities through bodies like the Indian Workers Association and Pakistani Workers Association (Ramamurthy, 2006; 2013). These organisations largely focused on issues of racism and discrimination and workers' rights as well as cultural acceptance. According to Parekh (2008:101) while the first generation of Muslim migrants initiated the process of politicisation, it was the second generation that played a crucial role in driving Muslim activism forward as they 'did not share their parents' inhibitions and diffidence, and knew how to find their way around well in the political system'. This confidence found expression in the emergence of the Asian Youth Movement organisations in various British cities in the 1980s, largely in response to frustration at the 'integrationist approach to politics' (Ramamurthy, 2006:42) conducted by organisations like the IWA and PWA who eschewed confrontational tactics. While the early workers associations chose to represent themselves under their different ethnic origins, the Asian Youth Movement sought broader solidarity under the identity label of 'Asian' where 'there was a conscious decision to find an identity that would serve to unify rather than divide' (Ramamurthy, 2006:43). The rise of Asian Youth Movements also saw people of

South Asian origin begin to assert their distinctiveness from the identity label of 'black' and 'race' although Ramamurthy (2006; 2013) argues that the emphasis on Asian was not a break from the political category of black but rather transcended the national and ethnic sectarianism of their parents which they could not identify with.

> Although those involved in youth movements were Asian, they simultaneously saw themselves as blacks in a white society. (Ramamurthy, 2006:44).

While this may hold for Asian Youth Movements, Modood (2005; 2010) has argued that the label of 'black' has never resonated politically with many Asian and Muslim minorities in Britain. Nevertheless Muslims did play a part in the Asian Youth Movement which was concerned with issues of 'street racism, institutional racism, the criminalisation of minorities and police racism' (Ramamurthy, 2013:193) albeit within a framework of mobilisation that has been characterised as distinctly secular in relation to later Muslim identity politics (Malik, 2009; Ramamurthy, 2006; 2013). Although the Union of Muslim Organisations was formed in UK and Ireland in 1970 this failed to gain support from Muslims (O'Toole et al, 2013) since early political mobilisation often converged around issues of ethnicity and culture rather than religion (Ansari, 2009). This began to change towards the end of the 1980s.

The emergence of 'Muslim' as a 'salient *political category or discursive field*' is a more recent development indebted to 'strategies of both political mobilisation and the incorporation of so-called 'immigrant' populations in Western Europe' (Adamson, 2011:900; original emphasis). The Rushdie Affair was significant in marking the emergence of Muslim identity politics on the basis of religious affiliation which brought into focus the inadequacy of anti-race and political black movements to represent the cultural differentiation and recognition sought by Muslims (Michael, 2009; Modood, 2005). The rise of organisations representing Muslim interests owes a great deal to the outrage felt over Rushdie's book which was not shared by others in the loosely allied field of anti-racism or left politics, leaving Muslims feeling politically isolated (Akhtar, 2013; Modood, 2005; 2010). For those who questioned the ability of Muslim migrants to integrate into Western liberal cultures there could not have been a better illustration of their misgivings than the image of angry young Muslims burning copies of Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* in British city centres, a reaction

that was cited as evidence of Islam's incompatibility with secular values of tolerance and free speech. As noted after the event 'no minority in the context of British race relations has been as friendless as Muslims in spring 1989' (Modood, 2010:13) with condemnation uniting both left and right critics.

The emergence of Muslim identity as an important driver for activism can be partly explained by generational differences, as British Muslims who were born and raised in the West were beginning to confront a new social, political and economic order compared to their migrant parents. Facing new challenges with the confusing and contradictory experience of being a religious minority in a secular society, young Muslims could not easily resolve these issues through the cultural and ethnic traditions of their parents to which they had little affinity (Ansari, 2009; Cesari, 2007; Lewis, 2007, Roy, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2005). Alienated from parental cultures and excluded from British society due to rising Islamophobia, many younger Muslims found a sense of integrity and belonging through identifying with Islam (Cesari, 2007; Parekh, 2008; Ramadan, 2009; Roy, 2004).

A differing view is that Muslim identity politics marks the maturation of Muslim civic consciousness through a proliferation during the 1980-90s of organisations like Muslim Council of Britain, Council of Mosques and Council of Imams and Mosques (O'Toole et al, 2013). According to this perspective the increasing salience of Muslim identity politics is not merely a negative consequence of events like the Rushdie Affair and 9/11 but rather it is the product of the dynamic and assertive action of Muslim civil society organisations. As a recent study argues:

> ..the current political visibility of Muslims in the UK has also been an outcome of *Muslim activism* – in lobbying for state recognition of Muslim distinctiveness and seeking inclusion within governance – as well as significant *institutional innovation* in the ways in which government has recognised and engaged with Muslims since the late 1990s. (O'Toole et al, 2013:9; original emphasis).

In this report, based on the 'largest and most comprehensive study of Muslim participation in governance' (O'Toole et al, 2013:11), the role of Muslims in civil society is described as progressing in three stages. Early efforts to tackle racism and structural disadvantages constitute 'disparate' attempts to establish representative bodies' (O'Toole et al, 2013:17). Although the report does not

mention them as such, organisations like the IWA and AYM can be seen as part of these efforts. After the Rushdie affair the 1990s are seen as a 'phase of consolidation' with the inception of the Muslim Council of Britain as an umbrella organisation representing the distinctive concerns and issues of Muslims. The third phase following 2005 is considered to be marked by 'pluralism and diversification', where a variety of bodies representing different Muslim interests, identities and concerns emerged and were variously recognised by government (O'Toole et al, 2013). A consequence of this latest proliferation of Muslim representative bodies has been the government's recognition that it needs to diversify its engagement with Muslims and stop relying on a 'small coterie of leaders' (O'Toole et al, 2013:22) who perpetuate the *biraderi* system.

As this and the previous section have demonstrated, Muslim engagement in British politics has made incremental gains in bolstering the visibility and capacity of Muslims to mobilise, which is viewed optimistically by some as marking new levels of accommodation and respect for Muslim cultural demands in Britain (Khan, 2000) while others have argued that the British state's concessions to Muslim demands sometimes exceed the limits of a liberal state (Joppke, 2009). However, it is important to remember that many of these forms of politics have failed to adequately engage with younger Muslims who often feel alienated from *biraderi* politics as well as the national organisations like Muslim Council of Britain run by older Muslim men (Akhtar, 2013; Lewis, 2007; Michael, 2004). For many young Muslims the Iraq War and the war on terror have been more decisive in mobilising political and civic activism (Akhtar, 2013). Nevertheless, it can be argued that the gains made by past mobilisations have opened up possibilities that newcomers to this field can capitalise upon. In the next section some of these gains are explored within a discussion of the rise of identity politics as the conceptual category that explicates Muslim claims-making.

The stakes in identity politics

Before exploring the central issues which have animated Muslim mobilisation under the rubric of identity politics it is necessary to define what identity politics refers to. The term 'identity politics' is usually seen as marking a departure from previous class-based labour movements. Fraser (2001) considers

class politics to be concerned with redistribution while identity politics focuses on recognition. Comparing the two Fraser (2001:21) claims:

> Members of the first camp hope to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor, from the North to the South, and from the owners to the workers. Members of the second, in contrast, seek recognition of the distinctive perspectives of ethnic, 'racial', and sexual minorities, as well as of gender difference.

However, the distinction between redistribution and recognition has been questioned as being conceptually and empirically unsound (Isin and Wood, 1999). Honneth (2001:53) claims identity politics cannot be reduced to demands for cultural recognition alone and that Fraser has constructed a false dichotomy that is challenged by revealing how various struggles for equality since the late 19th century have been based on demands for recognition as well as redistribution. Hall (2001:442) has similarly cast doubts over such a division between two paradigms within politics, which views identity politics as a replacement for class politics, since politics does not 'proceed by way of a set of oppositions and reversals of this kind'. Young (2000:1324) claims that identity politics is not simply a claim for recognition but functions as 'part of or means to claims against discrimination, unequal opportunity, political marginalization, or unfair burdens'.

Identity politics is often associated with movements and struggles based on claims of marginalisation, oppression and stigmatisation based on differences between groups that are structurally and culturally disadvantaged. This is why identity politics is also equated with the 'politics of difference' pursued by feminists, gays and ethnic minorities who have critiqued liberal ideals of equality based on universal rights as disguising the interests of white middle class heterosexual males (Parekh, 2000; Young, 1990; 2000). Modood (2003) claims that Muslim identity politics is a game of catching up where lessons have been drawn from other movements for emancipation and inclusion, like feminist and gay rights struggles, that have challenged class and colour-racism as the sole basis of social discrimination and inequality. However, the Muslim case has not been a straight-forward one of extending the existing accommodation offered to other group-based demands, due to Muslim differences being seen as particularly challenging to liberalism's strong secularist tradition (Cesari, 2009; Meer and Modood, 2009; Mavelli, 2013).

Despite significant challenges Muslim identity politics has made impressive gains in Britain, particularly in bringing religious discrimination on an equal footing with the higher standards of legal safeguards and penalties accorded to racial or ethnic discrimination. Previously while religious groups like Jews and Sikhs were recognised as ethnic groups, Muslims were denied this on grounds that they are an ethnically diverse group (Choudhury, 2007b; Meer, 2008). Although Muslims had recourse to equality legislation under their ethnic categorisation as Pakistanis or Bangladeshis, claims against religious discrimination were denied despite the established presence and rise of the phenomenon of 'Islamophobia' (Allen, 2007; The Runnymede Trust, 1997). A highly contested concept, the word Islamophobia was first officially defined in a report by The Runnymede Trust (1997:4) as 'unfounded hostility towards Islam' but its credence has been questioned by those who accuse it of confusing discrimination with criticism of Muslims, stifling free speech and deflecting attention away from structural inequalities (Joppke, 2009; Malik, 2005). This study follows a significant body of literature by scholars who contradict this latter view by framing Islamophobia as a form of cultural racism marked by fear and hatred of Muslims that causes real harms and injustices (Brown and Saeed, 2014; Frost, 2008; Kumar, 2012; Kundnani, 2014; Lentin, 2014; Semati, 2010). In a landmark moment, the introduction of the Equality Act of 2010 brought Muslims in line with other groups through an integrated law covering all forms of discrimination including 'age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment' (Weller, 2011:2) and marking a radical shift in the state's position:

> The Government has moved from arguing that there was no evidence of religious discrimination (making legislation unnecessary) to religious discrimination legislation that goes beyond EU directives or indeed anything found in Europe. (DeHanas et al, 2010:5)

Another significant demand within Muslim identity politics has been for the provision of state funding for Muslim faith schools which has frequently been portrayed as a step too far (Ansari, 2009; Meer, 2009; Tinker and Smart, 2012). After 9/11 Labour MP Tony Wright declared that: '[b]efore September 11 it looked like a bad idea, it now looks like a mad idea' (BBC News, 2001). With 'the existence of over 4700 state funded Church of England schools, over 2100 Catholic, 33 Jewish and 28 Methodist schools' (Meer, 2009:381) it is often overlooked that Muslim demands for faith schools are based on a bid for equality

rather than exceptional treatment. State funding for Muslim schools was first approved in 1997 with two schools getting voluntary aided status and later increasing to seven with continuing parental demand for more (Meer, 2010).

Another major achievement of Muslim mobilisation has been the inclusion of a question on religion and religious identification for the first time in the 2001 census (Adamson, 2011; O'Toole et al, 2013). The success of many of the above campaigns can be attributed to the efforts of Muslim civil society activists and organisations like the Muslim Council of Britain (O'Toole et al, 2003). As Yip (2012:129) has argued in relation to sexual minorities, legislation can be a very empowering first step towards equality although it is less effective against the damaging effects of negative views within 'entrenched social attitudes'. Such 'covert' forms of discrimination are evident in the negative characterisation of Muslim demands for equality under identity politics which are seen as separatist and harmful to Western liberal values.

This is related to what Solomos (2001:202) has argued is a major problem with contemporary debates on 'identity politics' based on the 'presumption that one's identity necessarily defines one's politics and that there can be no politics until the subject has excavated or laid claim to his/her identity.' What is problematic in this understanding of identity politics is that it fails to grasp the 'way in which identity grows out of and is transformed by action and struggle' (Solomos, 2001:202). This raises the inherent paradox of identity politics in that it is driven by the need to both challenge essentialist ideas about the group and reinforce them by asserting and amplifying differences (Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2008; Phillips, 2007). While identity is central to Muslim politics its' political positioning with reference to external discrimination becomes obscured by essentialised views about Muslims. This is what Roy (2004) refers to as the misguided 'culturalist' approach which assumes Islam explains everything about Muslims. Cesari (2009:1) argues that such essentialised views perpetuate notions that:

> Islam is steeped in history and absolutely incapable of innovation, and Muslims are defined by an almost compulsive conformity to their past and an inability to address the current challenges of political development and religious liberal thinking.

In this thesis I argue that such an essentialist view of Muslim identity politics persists because of a form of exceptionalism that positions faith-based

politics as isolated from other more secular political trends and struggles for inclusive citizenship. This is challenged in the next chapter which argues for the advantages of locating Muslim politics within broader theories of political participation. The theme of essentialism is also explored more fully in a later section in relation to its impact on Muslim citizenship.

The next four sections focus on contemporary challenges to Muslim citizenship as a means of anticipating some of the key issues that might motivate young Muslims to mobilise. As the concept of citizenship has gained salience in social sciences through an 'explosion of interest' (Kymlicka and Norman, 2000:5) in recent years so has it become more a more contested notion. This is because under conditions of globalisation citizenship is changing in multiple ways.

Citizenship and resurgent nationalism

At the most basic level citizenship may be understood as membership of a 'legally constituted political community which may be called civil society' (Delanty, 2000:4). Mouffe (1992 in Lister 2010:195) has observed that citizenship is a matter of 'the kind of social and political community we want'. The idea of citizenship emerged in conjunction with the establishment of nation-states and this association remains strong to this day, along with the understanding that it is constituted by single dominant groups in the 'suggestive unity of the seemingly homogenous nation' (Habermas, 1998 in McGhee, 2010:138). This dominance of one group which asserts its will and values on national life often renders minorities as marginal and their cultures and ways of life as invisible (Hall, 1993; Meer, 2010). Therefore, the terms of inclusion in citizenship are consequential for those who may be on the social periphery, as this section seeks to demonstrate, by highlighting the ways in which changing citizenship regimes have impacted on British Muslim citizens. In both the legal and the cultural sense citizenship remains an exclusionary concept since it draws distinctions between those who belong and those who do not (Kivisto and Faist, 2007; Lister, 2010, Marx, 2002).

In recent decades, the imperatives of globalisation have opened up possibilities for new modes of citizenship as migrant receiving nations confront the implications of 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007). This has led to the proliferation of terms like transnationalism (Samad and Sen, 2007; Kivisto and Faist, 2007) post-nationalism (Sassen, 2002; Soysal, 2012a), cosmopolitanism

(Stevenson, 2003), 'globally oriented citizenship' (Parekh, 2008:248) and 'citizens without frontiers' (Isin, 2012). Although globalisation has played a major part in reframing how citizenship is imagined Delanty (2000:2) argues that it is 'capitalism, not citizenship that is truly cosmopolitan today'. While globalisation has undoubtedly diluted the 'potency of the sovereign nation-state in control of its borders' (Isin, 2012:863), citizenship remains subject to the political and legal structures that are controlled by nations (Lister, 2010). As Delanty (2000:4) reminds us there is only 'a very limited civil society beyond the nation state' which diminishes the opportunities for enacting cosmopolitan or post-national citizenship.

While on one level globalisation has displaced the centrality of the nation-state to the idea of citizenship, the events of 2001 and beyond have seen many Western governments in Europe respond with new modes of resurgent nationalism which seek to reaffirm the central place of nations as the purveyors and custodians of citizenship (Delanty, 2000; Kaldor, 2004; Soysal, 2012a). Parekh (2009:32) has observed the term 'Britishness' as a basis of 'unity and identity' is not itself new but in recent years 'the frequency of its usage and the weight put upon it are.' The need to revive the importance of national citizenship has been translated into a number of practical steps, such as the launch of mandatory citizenship education in schools, oath-taking ceremonies, English language proficiency and citizenship tests, as the government attempted to foster social cohesion by promoting national identity and unity (Grillo, 2005; Fekete, 2009; McGhee, 2008; Kundnani, 2007). The Goldsmith (2008:7) report to the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown even suggested 'a national day' and 'extending citizenship ceremonies to all young people' following the so-called success of citizenship ceremonies for 'new citizens'.

The resurgence of nationalism in Britain can also be linked to new moral panics around failed integration and social atrophy in a 'backlash against multiculturalism' (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010:6) that came in the wake of riots in northern English towns in the summer of 2001. Social cohesion and national identity became a focal point of debates after official reports into the violent disturbances in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley blamed the riots on communities leading 'parallel lives' (Cantle, 2001:9) prompting Werbner (2005:748) to remark on the irony that:

Not economic deprivation or racism, or the sense of threat to community provoked by the presence of racist organisations in the towns where the riots took place, but a lack of community cohesiveness and leadership were thus blamed in the report for the riots.

Multiculturalism has come to signify such a multitude of concepts and ideas that often it is difficult to work out what is being rejected in the 'wholesale *retreat*' (Joppke, 2004:244; original emphasis) from the notion. Although multiculturalism can refer to a political ideal or struggle for cultural inclusion (Modood, 2007) what is being referred to as multiculturalism here is the dominant policy of the British government from the late 1970s for accommodating difference and diversity. Following the disturbances the policy of multiculturalism came under fierce attack for promoting segregation, a reaction that was compounded by 9/11 when the 'self-segregation' of Muslims was deemed to be a 'slippery slope' to 'terrorism', (Kundnani, 2007:124). The fact that the retreat from multiculturalism took a particularly nationalist shape and form is significant for Muslim citizenship since the outcome has been to associate the failure of the policy with the refusal of Muslims to integrate (Cesari, 2009; Lentin and Titley, 2011; Lentin, 2014; Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2008; Phillips, 2007). This was signalled by a new approach to integration which was articulated in efforts to promote a more vigorous and 'active' notion of British national 'citizenship' based on 'shared identity', which was contrasted to 'an unbridled multiculturalism which privileges difference over community cohesion' (Blunkett, 2002 in McGhee, 2008:88). The accent on nationalism was further observed in Gordon Brown's promise to revive a sense of 'Britishness' to encourage greater integration following the terrorist attacks of 7/7 (Kundnani, 2007). If Blunkett's attempts at 'civic renewal' through the introduction of 'active citizenship' (Jayaweera and Choudhury, 2008:1) cast doubts on the willingness of Muslims to fit in with Britain, then Brown's proposals for 'earned-citizenship' following 7/7 with an emphasis on 'loyalty, duty and responsibilities' (McGhee, 2008:43) implied a further Muslim deficit in relation to these values. Reverberations of this sentiment were evident in David Cameron's assertion of the need to strengthen 'national identity' as an antidote to the failure of multiculturalism (BBC News, 2011). The fact that loss of social cohesion was ascribed to the failings of the Muslim community rather than structural conditions was evident in the focus on the conduct and values of Muslims as the main problem as Mr Cameron stated:

We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values. (BBC News, 2011).

These kinds of arguments that became pervasive among European political leaders after 9/11 (Lentin, 2014) have been branded as a form of 'cultural fundamentalism' (Kundnani, 2007:85) that is driving attitudes towards minorities in a monocultural direction. The retreat from multiculturalism has been linked to new forms of racism which paradoxically adopt a cultural form by disregarding the political, social and economic origins of social conflict and blaming too much diversity and alterity as the culprit (Goodhart, 2004; Grillo, 2005, 2007; Lentin and Titley, 2011; Lentin, 2014; Modood, 2005; Vertovec, 2011). Referring to a new wave of 'nativism' sweeping Europe Fekete (2009:13) claims the intention is 'no less than the cultural cleansing of Europe of all foreign influences, particularly the 'alien' religion of Islam.'

However, despite now being seen as defunct, Modood and Meer (2009) have argued that the multicultural approach has done much to create a political climate in Britain where Muslim demands for inclusive and equal citizenship can be heard and addressed. As such it is argued that the so called 'retreat' from multiculturalism marks a rejection of its language rather than its principles (McGhee, 2008). Despite this positive note, the policy was officially abandoned and in its place community cohesion took centre stage as the government's new integration programme (Brown, 2010). While delivering some real benefits to disadvantaged areas (Thomas, 2006), community cohesion has been decried as 'a reinvigorated and assimilative national project' with 'an emphasis on social control rather than social justice' (Alexander, 2007:2436, 2468). Without wishing to dismiss the deep psychological benefits that national identity can afford individuals (Skey, 2013) the concern being highlighted here relates to the assimilative tenor of nationalism that has placed the burden of integration on Muslim citizens by casting their cultural values as incompatible with Britain (Alexander, 2004; 2007; Lentin and Titley, 2011; McGhee, 2008).

At the heart of government efforts to strengthen 'Britishness' lie concerns about Muslim lack of loyalty to the nation, as evidenced by a number of studies highlighting alienation and disillusionment among British Muslims (Ameli, 2002, 2004; Choudhury, 2007; Jayaweera and Choudhury, 2008; Joppke, 2009). When Muslim identities have been appraised through the lens of Britishness and

national identity a highly negative picture of alienation and disenchantment has emerged from studies such as Ameli's London-based research (2002) on processes of globalisation. Ameli (2002) found that Muslims often differentiated notions of home from citizenship, so although they considered themselves citizens of Britain, 'they did not harbour any great affinity with Britain as being their natural homeland,' (Ameli, 2002:280). Similarly, Ansari (2009:18) has revealed that identification with Britishness can be 'pragmatic' based on legal citizenship rights and obligations with no real 'deeply-held emotional and cultural bond shared with the white, secular or Christian majority'.

These studies have been challenged by alternative research revealing that young Muslims do have a strong sense of pride and ownership of British citizenship, although they do not relate to Englishness in the same way due to its association with whiteness (Hussain and Bagguley, 2005; Thomas, 2009b; Thomas and Sanderson, 2011). O'Loughlin and Gillespie's (2012:155) research has reported 'dissenting rather than disaffected citizenship' among British Muslims which they believe represents an attitude of 'frustration but hope'. In a more recent study Nandi and Platt (2013:24) reported that Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds 'are particularly likely to identify more strongly as British' compared to the white majority.

Despite these varying accounts questions over Muslim loyalty have formed the basis of discourses and policies that place them on the 'margins of citizenship' (Brown, 2010:171). These concerns are partly fuelled by concerns about the prioritisation of Islam over 'Britishness' as a primary source of identity for younger Muslim. It has been revealed that for many young Muslims Islam provides a more positive and empowering sense of identity which mitigates the negative experiences of disadvantage and exclusion associated with their parents' cultural and ethnic identity (Ansari, 2009; Lewis, 2007; Samad and Sen, 2007). Learning and adopting a more scriptural and non-cultural form of Islam also gives many young Muslims, particularly women, the means of resisting cultural restrictions imposed by parents by asserting their own religious authority (Briggs, 2010; Choudhury, 2007, Glynn, 2002; Samad and Sen, 2007). Others like Thomas and Sanderson (2011:1039) consider religious identification to be a reaction to the 'systematic racist vilification of Muslim communities over the past two decades' as well as a result of the alienating state policies on multiculturalism and terrorism.

As migrants many Muslims experience Islam as a faith that is dislocated from its territorial specifications and encountered instead as a common bond with other Muslims with different cultural, ethnic and national backgrounds. The experience of living in secular, non-Muslim spaces requires Muslims in today's world to constantly invent Islam through discursive and scriptural rather than traditional means since a Muslim identity can no longer be taken for granted as part of the dominant social norm (Cesari, 2007; Roy, 2004). Hence, 'identities that are integrated elements in Muslim countries are automatically deconstructed into their religious, social and ethnic components' (Cesari, 2007:113). The presence of 'new Muslims' in Europe who are embracing the individuality, postmodernity and urban character of the West through interaction with its secular traditions is reflected in the way in which Muslims have incorporated the ideals of autonomy and independence in their beliefs and practices by breaking with traditional rituals and observing their faith in a more spiritual and personal manner. According to Cesari (2007:113) this explains why, 'New Muslims have chosen to primarily anchor their identity within the transnational concept of the Ummah (the timeless community of believers), rather than in national culture.' According to these arguments a strong Muslim identity is attributed to modernising influences rather than atavistic ones (Cesari, 2007; Roy, 2004; Ramadan, 2009).

Although religion is making a 'comeback' amongst believers of other faiths (Roy, 2010) the growing religiosity of Muslims causes alarm because it is often spuriously linked to segregation and dangerous radicalisation (Brown, 2010; Lewis, 2007; Mythen, 2012; Parekh, 2008; Thomas and Sanderson, 2011). Research on Muslim identity and religiosity has made an interesting and valuable contribution to understanding Muslim citizenship in the West but it has also generated some questionable and pathological assumptions about the lack of compatibility between religious identification and Britishness. This may be the consequence of viewing identity separately from its political and social positioning by agents both inside and outside the group (Alexander, 2000; Solomos, 2001). As Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins (2001:298) argue: 'It is only when terms and concepts are analysed in the context of their usage that they take on richer and more nuanced meanings.' Therefore, this thesis pursues an understanding of the salience of religion in Muslim identities by reframing the notion of citizenship in the context of the 'politics of fear' (McGhee, 2010:xx) that

has dominated questions of nationalism and cohesion post 9/11, as examined in the next section.

Securitisation of citizenship

The rise of the 'law-and-order' or 'security state' marks, as Hyatt (2011:105-106) argues, a move beyond 'neoliberalism's high noon' towards 'policing as the primary mechanism of governance'. Security has become an enduring and ubiquitous theme in debates on citizenship in a post 9/11 context but as Bauman (2004) reminds us the notion of security in the 'risk society' diverges from previous understandings which underpinned the welfare state. Security no longer invokes anxieties linked to loss of employment, self-respect or status but raises fears and uncertainties related to the body and material possessions, engendering suspicions which are directed against 'trespassers on our property and strangers at the doorway' (Bauman, 2004:82).

Whilst one of the motivations for this study was to depart from a pattern of research that pathologises Muslim citizenship by viewing it exclusively through the lens of security and terrorism, these issues are difficult to escape when they are so dominant in social and media discourses and representations of Muslims, as well as being a pervasive and shadowy presence in the experience of everyday life for Muslims (Brown, 2010; Brown and Saeed, 2014; Frost, 2008; Gillespie, 2007; McGhee, 2010; Mythen et al, 2009; Pentazis and Pemberton, 2009; Spalek and Lambert, 2008). This section reveals how the securitisation of citizenship has two salient features which are consequential for Muslim citizenship, firstly that government responses have been responsible for the demonisation and criminalisation of Muslim citizenship and secondly that these responses have a cultural dimension that positions Muslim identities and faith as being antithetical and threatening to British society. To begin with, a definition of securitisation is needed. Buzan, Waever and de Wilde (1998 in McGhee, 2010:42) describe it as:

> If by means of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat the securitizing actor has managed to break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by, we are witnessing a case of securitization.

Therefore, securitisation is not a condition where the rule of law is violated in the face of real or imagined existential threats but when these threats legitimise the suspension of normally valid rules or exceptional measures are introduced even at the cost of cherished civil liberties (Brown, 2010; Mavelli, 2013; McGhee, 2010; Vertigans, 2010). The irony of curtailing freedoms in the name of safeguarding liberties has not been lost on scholars who have expressed concerns about the repressive and decivilising impact of the war on terror (Buck-Morss, 2003; Butler, 2006; Dworkin, 2003; McGhee, 2010; Vertigans, 2010). One example of such a discursive construction of security that serves to legitimise new and more authoritarian forms of governance can be found in a RUSI journal (Prins and Salisbury, 2008:22) which states that security is 'not only a question for Chiefs of the Defence Staff. It matters to every citizen of the United Kingdom' thus projecting security as a public issue which necessitates extraordinary state measures since security 'is the primary function of the state, without it there can be no state, and no rule of law'. Hence, the exceptional measures are justified on grounds of performing necessary state functions. The role of the state in securitising Muslim citizenship is most apparent in the way in which counter-terrorism strategies have been targeted specifically at Muslims who are 'instrumentalized and securitized, where their needs are seen almost exclusively through the security lens, rather than in relation to the range of other needs they have as individuals and communities' (Briggs, 2010: 274).

Two important studies have shown how processes of criminalisation occur through counter-terrorism measures, by drawing comparisons between past Irish and present Muslim communities. Comparing more than 2700 media reports and over 800 policy documents Hickman et al (2011:5) report that:

> Despite anti-discrimination legislation, Muslim communities today are subjected to a similar process of construction as 'suspect' as Irish communities in the previous era.

Based on their findings and drawing lessons from the Irish experience Hickman et al (2011) are pessimistic about the chances of success with current counter-terrorism strategies which they believe legitimate public suspicion and hostility towards Muslims, while at the same time failing to address the underlying issues that may explain acts of terrorism. Pantazis and Pemberton (2009) present a detailed examination of counter-terrorism measures in the last few

decades to explicate processes through which a 'suspect community' is constructed. Also adopting a comparative approach, Pentazis and Pemberton (2009:646) draw on Paddy Hillyard's seminal work on the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act and subsequent amendments which introduced the notion of a 'suspect community' to capture the devastating impact of the legislation on Irish communities. Hillyard (1993) identified a 'dual system of justice' through which Irish communities were marked by suspicion, where on the one hand a criminal justice system existed for 'Ordinary Decent Criminals who had committed conventional crimes such as burglary, murder and rape' while on the other hand an alternative 'draconian system developed to deal with those suspected of Irish 'terrorism'' (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009:647). Following Hillyard, the counter terrorism laws introduced in the last two decades are analysed by Pentazis and Pemberton (2009:653) to reveal how security forces have tackled the threat of terrorism by indiscriminately targeting all Muslims without any need to establish grounds for a 'reasonable suspicion'. Criminalisation becomes inevitable in the 'fixing of Muslim communities rather than individual suspects within the gaze of counter-terrorism policing', made possible through the extension of police powers in new terrorism acts passed in 2000 and 2006 (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009:653). Despite the damaging impact of this approach on community relations, as highlighted by Hillyard's research on the Irish case, there has been a failure of political will to appreciate how discriminating counter-terrorism measures are for Muslims. This is evident in a statement made by the then minister responsible for counter-terrorism, Hazel Blears, to parliament:

> … the fact that at the moment the threat is most likely to come from those people associated with an extreme form of Islam, all falsely hiding behind Islam, if you like, in terms of justifying their activities, inevitably means that some of our counter-terrorist powers will be disproportionately experienced by people in the Muslim community. That is the reality of the situation. (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2005:46)

One example of the blurring of lines between security and citizenship can be found in the way in which community cohesion was delivered through counter terrorism measures by the last Labour government (Thomas, 2009a) which 'criminalized Muslim communities and depoliticized the real threat' (Brown, 2010:173). The issue of terrorism becomes depoliticised when the state's efforts to tackle it divert attention away from legitimate political grievances towards cultural issues of integration and cohesion (Brighton, 2007). Thus criminalisation

occurs through the welding of explanatory factors for radicalisation and extremism with assumed characteristics of Muslim communities like segregation and religious fundamentalism which are seen as fixed, intrinsic and difficult to reconcile with British values (Goodhart, 2004; Phillips, 2006, 2013). Not only are such pejorative ascriptions based on unsubstantiated generalisations, they simply ignore warnings that the rise of extremism is linked to British foreign policy, particularly the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that a majority of Muslims, as well as non-Muslims, strongly oppose. In a leaked letter to a newspaper a top official at The Foreign Office warned that:

> British foreign policy and the perception of its negative effect on Muslims globally plays a significant role in creating a feeling of anger and impotence among especially the younger generation of British Muslims. […] This seems to be a key driver behind recruitment by extremist organizations. (BBC News, 2005)

Despite these warnings multiculturalism and lack of integration continued to bear the brunt of the blame for creating 'home grown terror' as Brighton (2007:3) has pointed out:

> The issue of foreign policy is raised, its central importance is noted, but little if any account is offered of its relationship with domestic radicalization. Instead, there is a return to the need for 'integration' and by extension for a reworking of the domestic framework of multiculturalism.

Another demonstration of the permeation of security into Muslim citizenship lies in the controversial counter-terrorism strategy of 'Prevent', under which the government sought to win the 'hearts and minds' of Muslim citizens but which was critically dubbed as the government's 'Islam policy' (Kundnani, 2009:8). As with community cohesion, Prevent has also been a mixed bag of fortunes which has impacted on Muslim communities variably through different local implementation practices as described by a recent report on the participation of British Muslims in governance (O'Toole et al, 2013). Although the report suggests that 'Muslim civil society actors were not merely subject to the Prevent agenda, but were actively involved in (re) shaping and contesting the implementation of Prevent' it is nevertheless views the policy as 'a limited and securitized model of state-Muslim engagement' (O'Toole et al, 2013:7).

Prevent's focus on 'promoting shared values, supporting local solutions, building civic capacity and leadership and strengthening the role of faith institutions and leaders' (DCLG, 2007) can be seen to reflect similar rationalities as the imperatives to promote 'active citizenship' in the context of resurgent nationalism (Home Office, 2004). The principle of 'active citizenship' underpinning 'contemporary criminal justice policy' was invoked after 9/11 to define the terms of Muslim citizenship as Spalek and Lambert (2008:257-8) argue:

> In a post 9/11 context, Muslims' responsibilities as active citizens are being increasingly framed by anti-terror measures, which encourage internal community surveillance so that the responsible Muslim citizen is expected to work with the authorities to help reduce the risk of terrorism.

It is no surprise then that the policy is seen largely as an exercise of surveillance intended to coerce Muslims to spy on each other. Although the coalition government's Prevent (2011) policy tried to address this by separating community cohesion from counter-terrorism, 'there remains considerable overlap between Prevent and Cohesion work' due to 'normative objections' to separating the two areas (O'Toole et al, 2013: 61-62). For all of the above reasons it is argued that government policy has been instrumental in cultivating anti-Muslim hate through 'more punitive and hard-line anti-terror legislation and measures that adversely affect Muslim communities' (Frost, 2008:246).

As with resurgent nationalism the issue of securitisation has also been punctuated by concerns of a cultural kind, reflecting the culturalist approach which frames Islam as an explanation for all the real and imagined problems associated with Muslim citizenship (Brown, 2010; Cesari, 2007; Lentin, 2014; Mamdani, 2002; Roy, 2004). One expression of this can be found in the government's attempts to manage 'Islamic interpretation' among Muslims as a means of addressing the issue of radicalisation by promoting 'mainstream' interpretations of faith (DCLG, 2007; O'Toole et al, 2013). By promoting acceptable forms of Islam through support for groups like MINAB and special training for imams the government has created a pernicious distinction between moderate and extreme Muslims (Brown and Saeed, 2014; O'Toole and Gale, 2013). Moderate or 'good' Muslims are expected to support government policies, particularly counter-terrorism measures that encourage them to spy on their communities, while those who refuse to do so are condemned as dangerous 'bad

Muslims' (Brown, 2010; Mamdani, 2002). This alienates many Muslims, inflames Islamophobia and as Kundani (2014:1041) argues: 'In doing so, culturalists displace what are essentially political conflicts onto a more comfortable cultural plane.'

The events of 9/11 added to corporeal notions of security an imperative 'to protect not only geographical boundaries and people but also civilization' (Vertigans, 2010:26). This cultural dimension of the war on terror is reflected in the urgent need to protect Western values and ideals from the taint of foreign and particularly Islamic aberrations. As Brown (2010:181) asserts: 'The ability to represent British Muslims as subversive, dangerous and threatening therefore becomes pivotal to the contemporary articulation of security in the UK context.'

Following Stritzel's securitisation thesis, Mavelli (2013:166) argues that the securitisation of citizenship has been mediated by a process in which 'terror' has been translated into 'Islam' through the existence of a 'consolidated discursive realm' which allows security to become easily associated with Muslims. This discursive realm is consolidated through repeated commentaries of Muslim pathology reiterated in events such as the fallout from the 2001 riots, moral panics over hijab and scarves, the Rushdie affair and the Danish cartoons controversy. Against this background existing flames of hostility towards Muslims are stoked by the discourses of politicians like Tony Blair (2013; my emphasis) who declared after the murder of Lee Rigby that while there is no problem '*with*' Islam, 'there is a problem *within* Islam'. While 9/11 has brought it into sharp relief, this consolidated discursive realm has historical roots in the West's deep-seated attitude of cultural dominance and supremacy towards formerly colonised people (Kumar, 2012; Said, 1997) whereby Islam has always been perceived as 'unenlightened and unsophisticated' (The Runnymede Trust, 1997:6).

Through such associations securitisation has become centred on the identities and beliefs of Muslims rather than political grievances as the lever to radicalisation and terrorism, promoting the view that Muslims are the "fifth column enemy within" (Spalek, 2010:795). Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010:889-890) relate this process to a misguided but 'conventional wisdom of radicalization' which asserts that 'a sense of Islamic difference …. among Muslim communities has the dangerous potential to mutate issues of differing identities into support for violent 'Islamo-fascism'.'

This makes citizenship more precarious impacting on the everyday experiences of Muslims (Brown and Saeed, 2014; Mythen et al, 2009; Spalek and Lambert, 2008) who not only face physical attacks necessitating risk management through avoidance of certain public spaces, but also creates psychological and symbolic forms of aggression 'characterized more by the intensity of the gaze of suspicion rather than the volatility of random violence' (Mythen, 2012:403). As a consequence of securitisation of citizenship 'young Muslims inhabit a contradictory and ambiguous space in relation to their values and identities, being depicted as a high-risk group whilst simultaneously being exhorted to assimilate more fully into British society' (Mythen et al, 2009:740). Despite such 'caveats on Muslim claims of citizenship' (Brown, 2010:177) research has revealed surprising levels of resilience and creativity in the way that young Muslims respond to the conditionality of citizenship at the current time. O'Loughlin and Gillespie (2012:115) discovered 'dissenting rather than disaffected citizenship is a growing trend' while Mythen (2009:402) identified 'acts of resilience…( )…through which a sense of self and faith were sustained'. The paucity of research in this area (Mythen et al, 2009; Spalek and Lambert, 2008; Vertigans, 2010) calls for further investigation to understand the impact of securitised citizenship on young Muslims which this study addresses in Chapters 7 and 8.

Rebalancing rights and responsibilities

Citizenship has always been subject to perennial tensions between 'the nature of and relationship between rights and responsibilities' (Lister, 2010:195). In post-war Britain, citizenship was predominantly shaped by Marshall's (1950 in Turner 2001:15) triad of rights; 'civil, political and social' designed to safeguard citizens from the 'injustices caused by the capitalist market' (Soysal, 2012a:1). Marshall's model has been criticised for failing to consider cultural rights which can be understood as 'a new breed of claims for unhindered representation, recognition without marginalization, acceptance and integration without "normalizing" distortion' (Pakulski, 1997 in Stevenson, 2001:3). More recently arguments for post-national citizenship have foregrounded human rights as the basis for claiming equality and justice thus blurring the distinction between citizens and non-citizens and undermining the hegemony of the nation-state (Delanty, 2000; McGhee, 2010; Nash, 2009; Soysal, 2012b). These processes

are paralleled by resurgent nationalism, as discussed earlier, which places increasing demands on citizens as citizenship moves from 'a prima facie right' to becoming a 'prized possession that is to be earned and can be lost if not properly cultivated' (van Houdt et al, 2011:408).

As noted earlier 'active citizenship' as a revised mode of integration under community cohesion (Jayaweera and Choudhury, 2008; McGhee, 2008) is a coded demand for Muslims to prove their compatibility with Britain and comply with government initiatives on counter-terrorism and foreign policy. This has created a sense of contingency and precariousness around citizenship which is further compounded by a corresponding emphasis on 'active citizenship' through the 'neoliberal turn' in Western democracies (Brown, 2005; Marinetto, 2003). As with citizenship the term neoliberalism is also an indeterminate one which at a broad level signifies a 'theory of political economic practices' premised on the primacy of 'private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (Harvey, 2005:2) but applied to governance it has taken variable forms and economic configurations since the 1970s. Rather than its economic formulations this study is more concerned with neoliberal rationality which involves '*extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action*' (Brown, 2005:40; original emphasis). The move towards the neoliberalisation of citizenship is evinced by the pervasive use of the term 'active citizenship' which emphasises citizen duties, with an attenuating focus on their rights.

Marinetto (2003:106) argues that the neoliberal turn marks a point of departure from liberal notions of citizenship under which citizens played a 'passive role in the political and decision-making process', usually limited to voting every few years. According to Kymlicka and Norman (2000:6) changes in global politics have reframed the meaning of democracy to go beyond the 'justice of its institutions' to divert greater attention to 'the qualities and attitudes of citizens' as a marker of the health and quality of a nation. While active citizenship is important for the functioning of democracy (Home Office, 2004) its definition and deployment through neoliberal governance has been problematic because it espouses 'responsible self-help' (Marinetto, 2003:109) while cutting back on welfare provision (Isin and Wood, 1999). Dominant in the discourses of successive British governments, the notion of active citizenship has been interpreted as hegemonic (Davies, 2012) which, rather than empowering citizens, has effectively been 'an efficient means for regulating the population' (Marinetto, 2003, 110). This approach to citizenship redirects attention from its inalienable

rights to the duties that it entails as Blair (1998:4) summarised: 'for too long the demand for rights from the state was separated from the duties of individuals and institutions'. The emphasis on active citizenship has emerged since the 1980s as part of efforts by the state 'to ground citizenship on the principles of duty, obligation and responsibility' which 'has challenged the traditional social democratic preference for a solidarity grounded on universal and egalitarian social rights' (Fitzpatrick, 2005:16).

The concept of active citizenship under the Conservatives made the individual the subject of active citizenship, privileging individualistic values as inscribed in the New Right agenda of marketising social arrangements, often at the expense of community engagement (Davies, 2012; Marinetto, 2003). In contrast even though New Labour 'made serious endeavours to develop policies to promote community involvement' (Marinetto, 2003:116), its initiatives have been framed around a very passive idea of participation without any real transfer of power. Employing a Foucauldian perspective, Cruikshank (1994 in Marinetto, 2003:110) has argued that the idea of empowering communities 'cultivates a certain type of subjectivity which encourages the active engagement of the poor in the provision of social services, thus reducing their dependency on the state.' While reduction of dependency can be empowering for citizens, the mechanisms through which this is being achieved under neoliberalism simply absolves the state of its responsibilities while vulnerable citizens are being asked to take a much greater slice of the burden than they are equipped to endure (Soysal, 2012a).

One of the distinguishing features of the neoliberalisation of citizenship is that it links good citizenship to economic self-sufficiency. As Lemke (2000:12) states: 'One key feature of the neo-liberal rationality is the congruence it endeavours to achieve between a responsible and moral individual and an economic-rational individual.' Conversely those who lack self-sufficiency and social capital are deemed to be bad citizens who are less deserving of rights (Kennelly, 2011; Soysal, 2012a). The new language of good (deserving) and bad (undeserving) citizens, who are characterised according to their ability to succeed in the market place, further burdens those who already experience structural barriers to inclusion as they now face demands to take responsibility for their unequal status (Soysal, 2012a). Since Muslims constitute one of the most disadvantaged and underachieving groups in terms of employment, education and other markers of social capital (Frost, 2008) this adds to existing

pressures on their citizenship which is already made precarious by post 9/11 policies on integration and counter-terrorism.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the relevant literature on the history of Muslim political participation and citizenship in Britain, reflecting on momentous events that have created precarious conditions for belonging and participation for Muslims in Britain. The emergence of new forms of nationalism, securitised citizenship and neoliberal notions of individual responsibility set the hegemonic conditions in which the political and civic activism of young adult Muslims is located. Against this context one of the tasks of this thesis is to examine how much these issues constrain or enable activism and how it relates to the politics of the past and the current regimes of citizenship. The following chapter examines the broader theories of political participation that frame these investigations.

Chapter 3: Politics, activism and power

Introduction

The previous chapter set out the empirical context of Muslim politics and citizenship, in the process touching on some of the specific theoretical debates around Muslim identity politics. This chapter draws on more general political theories of politics, power and participation which can be appropriated to gain a better sociological understanding of the political and civic activism of young adult Muslims.

This chapter is divided into four sections, the first of which challenges the exceptionalism of Muslim identity politics by revealing its consistencies with the changing patterns of political behaviour among citizens in the West. This discussion shifts the focus, in the next two sections, to cultural politics and social movements respectively, which play an important role in framing Muslim identity politics as a contemporary expression of political agency.

The final section focuses on Foucauldian theories of power and politics as a strong basis from which to develop an overarching theoretical understanding of politics in contemporary societies. Foucauldian analysis of power extends the traditional view of politics into areas of political engagement previously relegated to the private and personal. It is also a compelling and important sociological, political and philosophical model of the social world that allows this study to connect the microdynamics of political participation in the quotidian context, explored through the use of social movement theory, to the macro level where dominant forms of power become visible.

Democratic deficit and new citizen politics

A growing body of literature has chronicled the shifting dynamics of political participation by citizens, marked by a gradual decline in voting and political party membership, as well as increasing distrust and scepticism towards elite-governed hierarchical institutions in Western democracies (Dalton, 2008; Kivisto and Faist, 2007; Leftwich, 2008; Marsh et al. 2007; Norris 2002, 2003, 2011;

Putnam, 2000; The Electoral Commission 2005; Youth Citizen Commission, 2009). This trend has precipitated fears of a 'democratic deficit' (Norris, 2002) signalling a legitimacy crisis in politics (Dalton, 2008; Hay, 2007). Although electoral turnouts have gradually declined since the 1960s Norris (2011) has cautioned against drawing alarmist conclusions from such statistics as the decline is marked by fluctuations and is accompanied by an enduring aspiration for democratic ideals among citizens. Despite variations in patterns it is generally agreed that electoral politics is becoming less attractive to citizens in countries like the US and UK, where many voters 'see politicians as motivated primarily by self-interest, and government as serving a handful of corporate interests and wasting a significant proportion of taxpayers money' (Hay, 2007:43). Such attitudes also need to be examined carefully since the findings are mixed about how widespread disaffection is, with evidence of both negative and positive perceptions depending on the context and design of the research (Dalton, 2008; Hay, 2007; Norris, 2011). Nevertheless, the democratic deficit is keeping both political analysts and politicians animated in equal measure. Concerns about political apathy and disengagement are particularly acute in the case of younger members of society. As Norris (2003:2) states:

> Political disengagement is thought to affect all citizens but young people are believed to be particularly disillusioned about the major institutions of representative democracy, leaving them either apathetic (at best) or alienated (at worst).

This raises questions about the future of democracy itself with cataclysmic visions of the 'growth of anti-state movements and, at the most extreme, the breakdown of the rule of law' (Norris, 2003:8). The political will to address the issue of youth disengagement is evident in new initiatives like the introduction of citizenship to school curriculums since 2002, Millennium Volunteers, UK Youth Parliament, Young Mayor and Young Advisors and more recently the National Citizens Service, while improving participation has also been a strong remit of youth work in Britain (Shukra et al, 2012). However, these efforts often sit uncomfortably with what are seen as 'efforts to manage and contain the spontaneous political activity of young people' as seen in the harsh crackdown on student demonstrators during the 2010 anti-fees and cuts demonstrations by the police and subsequent vilification of the protestors by politicians in the media (Shukra et al, 2012:38). This, combined with the perception that government initiatives to encourage engagement are a 'token or a PR exercise' which are

designed to 'restrict, not enable them' (Youth Citizenship Commission, 2009:21) do not do much to mitigate young people's distrust of politics. These efforts reflect the tendency in policy and research to either present the category of youth as irresponsible and inexperienced (Mathews et al 1999; Valentine, 2000) or to pathologise it as deviant and delinquent (France, 2008; Herrera and Bayat, 2010).

When it comes to Muslim youth, in addition to generic concerns about young people, there are heightened anxieties due to the anticipated risks of radicalisation and terrorism (Home Office, 2005; Mythen et al, 2009; O'Toole and Gale, 2013). This impression is reinforced when government efforts to foster better engagement with Muslim youth are rationalised by the need to tackle radicalisation rather than meeting their needs as marginalised citizens (Briggs, 2010; Brown, 2010). For instance a government report on preventing violent extremism states that: 'There is evidence that a few young Muslims are turning to extremism fuelled by anger, alienation and disaffection from mainstream British society' and it suggests this should be addressed by providing 'Opportunities for young British Muslims to be leaders and active citizens' (Home Office, 2005:12).

Concerns over the alienation of Muslim youth may be reasonable but actual evidence for their political disengagement is indeterminate at best since much research about electoral behaviour does not disaggregate voting and participation levels by ethnicity, age or religion (O'Toole and Gale, 2013). The findings are further complicated by differences in results depending on claimed or actual electoral turnout and the failure to take into account different levels of voter registration across and between ethnic minority groups (O'Toole and Gale, 2013). Where more fine grained analysis does exist it can suggest a discernible difference in levels of participation by younger members of ethnic minority groups.

> While a failure to engage younger citizens is a problem for both white and EM groups, it is striking that second-generation black citizens and those of Pakistani or Bangladeshi background who have grown up in Britain are less engaged than immigrants. (Sanders et al, 2014:136)

Research by MORI (2005 in O'Toole and Gale, 2013) also suggests that the alienation and disconnection of youth from mainstream politics is more pronounced among BMEs than whites although this has been challenged by the EMBES (Ethnic Minority British Election Surveys) following the 2010 elections

(O'Toole and Gale, 2013; Sanders et al, 2014). This suggests government fears regarding the disengagement of young Muslims may have some basis in reality, although a recent Runnymede Trust report (Heath and Khan, 2012) has highlighted that contrary to widely held views the minority group that is most disenfranchised and alienated is not Muslim but black. A cynical reading suggests government motives in addressing Muslim disengagement are linked to associations with radicalisation rather than genuine concerns for their marginalisation. When government efforts to address the disengagement of young Muslims are couched in terms of minimising the risk of terrorism this is often seen as instrumentalising the state's relationship with Muslims, as highlighted by stakeholders in a report by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007). It also exposes exceptionalist attitudes towards Muslims.

> These exceptionalist claims about Muslim youth are made not simply because of their objective marginalisation, but especially because of their "Muslimness" – an attribute often equated with religious fundamentalism, outdated notions about gender relations, insularity, and proclivities towards violence. (Bayat and Herrera, 2010:4-5)

Besides the ambiguity of evidence around Muslim youth disengagement there are other reasons to be wary of misplaced anxieties over Muslim youth and their lack of political participation. This comes from arguments that the democratic deficit theory is based on a narrow and outdated definition of political participation, limited to voting and party membership (Dalton, 2008; Leftwich, 2008; Hay, 2007; Marsh et al, 2007; Nash, 2010; O'Toole and Gale, 2013). Growing evidence of a perceptible shift in citizen politics suggests a move away from passive participation through voting every few years to more active forms of engagement. This 'new style of citizen politics' seeks to gain political influence through direct forms of action beyond elections involving protests, campaigning, communal activity and internet activism (Dalton, 2008:8-9). It is argued that post World War II social and political changes in Western democracies have given rise to more educated and discerning 'critical citizens' (Norris, 2011:253) who vote less but are more knowledgeable about politics (Dalton, 2008; Della Porta, 2013). Norris (2002:188; original emphasis) has linked changing political behaviours to the arrival of new social movements 'that have altered the *agencies* (collective organizations), *repertoires* (the actions commonly used for political expression), and the *targets* (the political actors whom participants seek to influence)' of political action. It is also suggested that non-voters far from being

politically apathetic are in fact engaging in a form of protest politics (Hay, 2007; Marsh et al, 2007). The optimism of these theorists is based on the view that critical citizenship is a 'welcome antidote to what are seen as the worrying levels of deference to political authority exhibited throughout much of the post-war period' (Hay, 2007:46). Rather than being a threat such new forms of politics may even reinvigorate democracy, as Rosanvallon's (2006 in Della Porta, 2013:4) theory of 'counter-democracy' suggests 'democracy develops with the permanent contestation of power' through the actions of 'mass media, experts and social movements' that 'have traditionally exercised this function of surveillance'.

The importance of bringing together the distinct literatures on Muslim political engagement and new citizen politics serves not only to challenge the damaging exceptionalism that has negative consequences for Muslim citizenship but also makes for a much more comprehensive understanding of each of the areas of study. As O'Toole and Gale (2013:17-18) argue locating Muslim politics within 'broader literatures on shifting patterns of citizens' political engagement' is necessary for avoiding 'highly pathologising crisis narratives on ethnic minority young people'. Although this lesser known area is in need of further evidence there are indications that young Muslims are not as apathetical as feared and are involved in a range of different forms of civic and political activism (Back et al, 2009; O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012; O'Toole and Gale, 2013; Solomos, 2005). According to Briggs (2010:275) 'this political mobilization is difficult to capture quantitatively and is not always channelled through formal or traditional structures' but despite this there are encouraging signs that 'young Muslims are more interested and engaged in current affairs and politics than ever before'. Additionally citizenship surveys in Britain show that a third of Muslims report taking part in voluntary work which is an important indicator of civic and political engagement (Briggs, 2010). The importance and relative unfamiliarity of this topic necessitates an examination of how political participation among young Muslims citizens is being shaped by broader political and social shifts in society and what implications this has for their citizenship and belonging.

The cultural turn in politics

Diverting attention to alternative and non-conventional forms of politics requires theoretical and conceptual innovation as well as a shift in empirical

focus. Although politics has been defined in diverse ways by different disciplines and theorists, 'power' offers an abstract unifying dimension which draws the various perspectives together. Accordingly, politics can be defined as a process involving the use and control of power in society (Nash, 2010) or as Colin Hay (2002) surmises the prime concern of 'the political' is the distribution, exercise and consequences of power. Also crucial to reappraising the notion of politics is the question of where power is located in society and how it is legitimised. In a traditional view of politics, which still persists in some social science approaches, the state is pivotal to the control and exercise of power (Faulks, 1999). This has led to the dominance of 'the state as the site of modern politics and the labour movement as the dominant political force' (Nash, 2010:89). This view engenders fears of a democratic deficit because political participation is predicated on voting and party political membership.

As the previous section asserts, theorists are postulating new political subjectivities among citizens who are reshaping contemporary forms of engagement. Political activism through non-electoral channels has been made salient by the rise of social movements since the 1960s, precipitating an analytical and empirical shift from the 'politics of loyalty' or class based politics to 'politics of choice' (Norris, 2002:188) or identity politics. Giddens (1991:210-214; original emphasis) has elaborated a historical drift in Western liberal democracies from '*emancipatory politics'* which dominated till the middle of the 20th century and were concerned with 'liberating human beings from traditional constraints', to a focus on '*life politics'* from the 1980s onwards which 'presumes (a certain level of) emancipation'. Life politics is primarily about 'lifestyle' and is a 'politics *of* choice' (Giddens, 1991:214; original emphasis). This phenomenon has been referred to by Beck (1997:98-99) as the 'petering out of politics with the activation of subpolitics' and a 'category transformation' in politics which emerges in new areas of life formerly thought to be non-political. Sub-politics 'means shaping society *from below'* by 'groups hitherto uninvolved in the substantive technification and industrialization processes: citizens, the public sphere, social movements, expert groups, working people on site' among others (Beck, 1994:23; original emphasis). This has called into question traditional views of politics as 'equation of politics and state, of politics with the political system' (Beck, 1997:98). While Beck draws attention to the expansion of politics into new and previously untouched areas of social life there is also a need to formulate new conceptual tools to account for these changes. The emerging significance of

new forms of political expression prompted Melucci (1985:139) to surmise that collective action is increasingly moving from a 'political' form, commonly found in traditional opposition movements, to more cultural ground.

Nash (2001; 2009; 2010) asserts that there has been a cultural turn in political sociology that calls for a rethinking of the traditional domain of politics as state-centred and requires an analysis of politics as a possibility in every domain of society, bringing to life the feminist claim that 'the personal is political'. Nash (2010:37) states:

> …contemporary political sociology concerns cultural politics, which is the interpretation of social meanings that support, challenge, or change the definitions, perspectives, and identities of social actors, to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others, across state and society.

Nash (2001) distinguishes two types of arguments to support the growing significance of cultural politics in contemporary social sciences. In the historical case cultural politics signifies a distinct shift in the way politics is conducted in contemporary democracies as some of the foregoing discussions have demonstrated. According to the historical argument culture plays an 'unprecedented role in constituting social relations and identities in the contemporary society' (Nash, 2001:77). However, Nash (2001:77) has also highlighted the epistemological case for cultural politics which implies that politics is 'universally constitutive' of social relations and identities. The epistemological argument for cultural politics is based on a conceptually different view of politics which is indebted to Foucault's view of power as a productive force in all social relations, which has opened up the space to include conflicts and struggles of a more personal and symbolic nature (Nash, 2001; 2010). According to Foucault locating power in the state or ruling classes is to mistake the very nature of power and how it functions in contemporary societies. Although Foucault was not a cultural theorist, his understanding of power, as something that diffuses the entire body of the social world and operates through discourse and knowledge, brings culture to the forefront of political practice and analysis. Foucault's theorisation of power is returned to later in this chapter where its relevance as a theoretical framework to link the micro politics of Muslim activism to broader social structures of power and politics is elaborated in greater detail.

A cultural politics perspective expands the horizon on which an analysis of political activism can extend its reach by taking into account much broader

processes beyond the state and electoral political systems. The concept of cultural politics directs analysis to: 'The politics of signifying practices through which identities, social relations, and rules are contested, subverted, and may be transformed' (Nash, 2010:237). To be clear cultural politics does not mean neglecting issues of class and economic inequality but rather it focuses on how these issues are culturally framed and contested. Social movements have revealed cultural politics to be 'struggles over the definition of meanings and the construction of new identities and lifestyles, *as well as* addressing formal political institutions' (Nash, 2010:87; emphasis mine). The association of cultural politics to social movements should also not be taken to mean the state has become marginal to politics since it is one of the primary sites where cultural politics comes to life (Lentin, 2014; Nash, 2010; Pero, 2014). Castells (2012:4) has argued power is concentrated in social institutions, particularly the state therefore its exercise 'by means of coercion (the monopoly of violence, legitimate or not, by the control of the state) and/or by the construction of meaning in people's minds, through mechanisms of symbolic manipulation' implicates the state in both direct uses of force as well as the power to shape social meanings through cultural politics. However, this study attends to the exercise of what Castells (2012:5) calls 'counterpower' which is 'the capacity of social actors to challenge the power embedded in the institutions of society for the purposes of claiming representation for their own values and interests.'

Social movement theory

Social movements have been at the forefront of shaping and articulating the idea of cultural politics (Nash, 2010; Swidler, 1995) through a rich body of literature that has proliferated since the 1960s. Social movement theory is a diverse ensemble of ideas, concepts and approaches which highlights the various dimensions of collective action beyond the realm of mainstream electoral politics. Melucci (1996:1) compares movements to prophets that 'announce what is taking shape even before its direction and content has become clear'. Crossley (2002) similarly refers to social movements as harbingers of social change, making them an important site in which to explore themes of youth participation and citizenship. The application of social movement theory to the progressive politics of young Muslims in the Britain represents a new and theoretically promising area against the paucity of such an understanding in existing literature.

Where social movement theory has been applied to Muslims it has tended to be with respect to conservative, fundamentalist and traditional politics like the Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Qaeda (Castells, 2010; Munson, 2001; Sutton and Vertigans, 2006). In one such study Wiktorowicz (2005:4) applies social movement theory to Islamic activism in order to break a pattern of research which he claims essentialises Muslim politics by assuming that 'a particular set of grievances, translated into religious idioms and symbols, engenders mobilization'. His approach deconstructs 'Islamic exceptionalism' by highlighting the processes and strategies that Islamic activism shares with other social movements. This thesis goes beyond this by problematising the presumption that all Muslim activism is either deviant or in fact informed by faith. This is done by defining Muslims as sociological rather religious category as explained in detail in Chapter 4 on methodology.

Locating the activism of young adult Muslims within social movement theory requires an explanation of what social movements are and what distinguishes them from other forms of collection action. Due to the vast range of literature on social movements it is impossible to offer a tidy and exhaustive definition, but as it is necessary to specify exactly what is being covered by this thesis, a working definition is devised through the distillation of ideas put forward by some of the most influential authors on the topic.

Alberto Melucci (1985:795) defines a social movement as a 'form of collective action (a) based on solidarity, (b) carrying on a conflict, (c) breaking the limits of the system in which action occurs.' In this formulation conflict is defined as: 'a relationship between opposed actors fighting for the same resources, to which both give value' (Melucci, 1985:794) while solidarity is specified as 'the capability of an actor to share a collective identity, that is, the capability of recognizing and being recognized as a part of the same system of social relationships' (Melucci, 1985:794-795). This has much common ground with the definition offered by Mario Diani who has tried to distinguish social movements from other political expressions like protests, pressure groups, political parties and religious organisations:

> A social movement is a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in political or cultural conflict on the basis of a shared collective identity. (Diani, 1992 in Nash, 2010:120)

Della Porta and Diani (2006:20) further summarise the essential elements of a social movement by stating three defining elements:

- Conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents
- Linked by dense informal networks
- Sharing of a distinct collective identity

These definitions echo Melucci's (1985) emphasis on collective identity and conflict but extend the definition to include organisational features of social movements as operating through networks rather than the hierarchical institutional structures characteristic of more traditional politics in trade unions or political parties. The seminal importance of networks to a social movement was not denied by Melucci but rather it is assumed by his definition since Melucci (1996:113) has argued that collective action is itself the outcome of 'networks in the everyday'. Definitions offered by Diani (1992 in Nash, 2010) and Della Porta and Diani (2006) also overcome the more narrow understanding of the role of social movements as 'breaking the limits of the system' in the way that Melucci states by specifying a more general concept of 'conflict' which permits greater flexibility in what can be included in social movement analysis. However, Della Porta and Diani (2006:22) are reluctant to include forms of collective action that do not have 'clearly identified opponents' and refer to these as 'consensus movements'. This is problematic since it excludes movements that have 'more abstract targets' like 'institutionalized racism' or 'patriarchy' (Crossley, 2002:5) or, in the case of this research, Islamophobia. Addressing this critique a more useful and inclusive definition is offered by Snow et al (2007:321: original emphasis) who define social movements as:

> …collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority.

To synthesize the above definitions into a working model for this study, a summary of the above definitions suggests a social movement must contain elements of:

- Collective identity/solidarity
- Political or cultural conflict (with or without clearly identified opponents/challenge or defence of extant authority)
- Informal (dense) networks/some degree of organisation

The three qualifications taken together suggest that social movements can include individuals or groups but a single individual or group cannot be a social movement. Similarly, while protests and riots may be part of social movements a single protest or eruption of a riot does not constitute a social movement since it lacks a 'degree of organisation' or processes of 'collective identity' production.

Social movement theory is not a singular or fixed approach but rather comprises a number of different perspectives which incrementally contribute to a rich body of knowledge. One of the earlier approaches called collective behaviour theory (CB) explained social movements as a response to grievances and anomie associated with structural strain (Beuchler, 2007; Crossley, 2002). These theories viewed social movements as one of the many forms of collective behaviour, including panics and riots, which were assumed to be an irrational response to 'periods of strain and breakdown', representing the weakening of 'social controls and moral imperatives' (Beuchler, 2007:925). This approach eventually became discredited because grievances, deprivation and social crisis are widespread and do not necessarily lead to collective action (Diani and Della Porta, 2006; Nash, 2010). Furthermore, empirical evidence that social movements often emerge in times of social stability contradicts the collective behaviour perspective (Crossley, 2002).

In contrast to CB Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) argues that the availability of resources to mount collective action is a much better indicator of mobilisation than grievances alone. RM theorists are interested in the way in which social movement organisations conduct and sustain mobilisation and this has contributed to knowledge of the organisational practices and strategies employed by social movements. However, a critique of this approach is that it ignores macro social structures like the political opportunities of particular societies and how they constrain or enable mobilisation (Crossley, 2002). Political Process (PP) theorists address this by relating social movements to the degree of openness or closure of a political system. Charles Tilly (1978 in Nash, 2010) for instance has examined the way in which state agencies suppress or promote social movements to suit their own interests. A further advance in RMT comes from Benford and Snow's (2000) theorisation of 'framing' as a mobilising strategy in social movements. Inspired by Goffman (1974 in Benford and Snow 2000) the concept of frames allows social actors to 'define grievances, forge collective identities, and create, interpret, and transform opportunities in order to

bring about social movements' (Nash, 2010:100). Social movement organisations strategically use 'frame alignment processes' to link their interests and interpretive frames with those of prospective members (Benford and Snow, 2000:624).

While RMT has contributed a great deal to social movement theory it fails to link individual values to collective action as well as relating social movements to broader sociological changes in society, particularly the rise of postmodernism and cultural politics (Nash, 2010). The approach known as New Social Movements (NSM) goes some way towards bridging this gap by linking the emergence of social movements to changes in social conditions from the 1960s onwards, including the availability of better jobs and mass education and the rise of post-material values (Inglehart, 2000). The newness of social movements, like the feminist and environmental movements, is characterised by a shift from the politics of class, explained by Marxist models of society, to new forms of politics which aim towards cultural, symbolic and sub-political changes (Crossley, 2002; Melucci, 1989; 1996; Nash, 2010). New social movements are marked by different modes of mobilisation compared to labour/class movements and they often prioritise different values and targets (Norris, 2002). They typically have participants from a cross-section of social categories rather than a single class or social background; the organisational structures are more decentralised with a more open membership criteria; and their efforts can be aimed at changing lifestyles and social values as well as government policy (Norris, 2002; Nash, 2011). However, the distinction being drawn between old (class) and new (cultural) movements is a heuristic one to highlight relative but discernible differences between them. Empirically it would be implausible and historically suspect to assume that labour/class movements were devoid of cultural contestation or that new movements have little interest in material or class-based politics. As highlighted in the previous chapter the dividing line between identity and class politics or the politics of recognition and redistribution (Fraser, 2001) has been blurred by social movements (Isin and Wood, 1999; Young, 1990; 2000). It is also argued that these movements are not as new as it is assumed since movements prioritising identity or culture were either neglected by sociologists in the past or subsumed within the more dominant labour movement (Honneth, 2001; Nash, 2010).

One of the limitations of RM and PP theories is that they are informed by rational actor theory drawn from economics which has no way of accounting for

agency or subjectivity within social movements. Attempting to bridge this gap, Melucci (1996) turned his focus to the processes involved in the production of collective identities as engines of social movement mobilisation. Prioritising agency in social movement theory Melucci (1996) argues that it is in negotiating identities in interaction with others in society that collective action is generated. However, collective action is sustained by 'networks in the everyday' of largely part-time and floating membership which 'makes it extremely difficult to actually specify the collective actor' (Melucci, 1996:113-114). Contrasting social movement politics to class based mobilisations Melucci (1996) argues that the production of collective identity in the information age involves the manipulation of symbols and signs, the hallmark of cultural politics, rather than solidarity built upon shared material conditions.

Immanuel Castells (2010:xvii) has brought into focus 'the growing power of identity' as a key feature of social movements in the 'network society'. Castells (2010:xxxii) view of power shares much common ground with the cultural politics framework described earlier, in that he believes power struggles are always concerned with a 'battle over people's minds.' However, as a theorist who analyses social movements within the context of the 'network society' constituted by 'the revolution in information and communication technologies' Castells (2010:xxxii; original emphasis) argues that this battle is now primarily being waged within media spaces. He proposes that the social world is witnessing a new kind of politics that he refers to as '*informational politics*' or 'media politics'. With renewed interest in social movements sparked by a fresh wave of protests by young activists from the Arab Spring to the Occupy movement Castells (2012:4) has tentatively suggested a new form of power which he calls 'communication power'. This power has come about as result of advancements in communication technologies which limit government control over political expression, offering social movements and political actors the opportunity to challenge and reshape the way that dominant social values and meanings are framed. This has given rise to a phenomenon that Castells (2012:5) refers to as 'mass self-communication' which acts as a new and empowering resource for grassroots activists. According to Castells (2012) the availability of such modes of communication partly explains the eruption of new and unexpected revolutions and mass mobilisations around the world.

As the above summary has tried to demonstrate, social movement theory offers a host of analytical tools to probe and elucidate the activities of young adult Muslim activists at a micro level of analysis. Most importantly a definition of social movements cited above helps to draw a distinct boundary around the area being studied which helps to differentiate it from other forms of politics or social activities. The next section focuses on Foucauldian theories of power and politics which provide a theoretical grounding to link these forms of engagement to the broader macro level view of society to highlight the structures that shape and define the possibilities within which these contemporary struggles evolve.

Foucault, power and resistance

As mentioned before, the work of Michel Foucault has been instrumental in redefining the notion of politics by elaborating a more socially diffused and abstract model of power in society. Nash (2010:21) argues that Foucault's analysis of power is significant in the development of cultural politics:

> His analyses are opposed to what he calls the "juridico-discursive" model in which power is seen as possessed by the state, especially the law, and is used to impose order on society.

According to Foucault's 'nominalist view of power' (Hindess, 2012:37) it must be seen as a productive force which circulates in all of society rather than being an entity that is located within particular sites (Foucault, 1994c). Power is never possessed or owned but rather it is exercised and becomes evident in the effects it produces. Instead of trying to understand what power is, Foucault is more interested in power relations and the productive conditions and practices which explain them. This renders definitions of politics premised on the workings of the state as offering a very limited view which obscures the multiple sites and devices through which power can be exercised. Foucault's understanding of power chimes with the assertion that politics should be seen as a process rather than a domain (Hay, 2007; Leftwich, 2008). This theory allows us to take seriously the potential to find political participation within a whole range of social activities from protests to poetry.

An important dimension of Foucault's theorisation of power is his understanding that power in contemporary societies is exercised through

knowledge and discourse, both important concepts in his writings and vital aspects of political activism within the remit of cultural politics. Foucault (1994a; 1995) identified the use of knowledge as a form of social control that emerged some time in the 18th century with the use of new technologies of power to manage the changing dynamics of population, economies and governance in Western capitalist nations. The use of specialised knowledge is integral to Foucault's (1994a) theory about the modern art of government which is dependent on understanding and gathering facts about society and its various domains of activity from the economy to civil society. Foucault's (1994a:207) notion of 'the art of government' contrasts this form of rule with past modes of governing society which were 'concerned primarily with the business of taking over the state, keeping it in one's possession or subordinating it to some external principle of legitimacy' (Hindess, 2012:39). Here Foucault (1994a) contrasts modern government with the Machiavellian model of government based on consolidating the prince's power over the principality as well as distinguishing it from the justification of authority with reference to a divine order of society oriented towards the pastoral guidance of souls and lives. In contrast to these modes of rule modern government is something quite different:

> …on the contrary, with government it is a question not of imposing law on men but of disposing things: that is, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics – to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such-and-such ends may be achieved.(Foucault, 1994a:211)

In this mode of government power is less concerned with 'sovereignty' but with the 'welfare of the population' which it achieves by acting directly on the population itself 'through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people' the fulfilment of these ends (Foucault, 1994a:217). This is what Foucault has referred to as 'governmentality', a rationality of government which penetrates and multiplies through the capillaries of society and emerges in the actions of individuals. The production of knowledge was essential to this form of government in states established on principles of liberalism, since the people to be governed were 'endowed with a capacity for autonomous, self-directing activity' and government was about 'conducting the affairs of the population in what are thought to be the interests of the whole' (Hindess, 2012:39).

Foucault identifies a significant modification in the way knowledge was socially construed and applied at this time, from being an act of inquiry to becoming 'organized around the norm, in terms of what was normal or not, correct or not, in terms of what one must do or not do' (Foucault, 1994d:59). The ascendency of the sciences and the production of specialist knowledge went 'hand in hand with the installation of new mechanisms of power' (Foucault, 1988:106) operating through strategies of monitoring, measuring and shaping social behaviours and needs. This allowed increasingly complex and unpredictable populations to be managed with far greater efficiency and at a much smaller cost through:

> …the proliferation of new devices for governing conduct that have their roots, in part at least, in the success of welfare in authorising expertise in relation to a range of social objectives, and in implanting in citizens the aspiration to pursue their own civility, well-being and advancement. (Rose, 2006:147)

Foucault (1995:209) refers to this transformation in the way that power was exercised over people through knowledge as encompassing 'the formation of what might be called in general the disciplinary society' through 'anonymous instruments of power, coextensive with the multiplicity that they regiment, such as hierarchical surveillance, continuous registration, perpetual assessment and classification'. The production of such authoritative forms of knowledge, or regimes of truth, are seen by Foucault as one of the technologies of power which depend on the ability or tendency of power to inscribe desirable dispositions into citizens and produce certain subjectivities in what Foucault (1994b:341) referred to as the 'conduct of conducts'. By this Foucault meant: 'To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others.' This is how governmentality achieves the art of governing autonomous free individuals, central to liberalism, by conducting their conduct for the benefit of the whole. Knowledge is needed to create the conditions in which free individuals can act in ways that accord with the needs of governing. The complex workings of power encapsulated in the notion of governmentality is best explained by Nikolas Rose (2006) who states such technologies of power render 'reality thinkable in such a way that it is amenable to political programming' (Rose, 2006:147).

Knowledge that is produced through, within and in the presence of such technologies of power 'not only assumes the authority of the 'truth' but has the

power to *make itself true*' (Hall, 2010:76 original emphasis) through discourse that 'transmits and produces power' (Foucault, 1978:101). The concept of discourse is another important one described by Foucault (1995) since knowledge, produced through dominant discourses, is one of the key dimensions through which social control has been exercised in society. Discourse in the Foucauldian sense signifies the use of language as a social practice that produces meaning and in doing so constructs objects in the world (Foucault, 1981; Hall, 2010). This model of power and politics brings into focus the importance of cultural politics since power is no longer exercised directly through violence or subjugation but through both material and symbolic techniques (Lemke, 2000) that act on the conduct of free agents.

Foucault's theorisation of power is often criticised for its failure to account for the subject, begging the question as to how it might be a useful theory for studying 'counterpower'. While in earlier works Foucault did indeed state that in order to understand power relations in society the subject must be removed from the analysis, this was due to his concern for the inflated importance of the subject in existing social theory. In his later works Foucault devoted much greater attention to developing a better understanding of the subject and how it was constituted by power rather than preceding it (Foucault 1994b,c). Foucault is also criticised for not allowing the subject to exercise agency since power that constitutes the subject bounds the scope of freedom to act, making his theory of power 'incapable of distinguishing ontologically and analytically between human agency and social constraint' (Al-Amoudi, 2007:552). While it is true that agency is somewhat foreclosed, since the subject always acts within the limits produced by power relations in 'the possible field of action' (Foucault, 1994b:341), Foucault's analysis of power contains within it an explanation for how agency and resistance might be possible within power relations. Foucault (1997:299) stated: 'There three levels to my analysis of power: strategic relations, techniques of government, and the states of domination.'

This distinction is important in understanding Foucault's (1997:298) conceptualisation of power as not necessarily an 'evil' since he did not view the first nor the second of these distinctions as necessarily 'bad' in themselves. Foucault (1997:299) conceives of some ways of exercising power as 'strategic games between liberties – in which some try to control the conduct of others', which he also refers to as 'games of power'. In contrast a 'state of domination' is defined as when 'an individual or social group succeeds in blocking a field of

power relations, immobilizing them and preventing any reversibility of movement by economic, political, or military means' (Foucault, 1997:283). Between these two poles are located 'technologies of government' which are defined broadly as referring to both government/state institutions, practices and discourses as well as the 'the way one governs one's wife and children' (Foucault, 1997:299), in other words the idea of 'governmentality'. However, Foucault also specified that while states of domination curtail or prohibit the exercise of freedom or agency, outside such states, power relations assume a free subject capable of exercising agency and choice.

> When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterizes these actions by the government of men by other men – in the broadest sense of the term – one includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. (Foucault, 1994b: 341-342)

It is this freedom that allows the possibility of resistance and for power to be challenged and appropriated by subordinates. Foucault's theories of power therefore can be appropriated to illuminate the mechanisms through which individual forms of action can be linked to prevalent technologies of power through the way in which power is resisted. The possibility of such social change to transpire constitutes an important aspect of conceptualising the strategic importance of cultural politics as defined by Nash (2009; 2010). Forms of power that operate through discourses and knowledge are hard to identify and challenge through conventional forms of politics because as Foucault argued their danger lies in their ability to function as invisible and neutral forces (Gordon, 1994). However, these forms of power can be studied by the effects they produce. Foucault (1994b) suggests that one way of understanding how power is being exercised in society is to examine how it is resisted. To do so, Foucault (1994b:329) suggests 'a way that is more empirical' which 'consists in taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point.' This entails an examination of the forms of opposition prevalent at a certain time, so rather than studying sanity Foucault suggests investigating the 'field of insanity' or instead of 'legality' the 'field of illegality. Foucault (1994b:329) suggests that: 'Rather than analysing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analysing power relations through the antagonism of strategies.' Here Foucault's theory of power relates directly to social movements which he refers

to as more than just 'anti-authority struggles' in that they challenge governmentality itself:

> They are an opposition to the effects of power linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification – struggles against the privileges of knowledge. But they are also an opposition against secrecy, deformation, and mystifying representations imposed on people. (Foucault, 1994b: 330).

Foucault (1994a,b,c,d; 1995) was applying his 'analytics of power' primarily to the topics of sexuality and crime but his theories on the power/knowledge nexus and how it produces certain authoritative ways of defining and normalising social values, conduct and concepts can be applied to other areas of social life such as political participation and citizenship. Foucault's understanding of power and knowledge is well placed to explicate the plethora of literature around Muslims citizenship that has proliferated in the post 9/11 context which focuses on the pathologies associated with this minority religious group (Briggs and Birdwell, 2009; Choudhury, 2007; DCLG, 2007, 2010; Home Affairs Committee, 2005; Quilliam, 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2005). It may be argued that the disproportionate attention on radical, extreme and terrorist Muslims has discursively shaped public opinion to passively accept what constitutes an attack on hard-won civil liberties for all citizens (Buck-Morss, 2003; Dworkin, 2003; Vertigans, 2010). The concept of governmentality may be applied to understanding how certain political subjectivities have allowed a whole new range of security and immigration laws to be instituted in what is now referred to as the 'security state' or the 'law and order state' in a post 9/11 context (Fekete, 2009; Hyatt, 2011). Most importantly Foucauldian ideas of power and politics allow this study to not only extend the remit of political participation but also to appreciate the broader power relations in which day to day politics of citizenship takes place.

Conclusion

This chapter has articulated the conceptual and theoretical literature that sets the parameters for this study and informs the research design. New forms of political participation and new conceptual tools are explored to situate Muslim politics within wider understandings of changing citizen politics which directs attention to cultural politics and social movements as a promising and relatively uncharted site to study the politics of young Muslims. The chapter also draws on

Foucauldian theorisation of power, knowledge and discourse to substantiate this study's focus on cultural politics. Foucault's work also offers a sound theoretical link between bottom up processes of political contestation and top-down structures that dominate prevalent power relations in society.

Chapter 4: The research process

Epistemology and knowledge claims

This study adopts a subtle realist ontological position drawing on the work of Murphy and Dingwall (2003), who in turn appropriate this concept from Hammersley (1992). This ontological position claims that 'a world exists independently of its observers and constrains the observations that can be made' (Murphy and Dingwall, 2003:13). Although subtle realism, like critical realism (Sayer, 2000), is guided by the belief that social reality exists independently of human knowledge, this does not imply conversely that human knowledge is independent of the social world since 'reality has a way of resisting our constructions' (Murphy and Dingwall, 2003:12). Hence, even the most fervently held belief that racism does not exist fails to translate into its disappearance from society, which suggests that human knowledge is constrained by real, existing conditions. However, in contrast to objectivism, a subtle realist position approaches research from the perspective that 'all knowledge is based on assumptions and purposes and is a human construction' (Hammersley, 1992:74). This position avoids the determinist fallacy of objectivism as well as the extreme relativist implications of constructivism. Compared to realism it is a 'fallibilist' approach 'regarding "truths" as provisional until there is good reason for contradictory versions to gain support' (Seale, 1999:470-471). While subtle realism shares the relativist belief that reality can have several representations, from different perspectives, which may all be potentially true, it still allows judgements to be made about the relative plausibility and veracity of knowledge by asking whether it is 'adequately supported by evidence and argument' (Murphy and Dingwall, 2003:13).

The subtle realist position, and interpretative epistemology, of this research compels it to 'be rather more vigilant regarding the dangers of error' (Hammersley,1992:74) by carefully selecting methods that are likely to produce a more plausible view of social reality. Translating this into concrete terms it is asserted that an exclusive focus on the subjective perspectives of Muslim political activists provides only a partial view of political activism. Therefore, the research goes beyond probing the perspectives of participants to explicating the social structures and cultural settings in which activism is situated. In other words

while the primary focus of the research remains on individual participants and the ways in which they describe and narrate their social experiences, beliefs and aspirations it is recognised there may be differences between the participants' understanding, the interpretations of others and what actually exists in the world. This requires a study of both the participants meaning-making and the context in which this unfolds, necessitating mixed methods as explored below.

Research Design and Methodology

The study employs an ethnographic approach featuring mixed methods including semi-structured qualitative interviews, participant observation and documentary evidence. This is considered to be the most appropriate strategy for engaging with a marginalised group of citizens as it entails an 'extended involvement of the researcher in the social life of those he or she studies' (Bryman, 2008:401). This is important in the light of previous research highlighting potential difficulties with gaining access to some Muslim subjects in a current 'climate of fear and suspicion' (Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert, 2008:544). It has also been pointed out that research fatigue and heightened sensitivities are becoming an issue in areas where residents are being over-researched (Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert, 2008). Ahead of fieldwork in the Midlands such tensions were anticipated in several areas that have experienced high levels of scrutiny in the war on terror due to their high Muslim concentration (Pentazis and Pemberton, 2009).

Multi-sited ethnography

An important consideration in adopting an ethnographic approach is to avoid a tendency in previous studies to take a majoritarian perspective in engaging with Muslims and neglecting to consider the perspectives of those who have been most deeply and inimically affected by the war on terror (Bectovic, 2011; Brown, 2010; Garner and Selod, 2015; Mythen, 2012; Spalek and Lambert, 2008). It has been argued that many contemporary studies on migrants are conducted 'in the abstract and in isolation from the lived experiences and practices of citizenship of the migrants themselves' (Pero, 2008:76), offering a limited perspective of minority lives. Ethnography offers a more inclusive and therefore ethical way, to conduct research with minorities as it attempts to

embrace complexity and recognises the agency and subjectivity of participants (Pero, 2008) which may help to avoid some of the reified and reductive views of Muslims that have contributed to their marginalisation. Ethnography is well placed to help the researcher study the lived experience of activism and civic engagement since it aims to minimise the social and cultural distance between the researcher and the researched (O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012). Traditional ethnography has roots in the discipline of anthropology, which gained prominence in the work of Bronislaw K. Malinowski and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (Macdonald, 2001; Gobo, 2011) but it is also associated with the sociological tradition of the Chicago School (Delamont, 2007; Okely, 2012). Often ethnography is viewed as a method reliant on direct observation but in practice it has undergone many incarnations to become more than just a particular research tool, representing a 'particular perspective' (Miller, 1997:16) which requires the researcher 'to be in the presence of the people one is studying, not just the texts or objects they produce'. It also means evaluating what people do and not just what they say. Although ethnography has come to describe many diverse approaches Hammersley and Atkinson (2009:230) usefully summarise what is distinctive about ethnography in a list of commitments that are particularly instructive for this research. These call on the researcher to avoid 'quick conclusions'; to 'pay detailed attention to appearances, while not taking them at face value'; to 'seek to understand other people's views without treating what they say as either obviously true or obviously false' and to 'examine the circumstances in which people act'.

As ethnography covers such a diversity of practices and approaches it is necessary to specify exactly what kind of ethnography has been conducted. Traditionally ethnography is seen as an approach which focuses on a single site where intensive engagement is carried out for a long duration (Falzon, 2009; Marcus, 1995), although this view is contested by those who question whether the pioneering ethnographers were really fixed or isolated in that way (Hannerz, 2003; Okely, 2012). In a seminal article on multi-sited ethnography Marcus (1995:100) points out that in a globalised world the field of research of even 'standard ethnographic projects indeed already crosses many potentially related sites of work' where 'principles of selection operate to bound the effective field'. Due to this study's focus on individuals and diversity, rather than organisations, focusing on a single site would have posed serious limitations on generating sufficient relevant data, given the spontaneous, fluctuating and unpredictable

nature of unconventional, non-electoral politics that characterise social movements. Focusing on a single site, i.e. a single organisation or neighbourhood, would have severely limited how far the research could go into exploring the range of actions that young Muslims engage in. Focusing on one type of organisation might also run the risk of reinforcing essentialist views of Muslims by presenting a very narrow perspective. Although a representative sample is not sought by this study, it is hoped that including a wider range of activities, styles of mobilisation and recruiting Muslims from a range of backgrounds, might challenge some of the stereotypes of Muslims that dominate media and public perceptions. Including multiple sites increases the likelihood of gaining a broader and more comprehensive view of the diverse, unexpected and less visible ways in which Muslims conduct activism. For these reasons this study adopts a multi-sited ethnographic approach, which departs from the traditional view of anthropological practice as conducted by Malinowski and his peers but remains consistent with the use of ethnography as a 'particular perspective' (Miller, 1997:16). Falzon's (2009:1-2) definition of multi-sited ethnography serves as an appropriate description of what this research aims for:

> The essence of multi-sited research is to follow people, connections, associations and relationships across space (because they are substantially continuous but spatially non-contiguous).

Marcus (1995) provides a useful way of understanding how multi-sited ethnography constructs a research field:

> Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography. (Marcus 1995:105)

The tracing and following of some phenomenon of interest to the research is what characterises multi-sited ethnography. In this study the 'logic of association' that binds the various sites is the potential or real experience of being the 'precarious' Muslim citizen who is also engaged in some form of political or civic activism. Taking its cue from the 'modes of construction' suggested by Marcus (1995:105) this study pursues a strategy of 'following the thing', here defined as Muslim activism, and also 'following the people' after relationships become established with a core group of activists. In the following

section, some arguments are presented to justify the use of multi-sited ethnography rather than singular methods.

Limitations of single methods

Singular methods, such as surveys or interviews, have limited scope to provide a more fine-grained understanding of political and civic activism, as they present some epistemological and practical limitations for this study. From an epistemological perspective Gilbert and Mulkay's (1984) research into scientific discourses highlights the limitations of interview data by demonstrating the less than perfect correspondence between what people say and what they do. Robert Dingwall (1997) sums up the status of the interview in social research as:

> The interview is an artefact, a joint accomplishment of interviewer and respondent. As such, its relationship to any 'real' experience is not merely unknown but in some sense unknowable. (Dingwall, 1997:63)

This suggests interview data as a co-production between the interviewee and interviewer, based on temporal interpretations and reflections, may not fully provide the information sought by the researcher. While participants' meaning-making discourses are invaluable and of primary importance to the research, they also pose a practical challenge of how to obtain the relevant information and reaching what Scott (1990:14) refers to as the 'hidden transcripts' of subordinate groups. Although Scott was analysing the relationship between masters and slaves in historical societies, his distinction between 'public' and 'hidden' transcripts is helpful in sensitising research to the ways in which discourses can delineate the hierarchies of power between dominant and subordinate groups in contemporary society. Scott (1990:2) defines a public transcript as 'a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate'. It is the discourse of the subordinate 'in the presence of the dominant' whereas a hidden transcript describes a discourse 'that takes place "offstage" beyond observation of powerholders' (Scott 1990:4). Accessing these hidden transcripts becomes more challenging in a political climate where Muslims have been under such intense pressure to demonstrate their loyalty to Britain after 9/11 and 7/7, particularly by being coerced to avow liberal values and ideals (Brown, 2010; McGhee, 2008; Mythen, 2012; Thomas and Sanderson, 2011; Younge, 2005). In the context of securitisation it is distinctly possible that

interviews with unfamiliar researchers are likely to produce constrained responses reflecting a 'public transcript' designed to avert suspicion and censure. Indeed some studies with Muslims have indicated tendencies towards self-censorship and identity management where Muslimness is downplayed due to of fears of persecution (Brown and Saeed, 2014; Gillespie, 2007; Mythen et al, 2009). Recognising the challenges that a researcher faces in this context, there is a need to adopt an approach that can mitigate the limitations of single methods. Gillespie (2007:276) suggests that:

> Ethnography (as distinct from interview methods) lets us track differences between what people say and what they do, and gives clues as to why they might speak and act as they do.

Participant observation, which is often used synonymously with ethnography (Bryman, 2008; Delamont, 2007) is traditionally the main mode of data generation for ethnographers, though rarely the only one. The considerable advantage of participant observation to make sense of the social world compels Dingwall (1997:60) to argue that 'the world of social science professes a concern for the integrity of its conclusions which sits uncomfortably with the neglect of observational research'.

It is necessary to point out that while participant observation does allow the researcher to get closer to social actors and 'strike out interview variation' (Dingwall, 1997:67) to some degree, it would be a mistake to assume that this would grant direct access to reality. Observation as a method is also reliant on a filtering system which mediates what is recorded, how it is interpreted and what is selected for reporting (May, 2002). The observer's role in producing the data is unavoidable in an approach which relies heavily on the researcher's 'hand, heart, movement and the senses' (Okely, 2012:1). One way in which the researcher can attempt to defend against charges of doing 'fictional writing' (Davies, 1999:15) and the critique of creating rather than discovering 'objects of study' (Davies, 1999:14) is through transparency and reflexivity to make explicit the influence the researcher has on the knowledge produced. A researcher can add rigour, credibility and reliability to ethnographic accounts by remaining reflexive at every stage of the research, from access and data generation to analysis and writing (Davies, 1999; Delamont, 2007; Silverman, 2006).

However, no research strategy is without limitations and multi-sited ethnography does raise concerns about 'attenuating the kinds of knowledge and

competencies that are expected from fieldwork' (Marcus, 1995:100). This is the practical problem of a single researcher trying to cover a wider area of study involving multiple sites. Due to this limitation, as well as the irregular and eratic nature of alternative forms of activism, interview data plays a much more central role in the analysis compared to participant observations as has been the case for other multi-sited researchers:

> Probably the time factor has a part in making many multi-site studies rather more dependent on interviews than single-site studies. (Hannerz, 2003:211)

A narrative style of interview is another strategy used by this research to facilitate access to marginalised voices. Also known as biographical interviews (Bryman, 2008), narrative interviews invite participants to give detailed accounts of their lives, allowing them to describe significant and meaningful events and relationships. Narrative interviews are commonly facilitated rather than directed so that the participant can tell their story in their own words (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Mason, 2002), an approach that is more respectful of the participants' agency and intentionality which can be neglected in more 'variable-centred research' (Mishler, 1986 in Riessman, 2008:11).

Finally documentary evidence from organisational literature, social media sites and blogs provides another dimension of understanding of the social and cultural world in which activism is located, as well providing an insight into the activists' 'public transcripts' (Scott, 1990:1). The use of the terms hidden and public transcripts is not intended to signify a definitive distinction between two discrete and stable types of expressions since these are ideal types which in social settings are harder to fix precisely. In particular it is difficult to draw this distinction on Facebook and social media, as the lines between private and public are much more fluid and complex in these virtual settings. However, these concepts help to draw attention to the context and audience involved in producing texts. Text here refers to 'any actual instance of language in use' (Fairclough, 2003:3). Given some of the limitations of interviews and observations described above, data from documentary sources, particularly social media sites, is an important source of data to capture the everyday practices of activism where collective action is said to be forged (Melucci, 1989; 1996).

Research sample and location

This section covers some of the practical aspects of the research as a way of constructing the 'objects of research', which means rather than simply operationalising key terms, the process through which they are 'given determinate and/or functional meaning' is made explicit (Fairclough, 2010:413-414). A number of challenges and discoveries which called for responsive changes to the planned research design are also described. Fortunately the necessary changes did not pose any significant problems for the research driven by exploratory and open-ended aims and the promise of discovering the unexpected and the unfamiliar (Okely, 2012). However, they do require some degree of reflection to make the research process more transparent.

Purposive sampling, which Bryman (2008:458) defines as 'essentially strategic' where 'the researcher samples on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to the research questions' was used as a recruitment strategy. Participants were chosen because their identities and modes of social engagement were relevant to the research questions aimed at exploring non-electoral politics by young adult Muslims resident in Britain. Three criteria for recruitment are of primary importance:

1. Must be actively engaged in non-electoral forms of activism
2. Must be from a Muslim background
3. Must be aged between 18 and 35 years

Identifying and recruiting people who fit this description was quite challenging as there had been no previous engagement with the research setting. Additionally, due to the multi-sited nature of this study, as well as the patchy, peripatetic and unpredictable nature of activism in social movements, it was often not possible or practical to carry out extended engagements with participants prior to conducting interviews to determine if they precisely matched the recruitment criteria. In the following sections each of the recruitment criteria are discussed in detail, explaining the conceptual definitions developed to help make decisions about who would be included in the study and how these shifted in response to the emerging knowledge and demands of the research field.

Defining activists

The terms 'activism' and 'activist' appear frequently within social movement theory to describe collective action and those who engage in it (Crossley, 2002; Della Porta and Diani, 2006). This definition was of limited use for a study which could not determine in advance of fieldwork whether young Muslims were part of a social movement since this proposition was itself under investigation. It is also remarkable that a great deal of literature on social movements does not set out a very clear definition of what activism is, which is why it is worth taking some time to do so here. From the vantage point of this research Portwood-Stacer's (2013:238) comments are particularly helpful:

> It's also important to recognize that what counts as activism is a discursive construction. I argue that whether a practice can be considered activism does not depend on the measurable *effects* of the action, but rather the *meaning* people attribute to it.

This designation of activism is useful because it is broad enough to encompass a range of activities which can be construed as participation from a cultural politics perspective and is not reliant on selecting participants on the basis of a criterion that is itself indeterminate and being investigated. Portwood-Stacer's (2013) qualification relates to arguments over whether lifestyle politics counts as activism by those who adopt a more conventional understanding of politics where visible and contentious modes of resistance against clearly-defined opponents are a requisite. Here this qualification serves a different purpose, it means the participants can be selected on the basis of their efforts to bring about social change without establishing in advance that these efforts are part of a social movement. This definition of activism is consistent with the Foucauldian definition of politics as a struggle for power that occurs throughout society rather than being concentrated in particular sites (Nash, 2010). This allows the study to include those who act in a personal capacity through actions like blogging or graffiti art as well as those who adopt more conventional dissenting modes of activism through protests and campaigning. Given the study's remit to explore subpolitical activities (Beck, 1997; O'Toole and Gale, 2013) participants from mainstream political parties or trade unions were not recruited, although this did not exclude those who were active in mainstream politics, as long as non-electoral politics was the mainstay of their activism.

Another helpful definition of activism is offered by Hands (2011:2) who equates the concept with notions of 'dissent', 'resistance' and 'rebellion' to capture 'the general sense of opposition to prevailing power.' As Hands (2011:3) further elaborates all three notions are able to signify opposition but 'the manner of opposition, its rationale, action and impact, may be very different in each case.' He then goes on to describe important distinctions between all three. Dissent signifies 'dissatisfaction with a state of affairs' but it does not necessarily entail action. 'Resistance' on the other hand represents a more active stance 'when acts readily cross the boundary into defiance of authority or perceived injustice' through 'refusal not just of consent but also of compliance' (Hands, 2011:4). Finally 'rebellion' is a more 'collective and cooperative' form of action which includes both dissent and resistance 'but also entails the necessity of action' (Hands, 2011:5). While these distinctions are useful for this research, the focus on conflict or opposition to identifiable opponents is seen as a limiting the scope of activism to contentious politics. As discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to social movements, political projects of a consensual nature (Crossley, 2002) such as charity and community work also need to be included in this definition since resistance can take many different guises under conditions of domination (Scott, 1990) which may not always include 'defiance' as Hands (2011:4) describes it.

Participants for this study were chosen because of their involvement in activism in the sense defined above, although their levels of commitment remain varied. A total of 34 activists, 17 females and 17 males, participating in a variety of forms of activities are included in this study. A full description of the range and types of activism covered by this sample is indicated by Appendices 1 and 2. Some participants became involved in activism through chance and did not identify strongly with the 'activist' label, others saw activism as an opportunity to enhance career possibilities and a few considered themselves to be career activists. Levels of activity also varied from occasionally attending meetings to maintaining an active and visible presence, while a handful of participants acted, informally or officially, as leaders of campaigns or mobilisations.

Who is a Muslim?

The need for a clear definition of a 'Muslim' is necessitated by the sheer diversity of people in Britain who might, voluntarily or involuntarily, be associated

with this category. During a pilot study for this research (Mustafa, 2011) two out of six participants stated that they were not religious or practicing Muslims but upon analysing their interviews it was found that they had strong and personal concerns about Islamophobia and the post-9/11 securitisation of Muslims. This suggested that a self-defining Muslim category may be inadequate for capturing the experiences of those citizens who do not identify strongly with being a Muslim but nevertheless are socially categorised as being part of the group. Furthmore, it has been argued that neglecting the 'non-religious elements of identity of Muslims and making them more religious than they are, has furthermore contributed to reducing the complexity of Muslim identity' (Bectovic, 2011:1122). In other words existing research suffers from a 'grossness of social analysis' (Sen, 2007:61) due to the prioritisation of the voices of more religious Muslims and the marginalisation of secular, cultural or even non-believing Muslims who are included in the Muslim category due to their family name or ethnic background. I considered myself to be in this latter category of involuntary Muslims. Due to this study's interest in understanding activism in a securitised citizenship context in the aftermath of 9/11, it was vital to adopt a sociological rather religious definition of a Muslim since the 'Muslim experience' can and has visited anyone who is associated with Islam in the public imagination. Reference is being made here to reports of attacks on Sikh people in the US for looking like Muslims (Maira, 2009) as well as the shooting of the Brazilian youth Jean Charles de Menezes for suspected links to Islamic terrorism in the UK (BBC News, 2005). As Butler (2006:39) notes, following 9/11 there has been 'a heightened surveillance of Arab people or anyone who looks vaguely Arab in the dominant racial imaginary'. For this reason a 'sociological' rather than 'purely theological' definition of a Muslim is adopted here to allow 'opportunities for self-definition' (Meer, 2010:63) thus capturing both voluntary and involuntary Muslim identities. This highlights the politicisation of Muslim citizenship in a post 9/11 context where distinctions between practicing and non-practicing Muslims have become blurred with the rise Islamophobia and tough new measures on security and immigration (Briggs, 2010; Brown, 2010; Kundnani, 2014).

Hence, throughout this study the term Muslim refers to participants who have a Muslim background either through family, country of origin or culture. The definition only serves as a recruitment strategy and not as any kind of description or normative statement. To reiterate, this study's interest in Muslims stems not from a concern with religion but from their marginalised and demonised status in

a post 9/11 context that produces 'pervasive feelings of the precariousness of citizenship among British Muslims' leading to 'diminishing prospects for effective participation in formal political processes' (O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012:115).

Age category

A young adult category of 18 to 35 years was set as a recruitment criterion even though it is more customary to define a youth category from 16 to 25 years in much of existing literature on young people and employment (Bradley and Devadason, 2008). There are two reasons why an extended age category was chosen for this research. Firstly, scholars like Bradley and Devadason (2008) have argued that the transitional phase between education and full time employment, which is often a marker for young adulthood, has expanded in the last few decades. Due to the fragmentation and vulnerability of employment in current times many young adults do not experience the kind of independence that previously established adulthood around the age of 25 years. As a result people as old as 34 have been included in the young adult age group by Bradley and Devadason (2008). Another argument for including people aged up to 35 years is to gain a longer historical perspective by including the different generations of youth that have emerged within the last two decades, when the social and political context of securitisation and declining youth participation became more salient. People aged 35 at the time of conducting interviews between September 2012 and December 2013 were in the traditional youth category when 9/11 transpired and are in a good position to reflect on experiences and reactions to this major event and its immediate aftermath. Although it was not assumed activists would have a greater awareness and experience of post 9/11 politics, if their mobilisation had turned out to be completely devoid of any reference to 9/11 or security, as it did with some respondents, this has important implications for the securitisation of citizenship thesis. A strategy of including older participants allows the research to capture the experiences of people who are old enough to remember significant events like 9/11 and examine its political and civic impact on them. Having a sample with an extended age range encompasses a broader and more retrospective picture.

The ages of participants ranged from 17 to 37 years at the time of interview. The ages of two participants fall outside the target age group of 18 to 35 years which needs to be explained. Although the analysis presented in the

findings chapters that follow is based on 34 recorded and transcribed interviews, some supplementary interviews were conducted with 5 other activists who did not fully comply with the selection criteria for this study. This was done in the same spirit as observations were relied on to try and understand the social and political environment in which participants were located. Older activists who engage with young people on a regular basis are an important source of knowledge on the context in which activism takes place but they are also well placed to comment on what young people do and offer perspectives on what is novel or unusual about their actions in relation to other generations. With this in mind, an interview was conducted with a 61 year old veteran activist who had been involved in anti-war, pro-Palestine and trade union activism for several years in the West Midlands. He was able to give me an account of his experience of the changing local landscape of 'Asian' rather than 'Muslim' engagement with political and civic participation over the past 30 years as well as insights into how young people are doing activism at present. This kind of insight adds depth to the knowledge produced since younger people are less likely to have such a historical view of the field of activism. Talking to some of the older participants also confirmed the view that some of the issues emerging among the younger participants in this study, such as marginalisation, securitisation, Islamophobia and religiosity, pre-date 9/11 and 7/7.

Another reason to solicit older participants was because they sometimes acted as gatekeepers to organisations that were otherwise difficult to access. An interview was conducted with a member of MPACUK, aged 43 years, as he was the first point of contact for the organisation. This interview was useful but unsuccessful in leading to further interviews with younger members as repeated attempts to contact individuals were met with silence. Similarly, 39-year-old Shazia was an important first point of contact for a social justice organisation in the East Midlands which provided a unique insight into community activism which was proving harder to access. Again there was a noticeable absence of young adults in this group, as well as difficulties in convincing them to do interviews with me. An interview was carried out with Aliya, aged 37, from a faith based community group for the same reasons and also because of the difficulties encountered in trying to recruit more participants involved in grassroots activism. This was harder to do in comparison to recruiting University students because I did not have any personal links to the areas of research prior to fieldwork. I met Aliya at a training course on politics, organised by one of the groups of interest,

and decided to interview her after discovering that she was key member of a national faith-based society. As it turned out I had to rethink my plans to recruit further participants from this Society because Aliya revealed that it was largely populated by older people and was in fact was struggling to attract younger members. However, her story of growing up in Britain had many common threads with some of the younger participants of the study but her 'repertoires' of action were different from the University students. This could be understood partly by the nature of the organisation she was involved with it. It was decided her account and her experience added an important dimension to the study and should not be excluded simply because she was two years older than the target sample. Finally, a 17 year old was recruited because of his involvement with an anti-war organisation but he also had an important story and perspective which was at odds with some of the other participants, allowing for a more diverse sample where interesting comparisons could be drawn.

Citizenship status

While a majority of participants were born and raised in Britain and had legal citizenship, two interviews were conducted with non-British nationals who had been resident in the country for over ten years. They were included in the study primarily because they fit the bill of someone who is vulnerable to having a 'Muslim experience' in the securitisation of citizenship context but also because they were important and committed members of the activism networks that were being studied. Most importantly as Isin (2012:3118) has argued citizenship is 'the right to claim rights' and therefore should not be seen as the exclusive purview of those who enjoy legal status. Migrants who struggle for political rights can be viewed as carrying out active citizenship by virtue of their efforts within the nation state regardless of whether they have a passport or not. While the particular experiences of new migrants might present some analytical challenges, there was no reason to exclude more settled migrants from the study when their mobilisation constituted active citizenship in every sense of demanding change from the society in which they lived and made valuable contributions to.

Types of activism

To achieve respondent variability it was intended to include diverse forms of activism, from as many different groups and settings as could be identified during fieldwork. However, the high representation of University students (21 out of 34) in this study is not merely a consequence of convenient access, there are some theoretical arguments to be made for this dominance. Access was no doubt much easier, even though the research was conducted across different Universities but more importantly students have been very prominent in the rise of social movements since the 1960s (Crossley, 2008; Crossley and Ibrahim, 2012; Nash, 2010). It has also been argued that Universities represent the 'most politically active spaces in the country' (Brown and Saeed, 2014:1) as well as having a strong role to play in politicising students:

> University campuses, I suggest, facilitate the formation of a critical and connected mass of previously politicised actors who then use their further networks to recruit political novices into activism. (Crossley, 2008:18)

Indeed a number of participants reported becoming politicised during University life in this way. What also emerges as a positive consequence of interviewing students is the representation of variable experiences from across the country. Although the research was located in the Midlands, the students interviewed came from all over including Essex, Yorkshire, Lancashire and London which added to the variety and depth of experiences and biographical narratives included in the study. However, gaining this advantage to some extent came at the cost of exploring more deeply the perspectives of activists located in grassroots and community networks. Despite efforts to recruit more grassroots and local activists, these sources were harder to identify as well as engage with without personal contacts and former involvement. It was also the case that student and community activists did not constitute discrete and unconnected arenas of activity as there were overlaps and common membership between University and non-University activism networks.

Research location

The term location is used here rather than site because it subsumes the multiple sites that were included in the study. The Midlands region was identified as an ideal location to conduct this study for a number of strategic advantages it

offered, not least of all because it happened to be where I lived. Birmingham itself has the second largest Muslim population in the UK after London as well as the highest percentage of Muslims (15%) in any UK city after Bradford (17%) (Ansari, 2009). The Midlands is also home to Muslims from diverse ethnic and national backgrounds providing an opportunity to engage with groups that have previously been marginalised in studies on Muslim citizens which tend to focus on people of South Asian origin (Ansari, 2009; Lewis, 2007). There are a number of features of the history and politics of the Midlands which make it relevant to the context of precarious citizenship (O'Loughlin and Gillespie 2012), including issues of security (BBC, 2011b), parallel lives (Karner and Parker, 2011:355) and rioting (Varma, 2010). Identifying a particular location in which to conduct the study was intended as a strategy to make it possible to capture the complexity of interactions within a quotidian context where political and civic activity is typically generated and mobilised (Melucci, 1989, 1996).

Although originally the research hoped to focus on the West Midlands, a few months after the research commenced the field was expanded to include the East Midlands. A compelling reason to do so was because the number of activists identified in the first few months of fieldwork was not as large as anticipated and it was felt a wider area would need to be covered to get a critical mass of activists for the study. As already mentioned access to certain community groups proved more challenging than expected and this called on the research to be responsive to opportunities wherever they arose. Of all the participants whose interviews were transcribed 24 were located in the West Midlands while 10 were based in the East Midlands. However, following leads to other sites and expanding the research area were never precluded in the research strategy in the first place, as the intention had always been to stay responsive to knowledge emerging from the field.

Fieldwork, challenges and resolutions

This section will focus on how the fieldwork was approached and undertaken, describing how access was sought and what challenges surfaced, as well as reflecting on the strategies used to overcome these. This account is important for justifying some of the methodological choices made for the sake of

transparency of process, as well as for setting the context for the analysis that is presented in the following chapters.

Entering the field

Fieldwork commenced in June 2012 with groups like Stop the War Coalition, Unite Against Fascism and Palestine Solidarity Campaign being contacted to identify and recruit participants. Such groups appeared to be a good starting point since previous literature (Phillips, 2008; Werbner, 2005) and a pilot study (Mustafa, 2011) had indicated a good level of Muslim participation in such groups. On a more practical note, these groups had informative and up to date websites with information about local activities and named contacts, making access a lot easier. Another important starting point was University student unions and societies for which there does also tend to be information available online. Attending a planning meeting of a local Stop the War Coalition group early in the fieldwork revealed that although there were few 'young' Muslims involved with the core organising committee, some executive members had good links with younger Muslims activists in the area. One of these individuals kindly invited me to connect with them on Facebook which opened up several doors into local networks from which participants were recruited. This launched my fieldwork as I was instantly connected to a number of key local figures in student activism, as well as some community-based actors. It was not only the opportunity to 'befriend', in Facebook lexicon, a number of key actors that was useful but also the information this network shared about local events and campaigns which was valuable. As one of the main channels through which collective action is being galvanised, Facebook and Twitter very quickly became vital resources in my research. However, Facebook connections were not enough to gain interviews, as being a 'friend' on this medium has different implications to what the term implies in a non-virtual context. Being a Facebook contact meant I could email people and make arrangements to meet them at events they were planning to attend, where I would introduce myself in person and explain more about my research before seeking permission to conduct a recorded interview. Being a virtual friend did not automatically guarantee someone would make themselves available to be interviewed by a complete stranger.

Fieldwork progressed slowly but steadily but as the list of groups and individuals recruited to the study grew it became necessary to limit the number of sites engaged with as meetings and events started to overlap and conflict with each other. A full account of the groups that were observed and recruited from is available in Appendix 2. The fieldwork includes over 40 observations of meetings and demonstrations as well as countless visits to social media sites from which comments and content was observed and recorded.

Access issues and approaches

Based on a review of previous literature some challenges were anticipated in advance of conducting this research. Foremost was the possibility that marginalised citizens who are currently living in a 'climate of fear and suspicion' (Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert, 2008:544) might be reluctant to engage with an unknown researcher. Existing literature also indicated that there may be difficulties recruiting research participants due to issues of being 'over researched' in areas with 'controversial and contested' political histories (Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert 2008:544).

The fieldwork has largely supported these concerns with access proving to be difficult. As access to participants was dependent on gaining entry into groups as a first step to identifying suitable candidates, it is worth mentioning perceptible differences between groups, some of whom were relatively open and public, while others were more closed and guarded in their operations. Although groups are not the unit of analysis in this study some understanding of how they operate was relevant to engaging with individual activists in the field and understanding the relationships within the activism networks. These themes will be explored further in the findings section but suffice it to say the difficulty encountered in attempting to access particular groups, like MPACUK, posed significant challenges to identifying and engaging with individuals working with them.

Where access to groups was successful recruiting suitable subjects was also far from straight forward. This is not entirely unexpected as all research has its own set of issues relating to access, particularly where there is no previous relationship between the researcher and the research area (Bryman, 2008). Recruiting participants for interviews involved a process of holding one or two initial and informal meetings with participants during which they had an

opportunity to meet me in person, receive a verbal description of my research and ask questions. There were some exceptions but in those cases the participants knew me through friends who had already been interviewed and who were happy to vouch for me.

Another challenge was the lack of visibility of many of the types of political and civic activism that young Muslims engaged in. While there have been studies examining the different forms of participation by young Muslims (Back et al, 2009; Briggs, 2010; O'Toole and Gale, 2013) these by no means provide an exhaustive list of activities, groups or organisations. This is because many such bodies operate at a grassroots level and often on a very voluntary and informal basis and are not visible or identifiable without a presence in these local networks. Such political formations also often arise during crisis periods and then disappear once the urgency has dissipated or the funding has dried up. Sometimes groups that are mentioned in previous literature disband and their websites become defunct, for example 'Just Peace' (Phillips, 2008) and 'Young Muslims Advisory Group' (O'Toole and Gale, 2010). Circumstances also change and what once appeared to be a significant development, such as Muslim engagement with the Respect Party (Briggs, 2010), loses some of its relevance. This does not imply that support for Respect has dwindled in the Midlands, only that it was difficult for this research to find any evidence of it.

Many of these challenges were resolved and several others averted through the use of an ethnographic approach, vindicating claims that this method was the most appropriate for this research. One of the advantages of doing ethnography was that gatekeepers were largely avoided as participants were identified and approached directly through participation in activities or surfing social media sites. This was particularly useful in identifying people that might not have otherwise been available through gatekeepers, such a photographer activism and a political poet, both of whom I met by chance at meetings. Being able to include such diverse and atypical examples of young Muslim activism was really important for this study, which seeks to challenge some of the reified judgements about young Muslims that have been dominant in media and policy representations. It should be noted that although a majority of the time gatekeepers were not used, some participants were identified through conversations and interviews with other participants but they were all contacted independently of the original source to maintain confidentiality.

During initial contact participants took the opportunity to determine my political position or 'agenda' in advance which sometimes involved me having to make my political views on issues related to Muslim citizenship quite explicit. This precaution was not solely related to fears of surveillance and spying but was also precipitated by concerns over being misrepresented in what participants viewed as an already toxic environment of relentless attacks on Muslims in the media. In this context it was important for participants to establish whether my views were sympathetic to their causes and beliefs before agreement to participate in the research ensued. In most cases I was able to demonstrate a supportive stance through my engagement as a participant observer where I conveyed my aims to avoid the kind of stereotypical and essentialist portrayals of Muslims that have dominated media headlines. This facilitated the recruitment of subjects for interviews which may have proved a lot harder, if not impossible, without developing some kind of understanding in advance.

Apart from paving the way for interviews, an ethnographic approach enabled this research to map the field of activism itself. Participant observation helped to identify several previously unknown groups that young Muslims were engaging with or forming themselves, which were hard to locate without insider information. Being in the field also gave access to spontaneous initiatives in response to unexpected events like the series of demonstrations organised in November 2012 to protest against Israeli attacks on Gaza, and an anti-extradition meeting supporting Babar Ahmad and Talha Ahsan in December 2012 as well as a Muslim women-led counter protest on social media against the 'Topless Jihad' organised by FEMEN in April 2013.

Ethnographic methods also facilitated first hand observation of how activism is conducted and what new 'grammars of action' (O'Toole and Gale, 2010:126) or political 'repertoires' (Norris, 2002:18) look like. This type of information was not easily available from interviews alone as many, though not all, activists were not very knowledgeable about political terminology or concepts. Their consciousness of mobilisation was that of an embodied and lived kind for which they did not have an available vocabulary or existing set of narratives. Categories employed by this study such as activism, politics, civil society, social movements and even citizenship did not automatically resound in the activists' accounts. During interviews when participants were asked 'how' they did politics and what their 'aims' were, the answers never fully revealed what they actually did or wanted to achieve, which often emerged from observing them in the field

or changing the way in which the questions were asked to elicit this information. However, this was not the case with all the participants and some were highly knowledgeable about political theory and in these interviews it was harder to get information about biographical details and personal beliefs because the participants produced more abstract and theoretical responses to questions.

Further appreciation of the distance between an academic perspective and the lived experience of activism came from discovering the inadequacy of the first set of publicity materials designed to help recruit participants. At the start of the study some leaflets and letters were designed to introduce the study to potential participants and these were used in emails and face to face meetings to give some background to the research. However, the stone wall of silence that greeted these materials led to revisions in order to make information about the study more amenable to a wider audience. Based on some of the conversations held early on in the fieldwork, where I was warned that 'Muslims don't do politics', I felt that labelling the research as a study of 'political activism' was problematic. In response, the research was rebranded (see Appendix 3), so to speak, as a study about 'active citizenship' and even though this led to only one person contacting me voluntarily to take part in the study, when I gave the new materials to potential participants the responses seemed to be more positive.

Interviews, narratives and discourses

All the interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Apart from 2 interviews conducted by Skype all the remaining were carried out in person in public locations. Initially the research had intended to use narrative inquiry methods to privilege the voice of the marginalised participant. The interviews were conducted in an informal way, often as an extended conversation, allowing the participant to take the lead and trying to fit questions around the themes they were discussing. As a result the questions were not asked mechanically in any structured way as demanded by narrative interviews (Mason, 2002; Riessman, 2008). While attempts were made to adhere to the guidelines of narrative inquiry, in practice this was difficult to achieve for two reasons; firstly it did not elicit the kind of data required by the study and secondly the data that was being generated did not fit the description of a narrative. This discrepancy between the research aims and practice in the field yielded an important methodological insight which is worth discussing briefly. Applying narrative interview techniques

involves open ended questions to allow participants to have more control over the interview and to tell a story about their lives (Mason, 2002). However, this approach became problematic because it did not necessarily lead to reflections on the concepts that this research aimed to explore, such as politics, activism and citizenship. This required multiple interventions during the interview to direct participants to reflect on views and experiences that might contain information regarding these concepts.

In a further complication, not all participants responded to the open ended questions as hoped by providing extended stories about their lives and a large number of interview subjects simply gave brief and factual responses. These records of events or facts defeated the goal of narrative interviews to elicit 'detailed accounts rather than brief answers or a general statement' (Riessman, 2008:23). As the interviews progressed it became obvious that the requisite storied accounts (Lawler, 2002; Riessman, 2008) were missing from some interviews and the features needed to conduct a narrative analysis were absent in large parts of the data, making it necessary to reframe the interviews as 'semi-structured' rather than 'narrative' interviews.

Reflecting on this experience raises questions about the relevance of a narrative framework for this study and suggests a distinctive characteristic of political topics to direct speakers to refer to collective action rather personal experience, making it less likely to feature the kind of stories that narrative inquiry seeks. What emerges are arguments, evaluations and normative ideas concerning the participants' social world, political issues and their role in activism. An alternative way to describe the talk generated in the interviews is through the notion of 'discourse' which seems to be a better fit to the data because it works at a much broader conceptual level than 'narrative' which is a specific kind of discourse. Research on 'discourse' is now a very vast discipline, with numerous methodologies and approaches employed with different intended research aims (Hammersley, 2005). In response to the question of how discourse plays a part in research Wetherell (2010:3) states that 'the study of discourse is the study of human meaning-making'. This is a very broad definition of what constitutes a 'discourse' which requires further qualification to be formulated into a specific method of analysis, particularly if this is to be combined with ethnography. The next section explains how the concept of 'discourse' is employed as a framework for data analysis and how this relates to other sources of data gathered through observations and documentary evidence.

Analysing data and discourse

Narrative inquiry appealed to this study because it not only involves a particular type of interview, it also offers a number of approaches for data analysis that try to be less reductive of the text and therefore avoid taking participants' words out of context. Narrative analysis has some common interests with other linguistic methods to uncover 'intention and language – *how* and *why* incidents are storied, not simply the content to which language refers' (Riessman, 2008:11; original emphasis). This was considered an important device because of this study's theoretical accent on cultural politics where the symbolic and the representational features of the social world assume greater prominence (Hall, 2010: Melucci, 1996; Nash, 2010). Switching from narrative analysis to discourse analysis had the advantage of retaining a concern with the discursive and rhetorical features of participants' talk but raised some important questions about how this would impact on the ethnographic approach which underpins the study.

While narrative interviews are well placed to complement the aims of traditional ethnography (Reissman, 2008) to gain a more bottom up perspective, the combination of ethnography with discourse analysis requires some qualification. This is because more radical approaches to discourse analysis can lead to a contradictory rather than complementary relationship between the two approaches (Hammersley, 2005). Some influential approaches to discourse analysis are not concerned with the wider context of talk unless the speakers refer to it in their interaction (Potter, 1996; Wetherell 2010) making them problematic in relation to ethnography, which is driven by more holistic research concerns (Okely, 2012). Many linguistic methods, like conversation analysis, are purely interested in the interactional features of naturally occurring language in the social world (Heritage, 2010) rejecting interviews as unsuitable for analysis due to their staged character. Linguistic ethnography combines an interest in language with an ethnographic focus on social context but there remains a focus on the use and structure of language within interactions which does not serve the research aims of this study.

Instead of focusing on language structures or social interactions, this study made use of the insights gained from a number of discourse theorists to illuminate the empirical themes under investigation. Foremost amongst these is Michel Foucault who shifted the attention from 'language' to 'discourse as a system of representation' (Hall, 2010:72). Foucault was less interested in the

internal structures of language itself and more concerned with the constitutive nature of talk or in other words the 'production of knowledge through language' (Hall, 2010:72). He argued that discourse was not a neutral system of signification but rather it 'defines and produces the objects of our knowledge' (Hall, 2010:72) and places limits on the ways in which objects and realities in the world can be constructed through talk.

Foucault is often criticised for arguing that nothing can have any meaning outside of talk (Al-Amoudi, 2007), an epistemological claim that potentially undermines as contradictory any encounter with ethnography. This critique would add to the complication that many discourse analysts are social constructivists and lean towards a relativist position (Potter and Hepburn, 2008) which might be viewed as conflictual in relation to subtle realism as well as ethnography. In response to these positions critical discourse analysts like Norman Fairclough argue that discourses are socially constitutive but in a dialectical relationship with other non-discursive aspects of social life (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002; Fairclough 2010). Fairclough (2010:23) uses the term 'discourse' in three ways:

> (a) meaning-making as an element of the social process, (b) the language associated with a particular social field or practice (e.g., 'political discourse'), and (c) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective (e.g., a 'neo-liberal discourse of globalisation').

These three conceptualisations of discourse point to different aspects of talk which are useful for interrogating the data from multiple angles. One of the most important advances that Fairclough and other critical discourse analysts have made on Foucault's thinking is that they define discourses as not only 'constitutive' but also as 'constituted' by social practice (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002:65). This position is more consistent with the subtle realist epistemology informing this ethnographic study. The consequences of accepting Foucault's theories as implying radical constructivism would make an ethnographic approach redundant because if all social reality is constructed in talk there would be no need to observe anything other than the texts produced by activists. Such a reading of Foucault is highly questionable since his genealogical approach in his studies on sexuality (1978) and prisons (1995) moved his research beyond examining discourses to studying the conditions in which they become possible. In any case assessing whether Foucault was indeed in an extreme constructivist is

an aside here, since this thesis is not concerned with his work per se but rather deploys it strategically to make sense of the data gathered. Fairclough's arguments against radical constructivism offer further justification for an ethnographic approach. The position taken by Fairclough (2003; 2010) is that discourses are a part of a social order which also contains non-discursive dimensions like economic power and inequalities that are structural in nature. These may be the product of previous discourses but an analysis of their effects cannot be fully captured in the discursive dimension (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). This is perhaps why Fairclough (2003:15) states:

> To research meaning-making one needs to look at interpretations of texts as well as texts themselves, and more generally at how texts practically figure in particular areas of social life, which suggests that textual analysis is best framed within ethnography.

Now there remains a need to articulate the relationship between the data that has been generated from interviews, observations and documentary evidence. As a number of discourse theorists rely on original texts or word-perfect transcripts based on recorded interactions and content for analysis, the status and role of field notes based on observations is particularly in need of some clarity. Due to the focus on individual activists rather than the sites in which they are located, interview data assumed greater significance as the main unit of analysis. Observations played an important part in a number of ways, initially facilitating contact with potential interview participants and later helping to build up trust and understanding to progress to interview stage. However, notes taken during observations also played a role in the analysis by contextualising the interview data. All the data was imported into NVivo software for analysis where concepts and themes were isolated and progressively condensed as similarities and contrasts were drawn between different participants and groups of activists.

While discourse analysis based on the work of Foucault and Fairclough is employed, there is no specific model or technique that has been applied. Foucault did not make such a technique available for text analysis but the same can hardly be said of Fairclough whose writings provide very detailed and specific methodologies for researchers. Rather than mechanistically trying to apply given techniques, the work of both theorists acts as a valuable resource in developing a heuristic sensibility that guides the reading and analysis of texts. Theoretical insights were used to conduct multiple critical and exploratory

readings of the data. This strategy is welcomed by Fairclough (2010:11) who states that the 'transdisciplinary approach to research which I have suggested entails a way of developing theory and methodology through re-contextualising categories and relations from other theories and frameworks.' Working with a permeable and heuristic framework allows the study to appropriate and recontextualise relevant concepts from other discourse theorists without being restricted by some of the methodological and epistemological imperatives prescribed by the theories and approaches from which they are drawn.

At a more abstract level applying the philosophy of Foucault involves reading the text with a view to understanding what is being represented as a truth or as the norm and what kind of evidence is being used in this construction. Other important questions that guide the analysis include looking out for what kinds of interests are being mobilised and what kind of identities or subject positions are being formed. Foucault's concept of power opens up the possibility of investigating how participants' talk locates and resists power and the ways in which their representations are constrained and enabled by dominant discourses (Thomson, 2011).

Important discursive strategies to orient to in the data include devices like 'rhetoric' which Billig (2010:214) describes as, 'discourse which is argumentative and which seeks to persuade.' Other important concepts are the related terms 'intertextuality' and 'interdiscursivity', which highlight the ways in which 'texts draw upon, incorporate, **recontextualise** and dialogue with other texts' (Fairclough, 2003:16; original emphasis). However, employing such devices can only be useful in drawing attention to their presence in the text as they do not automatically translate into interpretations. Drawing interpretations and inferences from the data relies on the researcher's unique and subjective analytical work based on understandings and knowledge gained from within the field. Therefore, the data analysis framework outlined above describes the conceptual and theoretical ideas and orientations which inform the process of interrogating the data and does not constitute a specific step by step process.

Reflexivity, researcher role and ethics

As the status and identity of a researcher plays a very important part in the research process and its outcomes, I want to briefly reflect on my own position in this research. Ethnography entails unavoidable tensions between being an insider and outsider, as well as the need to maintain a balance between being a participant and being an analyst (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2009). Knowing this in advance does little to prepare the researcher for the conflicts and pressures that can arise in the field and as a first time ethnographer approaching a highly politicised and sensitive research field such issues were not always easy or simple to manage. Consciousness of the political sensitivities around issues of security and Muslim citizenship constantly plagued my interactions with participants as I was eager to present myself as sympathetic and non-threatening. I also felt a huge burden of responsibility not to add to the injustices they already faced in society or to misread their messages or interpret them out of context.

Having a Muslim background gave me untold advantages in the research field, primarily with gaining access and additionally being able to relate to the cultural and religious habitus of the participants. I had insider status with the participants by virtue of my name, my Pakistani roots and my understanding of Islamic principles and teachings, all of which allowed me to form an immediate bond with participants as someone from the same identity group. However, in many other ways I was painfully conscious of being an outsider because of important differences in life experiences and social position. While I was from Pakistan, some of the participants had migratory origins from other countries, including Algeria, Somalia, India and Morocco with different and unfamiliar cultural experiences and customs. A majority of participants were brought up and educated in the UK which was also an alien experience to me since I arrived in the UK in my mid-twenties. While this did not have a perceptible impact on the research, the fact that I was considerably older than many of the participants was a visible and consequential difference that may have amplified any tendency among some participants to view me as a figure of authority representing the academy, an elite institution in society. If my gender played any role in shaping the research outcomes this was not in any way evident to me despite reflecting on the issue carefully. Where potential participants failed to respond to my requests for interviews it is my understanding this was related to issues of trust, as I was someone who was a stranger to them.

There are a number of ethical considerations within ethnography that apply across all research but there are also issues that are particular to this study. The ethical position of this research takes as a touchstone the six key principles of the ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics 2010 which expect 'integrity, quality and transparency' (ESRC, 2010:3) in the undertaking of research and its' final outcome. A researcher must also ensure informed consent (Appendix 5), confidentiality of information and anonymity of the participants, freedom from any kind of pressure or coercion and minimising any kind of harm. Lastly the ESRC principles state:

> The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit. (ESRC, 2010:3)

However, these principles represent a minimum standard for ethical conduct and careful consideration was given to the particularities of this research project. The work of Murphy and Dingwall (2003) has been particularly valuable in anticipating potential pitfalls and paying due care to the numerous possible ways in which research in the field can present a whole new set of unexpected challenges.

This research deliberately set out to avoid any illegal or violent forms of politics. This was not only to protect my own self and my research, it was also to safeguard the other participants in this study by avoiding any links with people that might be deemed to be suspicious by security forces. Interview participants were given information about the aims and objectives of the research in advance, in written and verbal form, with assurances that anonymity and confidentiality would be of paramount concern to the research. Informed consent was given by all the participants whose interviews were recorded and where possible attendees of observed meetings were informed of the presence of a researcher. Clearly this was not practically possible at demonstrations and protests where behaviours were observed and photographs were taken without gaining consent from everyone present. Nevertheless I was aware that photographs might lead to my participants being identified and therefore I plan to be cautious in their dissemination in the outputs that follow from this research.

The political implications of this work are of paramount importance due to the current attention on Muslim citizenship, which calls for a greater level of responsibility and due care to ensure anonymity and confidentiality without

compromising 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). As Murphy and Dingwall (2003) point out there are a number of ways in which research participants can be wronged, even when actual harm is not done. The most pertinent concerns for this research are the disruption to the participants' assumptions about their own world and the risk of presenting their perspectives in a form that does not coincide with their expectations (Borofsky, 2005; Murphy and Dingwall, 2003). It is hoped that through open and honest discussions with participants during the fieldwork and sharing the knowledge produced some of these issues can be mitigated.

Nevertheless in researching political topics there will always be a risk of unwittingly doing harm if the representation of issues is viewed as unjust or damaging by those who are researched (Borofsky, 2005). This also raises issues about the researcher's political values, a much contested area between seeing all research as inevitably moral and political in nature (Becker, 1967) and the belief that values should not over-determine research outcomes (Seale, 2004). This research follows Murphy and Dingwall (2003:192) in relation to what a researcher should do:

> ...to make a clear distinction between their activities qua scientist and qua activist. To put it bluntly, while it is perfectly legitimate for their findings to inform their political activism, it is illegitimate for their political commitment to determine their findings.

In accordance with this position while most of the activities and activists I engaged with fell within a broad spectrum of political and civic aims that I supported, the individual tactics and strategies employed by participants might not have resonated with my own normative position. For instance as a non-religious person I could not relate to the efforts of one particular youth group who set out to coach young people from their community in how to be a better Muslim, with aims of challenging negative stereotypes about Islam. I viewed such projects to turn young Muslims into ambassadors of Islam as promoting the 'culturalist' view that Islam is the problem, which serves the interests of neoliberal governance to push politics out of the civil domain by shifting responsibility for social problems to individuals and their actions (Brown, 2010; Hindess, 2012; Kundnani, 2014; Marinetto, 2003; Soysal, 2012a). Despite this I would situate my political aims on a shared horizon with a majority of participants who were concerned with and motivated to act against the current pariah status of Muslims

in the West. In this I would draw support from Brown (2005:X) who states that 'critique is not equivalent to rejection or denunciation, that the call to rethink something is not inherently treasonous but can actually be a way of caring for and even renewing the object in question.' However, it is recognised that a study dealing with an emotive and sensitive political topic may unavoidably generate outputs which may themselves become political objects and be further politicised by some readers, which brings with it a responsibility to consider possible consequences, not only for the participants' but through implication Muslim citizens everywhere in general. These considerations will be paramount in reporting the findings in a manner that protects the participants' identities but also tries to be accurate in representing their lives (Murphy and Dingwall, 2003).

It is for this reason that in trying to achieve a balance between providing descriptive data for the purposes of transparency and maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants I have erred heavily in favour of the latter. Where there are risks of identifying participants this research has favoured caution rather than academic lucidity.

Chapter 5: Signs of a social movement

Introduction

This chapter explores the repertoires of political action of young adult Muslims, to map the range and nature of their activism and highlight some of its distinctive features. The modes of activism described in this chapter reveal typical features of social movements as identified in Chapter 3, highlighting the congruence between Muslim activists and other progressive struggles for social justice. This poses a distinct challenge to the moral panic engendered by Muslim youth disengagement, sometimes seen as a risk factor for radicalisation and terrorism.

The analysis proceeds through four sections, each of which explore the distinctive and interrelated features of activism, explained with reference to insights drawn from social movement theory. This begins with an exploration of lived and ethical forms of action which are performed through lifestyle and embodied expressions of political agency. These lifestyle politics are linked to individualised and non-institutional modes of activism as discussed in the next section. This is followed by an exploration of the importance of informal networks which offer affective support and viable alternatives to the traditional role of institutions in producing and sustaining mobilisation. Finally the rise of digital technologies that enable and promote such forms of action in social movements are explored.

Lifestyle politics and abstract objectives

This section reveals how the repertoires of political action of young Muslims share many features described by other social movement studies where lifestyle and values are important sites for political contestation (Melucci, 1989, 1996; Nash, 2010; Portwood-Stacer, 2013; O'Toole and Gale, 2013). A distinctive feature of activism in this study is the lived and embodied performance of normative ideas, where activists project their values and ideologies through discernible life choices and comportments. These are political repertoires without concrete aims or targets but rather exemplify the cultural reformation and value

transformation activists seek to promote in society through their demeanours, practices and conduct. Here the term 'lifestyle politics' serves as a shorthand to facilitate a discussion of this feature of activism which Portwood-Stacer (2013:156: original emphasis) defines as:

> When individuals who desire social or political change are compelled to shape their own personal behaviours and choices toward the ideals they envision, this is known as *lifestyle politics*.

Mona's story is a good example of how such politics are enacted by participants in their everyday lives. A 27-year-old politically-motivated photographer and graphic artist, Mona aims to raise awareness of issues that are close to her heart, such as Islamophobia, Palestine, foreign policy and civil liberties. I understood Mona's emphasis on artistic modes of political expression by relating it to a particularly troubling event in her life where she was violently assaulted by a group of white people for wearing a hijab. The attack took place on the same day as 9/11 and deeply influenced Mona's subsequent activism as she explains:

> **Mona:** You either let something stop you or you just carry on sort of, you know, dispelling all the ..… the misunderstandings that they have about us and that's the reason why I like to sort of- like attend these events is to make them see, look, I'm not gonna be … one of those people that sort of hiding away from- I mean I've attended, I've attended politics lectures here [*University campus*] and.. just about the UK economy or something or anything sort of completely random and I've walked in and like you- the whole like heads turn around and then when you- when you make a really intelligent comment about a specific topic they're like 'wow' like you know 'really I thought like Muslims, especially Muslim women they're so sort of dumb' and sort of like, their vision is of the oppressed and you know that we're kept oppressed and things like that but you know I think the more… especially amongst the women, integrated into society and sort of it gets involved in sort of you know all walks of life, I think that really helps and you really do change people's minds like slowly but surely.

In this account Mona is describing actions that may not conform to a traditional definition of politics, but which clearly reflect a concerted political aim to challenge dominant stereotypes of Muslim women as helpless victims of oppression. Mona demonstrates through her presence and performance that

wearing a hijab is neither a sign of weakness nor of diminished intelligence and agency. These actions can also be interpreted as symbolic defiance against her attackers who not only assaulted her person but the idea of who she was. The act of trying to forcibly remove her hijab was not only a matter of bodily harm it also represented symbolic violence against her identity. Mona's subsequent engagement in political activism through forms of expression that rely primarily on visual and graphic signifiers, that is photographs as well as her own veiled appearance, may be related to the way in which her scarf made her a visible target of hate and violence. While the vicious attack on Mona is not a common theme among participants, the experience of symbolic violence produced by verbal attacks and cultural exclusion against Muslim identities is quite widespread. The fact that various forms of discrimination are often symbolic and psychological rather than physical makes it all the more explicable why mobilisation takes the form of lifestyle politics. Participants do not report many episodes of direct physical threats to their being but they often refer to prejudices operating in negative and pejorative assumptions about Muslim faith identities and cultures, particularly visible symbols like the hijab amongst women or beards among men. Similarly, certain social practices associated with Muslims are also seen as the target of public renunciation and contempt, such as gender segregation and arranged marriages, which leads to feelings of rejection and humiliation. In order to negate these stereotypes and false perceptions of Muslims participants are almost compelled to conduct activism through performing normative ideals to produce alternative representations of Muslims.

> **Irum:** I think I make the most difference when I'm sitting on the train you know, travel, because I talk to - I talk to someone and I give them my time and they give me their time and I learn from them and they take things from me and .. I suppose this is not something I've only just brought into but one of my driving forces for joining (*government consultation group*) was Islamophobia and being misunderstood as a Muslim and being misunderstood as a Muslim woman and terrorism and how that you know, how misguided people's views about Islam are so I literally was carrying... the flag.. and that's how I was, I was carrying the flag wherever I went.

> **Khalid:** A lot of people portray Muslims in a negative way so I think to me.. I'm not doing this (*activism*) so I can change that but I'm doing this because that's what I'm supposed to do as a Muslim and in a sense that does change that hopefully so being a Muslim in here …it…I do feel that you

know ....you have a role as well to act because you're leaving an impression.

Irum and Khalid both describe strategies to combat Islamophobia through political repertoires marked by efforts 'in which both the political end, and the means, are the transformation of the self' (Nash, 2010:56). They attempt to confound negative perceptions of Muslims by providing living examples of positive, active citizenship and normalising the visible cultural symbols that are the object of stigmatisation. These discourses indicate types of political repertoires that are captured in previous literature through variant conceptual iterations from Giddens (1991) concept of 'life politics' to Beck's (1997) theorisation of 'sub politics' and more recent discussions of 'lifestyle politics' in social movements (O'Toole and Gale, 2013; Portwood-Stacer, 2013).

The role of lifestyle politics within social movements is a contentious one that has been linked to the encroachment of neoliberal rationalities into every area of life. In her study of self-esteem movements in the US Cruikshank (1999 in Lemke, 2002) revealed how these politics of self-empowerment could be seen as reproducing neoliberal goals to shift politics from collective concerns to ways of governing the self. Similarly, Portwood-Stacer (2013:3185; original emphasis) argues that lifestyle politics within radical social movements 'are so problematic as a form of activism because they are a product of neoliberal conditions while at the same time representing resistance *against* many of the political projects of neoliberalism.' While lifestyle politics raises concerns that youth expressions of individuality and choice can be 'exploited economically within a global marketplace' (Blackman and France, 2001:180) the adoption of such grammars by young adult Muslims in this study can be better understood as a response to the 'culturalist' form Islamophobia takes at the current time where Muslim customs and values are being denigrated (Grillo, 2005; Kundnani, 2014; Lentin, 2014). While these repertoires of action can be seen as reflecting neoliberal rationalities of individuality and choice they also resist its instrumental and material imperatives through the pursuit of 'non-instrumental' objectives. Many participants explain their actions as being motivated by moral beliefs and ideologies rather than driven by concrete goals and targets.

Amna: I don't think the world's going to change the way I want it to or I don't even know how I want it to change, I just know that right now what's happening is a test for me.. for all of us and we've got a choice, either we

ignore it and sit back and get on with our lives and do what we have to do or we get involved and do what we can, do our own bit. At least then when, you know, when we're on our deathbeds we know that we've tried, even if nothing does change so I'm not going to be disappointed if you know come to 30 years time nothing's changed it's all the same. I'm gonna be disappointed if I don't do anything.

Tehmina:…...and I won't feel satisfied and the reward won't necessarily be the outcome, the reward will be … the fact that I won't look back and think 'oh God I sat by and did nothing' I didn't have anything to do with that, you know, just because I thought it didn't involve me or I thought I couldn't do anything.

These arguments resonate typical social movement objectives described by Melucci (1996:102) which are marked by 'low negotiability', in that they do not have an interest in seizing power, hence, are not fully reducible to political mediation through representative party political channels. This is reflected in participants' justification of actions and behaviours as being inspired by a sense of personal duty and responsibility to act against injustices with little concern for personal profit or gain. The presence of such repertoires of political action in social movements have been explained with reference to changing social and economic conditions post World War 2 including wider access to education, civil rights and better jobs (Beck, 1997; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Nash, 2010). Based on extensive survey research, Inglehart (2000:222) has argued that rising standards of living have led to a change in values among citizens creating a 'shift from materialist to postmaterialist values' which is 'only one part of a much broader shift from modern to postmodern values' within 'advanced industrial society'. Inglehart's ideas have been validated in subsequent research linking postmaterial values to the rise of new forms of politics through social movements, leading to claims that people with 'postmaterial values are strongly disposed to support new forms of collective action' (Della Porta and Diani, 2006:69). This is not to suggest that such values are exclusive to social movements, since members of trade unions, labour movements and political parties may also pursue non-instrumental and symbolic objectives. Similarly the dominance of postmaterial values in social movements should not be taken to mean they are oblivious to material concerns (Inglehart, 2000) as such demands continue to be reflected in social movement struggles even if they continue to prioritise 'more 'expressive' goals of 'self realization' (Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins, 2004:341).

This point is echoed in this research, as participants' discourses also touch on class and material conditions but these are subsumed within political repertoires which prioritise a lived and embodied enactment of cultural politics aimed at challenging dominant social codes (Melucci, 1985; 1996). More importantly though these lifestyle politics are not simply an expression of choice and individualism but are part of a social movement that builds and serves collective identities and goals as the following chapter elaborates in more detail. In this respect this study agrees with Rheingans and Hollands (2013) contention that theories of individuation and life politics put forward by Beck, Giddens and Inglehart have limited purchase in anticipating the ability of youth politics to mobilise collectively. Based on a case study of the British student anti-fees and cuts movement in 2010 they highlight the 'centrality of collective reflexivity in the student movement, the merging of so-called 'materialist' and 'post-materialist' political values, and the importance of both virtual and physical spaces for youth activism' (Rheingans and Hollands, 2013:546).

Organisations, mistrust and autonomy

Participants in this study manifest the typical social movement propensity for decentralised and non-institutional forms of organisation which contrast with traditional political party and trade union modus operandi (Castells, 2012; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Downey and Fenton, 2003; Melucci, 1985, 1996; Nash, 2010). Given the study's focus on subpolitical and non-electoral forms of participation it is not surprising to find that membership of political parties and mainstream institutions is low, but it is striking how little regard participants have for *any* form of institutionalised political action, whether mainstream or led by minorities.

A large number of participants, 23 out of 34, do not have formal membership of any organisation, even though they often participate in activities orchestrated by organisations with whom they have common goals, like Stop the War Coalition and Palestine Solidarity Campaign. This is despite these organisations having the ability to provide and pool expertise and resources that enable collective action and reduce the costs to individuals of mobilising (Della Porta et al, 2006). It has been argued that for individual activists multiple associations with different organisations affords a number of advantages

including expanding informal networks, facilitating the circulation of information and building solidarity which can extend the movement's reach (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Participants in this study reflect such tendencies by rarely (though not universally) affiliating with a single organisation and this is often due to a ubiquitous distrust of institutions.

> **Amna**: …like Tell MAMA if you look into the history of it or the people that are running it, it's all very dodgy like the guy that's the head of Tell MAMA you know has got an MBE, I totally disagree with that anyway, I think that that just proves, you might as well be a sell-out.

> **Haseena:** [I] actually worked with some of the pretty you know controversial big NGOs like Oxfam and Christian Aid and stuff so like I, I kind of I guess I was a bit more naïve then so I thought I could exert change and influence through those kind of platforms and then I realised that actually they are part of the problem and that you know it's all about grassroots kind of work and grassroots movements.

In these accounts established, mainstream institutions are described pejoratively as 'dodgy' and 'controversial' on the basis of underlying assumptions and presuppositions often made when people talk where 'what is made explicit is always grounded in what is left implicit' (Fairclough, 2003:17). Such assumptions are revealed by the way in which the social world is represented in a particular way, where someone who accepts an MBE honour is a 'sell-out' and NGOs are 'part of the problem'. These participants do not offer any further qualification that explains why these institutions are framed so disparagingly but rather these are taken to be as self-evident truths in dismissing their credentials. The deployment of such assumptions suggests that such views may be quite common place within the participants' social networks and discursive field. This is suggested by the certainty inflected in the arguments which takes agreement from the listener for granted.

Participants not only dismiss mainstream institutions as lacking credibility, they also express frustration with organisations and institutional structures because they view them as an impediment to action.

> **Mona:** Ok to be honest with you I don't associate myself with any particular group, the reason being is because on many sort of engagements that I've had with them, activities that we have done, I've always felt that.. it was a

bit of a hold back like you have to collectively make a decision whereas if you've got your individual sort of like … how do I put this… like you're more gungho about something than somebody else is then you would want to do that rather than making a collective decision about it. So I've always thought if I wanna do something in terms of my activism I am going to do it in future and I am going to do it on my own.

Here Mona is describing the limits of organisations for mobilising in a more 'gungho' way due to the necessity of achieving consensus among members, which makes activism through institutionalised structures time-consuming and bureaucratic. This not only reflects the participants' desire for being more proactive but also implies that groups are seen as inhibiting rather than enabling action. While dialogue and compromise are essential and valued aspects of democracy, these arguments suggest they may pose challenges within a political project that is driven by individual choice and interests.

To offer a more concrete example of the tension that arises between individuals and groups, a meeting of a Palestine Solidarity Campaign group is illustrative of the limitations of collective decision-making. This particular PSC event was an executive meeting where members managed the running of the group and planned events and campaigns. During the meeting two members of the group asked for a contribution from the local group's funds to visit Palestine to assist on the Marmara Project, a non-profit NGO run by volunteers to help rebuild homes demolished by Israeli authorities. While a number of members agreed with funding the Marmara visit, other members felt that this was incompatible with the PSC's remit. One member in particular argued that the PSC's job was to lead a 'political' campaign to support the Palestinian cause through lobbying international governments, raising public awareness and challenging the mass media's biased representations of the conflict. Another member supported this view saying that Palestinians want the international community to do what they themselves struggle to achieve. However, after some debate it emerged that a majority of executive members were in favour of funding for the Marmara trip because they felt it not only constituted direct support to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians but also offered an opportunity to raise awareness through local publicity of PSC's involvement in the project. This incident highlights how members of groups sometimes disagree over how to define and pursue their political interests, creating tensions between individuals and placing limits on actions due to the need for compromise. This highlights why

young activists often associate with such groups like the PSC on an ad hoc basis. While mistrust of institutions is pervasive, this does not apply to student societies since these are more likely to operate on a modest scale allowing individual members to exercise greater control over decision making and maintain autonomy. However, even within these societies tensions can arise around identity and belonging as explored in the next chapter. The following quotes reveal the importance of individual autonomy in maintaining fidelity to a set of values which can be compromised by affiliation to mainstream institutions.

> **Yousaf:** I sort of decided not to get involved in membership at all, in anything other than you know just like student societies, you know, which is not the same thing but politically I just didn't feel comfortable cause I think when you're a member one of the first thing you do is, you sort of, in a way give away your right to just be…choose your own actions because then you have to stick to a party line - you have - you can't ..and I was thinking that knowing myself I will.. I speak freely I speak my mind and whatever group I'll be part of I will be chucked out within- within because I will say something that people say we don't say this thing here and I'll say well you know, I do, so therefore.

In this quote Yousaf equates institutional affiliation to loss of autonomy and diminished agency which justifies greater emphasis on individualised forms of activism or strategic and selective involvement with organisations. For Yousaf institutional membership is problematic because the 'party line' places limits on the individual's actions and constrains their ability to express political views if they do not conform to the organisation's ideology. These concerns reflect salient trends among contemporary social movements that favour leaderless and non-hierarchical organisational structures with a greater emphasis on direct engagement and participation (Castells, 2012; Fenton, 2008; Maharawal, 2013; Nash, 2010; O'Toole and Gale, 2013; Solomos et al, 2005). Participants explain these in terms of not only being more effective but also less risky.

> **Saif:** I think I'm absolutely recruiting everyone to a leaderless cause .. because I genuinely believe that the way I think is, is .. the only sensible way to do it in a time when- when it's so… troublesome and so easy to get caught, it's a safe way, it's a respectable way and more than anything it's a way that you can't challenge any of us.

Mona: I've found that you know you can quickly sort of manoeuvre yourself rather than a lot of people together so in terms of like the activism I've done for Gaza I've sort of managed to get sort of medical supplies and really quickly over there rather than through like convoys and stuff like that and I've found again with convoys there's a lot of resistance that's met through that so I think it's much easier to act as an individual more than anything else.

In these extracts participants highlight a different kind of constraint that institutions place on activists by rendering them visible and easily identifiable when acting under the banner of established organisations. Since organisations aim to make a mark in the public sphere they often seek opportunities to publicise their activities, not only to spread their message but also to expand their membership and raise their profile, thus greater public visibility and prominence serves institutional interests. However, the above comments suggest that for individuals such publicity can be counterproductive as well as risky, suggesting this is one of the consequences of the rise of the 'law and order' and 'security' state (Hyatt, 2011:105). In the case of Saif, it is not made explicit how a leaderless cause might make activists 'safe' or 'respectable' but the reference to 'troublesome' times and the danger of getting 'caught' is indicative of the repressive conditions of activism in which individuals face risks and need to keep a low profile. Mona explains that taking aid to Gaza under the fanfare of a public campaign is more likely to meet repression by Israeli forces, while as an individual she can mobilise before such plans can be detected and thwarted.

While individualistic repertoires of action are dominant in the study a small number of participants do play a role in national organisations as executive members, with two being paid for their positions and a third participant working in a voluntary capacity. However, the two paid members of groups were selected for the study despite their formal roles because they were also active in their communities on a voluntary basis. In any case the organisations they belong to are important contributors to the social movement whose ontological status is being established in the present chapter.

The features of activism reviewed in this section reflect what O'Toole and Gale (2013:76) describe as 'more hands-on, loosely organised forms of action, where activists can engage directly in concrete action to make a difference, but without submerging their identity into any organisation or movement.' While

these individualistic repertoires of action and lifestyle politics may convey a rather atomistic picture of activism an exploration of the activists' relationships with other social actors in the following section highlights the centrality of networks in instigating and sustaining collective action, particularly in the light of distrust of and indifference to institutions.

Networks, solidarity and communication

In Chapter 3 'dense informal networks' (Della Porta and Diani, 2006) were identified as one of the classificatory features of social movements. This section demonstrates the presence of this dimension of activism by revealing the nature and importance of relationships between activists. Such a network is not only perceptible in the research setting but it proved essential for conducting this study, as it facilitated access to and recruitment of suitable participants. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, a formal network analysis (Crossley and Ibrahim, 2012) is not possible nor desired, however, in order to demonstrate the links between participants a diagram indicating relationships and associations has been produced. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive picture since ethical necessities of upholding confidentiality prevented questioning participants on their relationships with other informants in the study and other extant means of determining links were limited. This model is based on ethnographic data which has a limited ability to fully grasp the network density. This model has been constructed from analysis of interviews, observations and an investigation of Facebook connections where such information was available. Not all the participants are members of Facebook or attended events that were observed. Yet, even this limited and partial picture reveals a fairly dense network of associations between diversely situated participants. The named discs and diamond shapes represent activists from different cities in the Midlands, revealing clear links between both sites as well as between different types of activists distinguished as community, community/past student and student activists. The model also shows two participants, Maz and Shoaib, as being external to the networks but this is because they were the first two interview candidates identified through an internet search before observations and direct recruitment in the field commenced. Further details of each participant are given in Appendix 1.
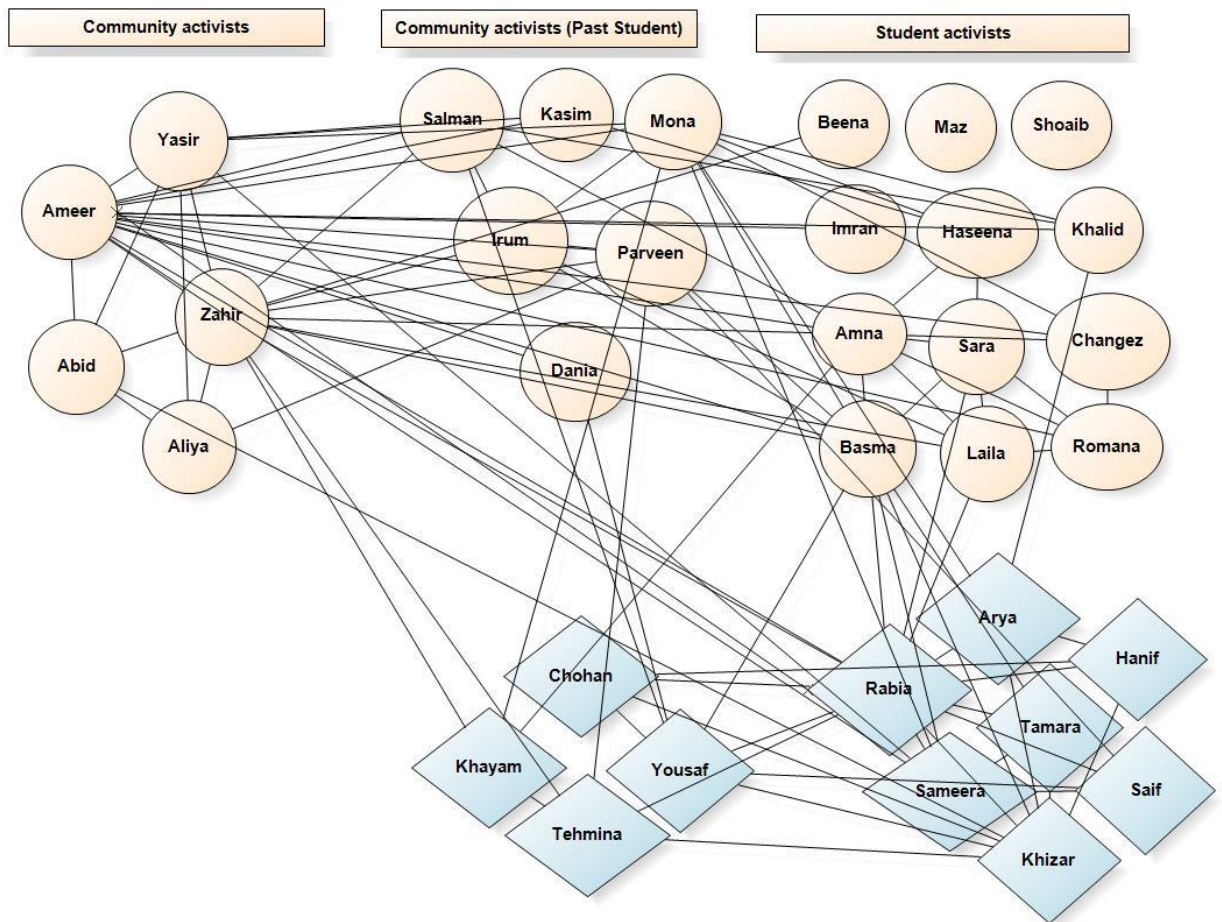
The presence of a fair level of networking within the participant sample clearly indicates the importance of building relationships and associations with other like-minded and supportive activists. Although averse to committing to formal membership of established organisations, most participants view solidarity with other activists as vital to initiating and sustaining activism. Participants describe the role of other activists in diverse ways but two dominant themes emerge which relate to their vital functions within mobilisation; firstly the emotional and psychological support derived from such relationships; and secondly the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge and skills. The affective dimension of relationships with other activists plays a decisive part in cultivating the confidence to act politically.

Beena: And it was all this like really supportive environment I've never experienced before and all of this was really overwhelming and kind of like really gave me the confidence to actually say you know what, like I can make a change and I want to make a change and this time I'm going to do it and all these people will help me.

Romana: It's empowering in a way because like I've never had that voice before like as a young person and like, so like to be part of that and to be part of a movement to be like seven, eight people strong is like, it is empowering and in a sense like being able to talk about these issues out in the open with these people is like liberating which I know in – it's quite sad because like you should be able to say that yeah I do experience racism on a daily basis but like you can't so like being amongst that it's like it is liberating and like even like being involved in activism generally like sort of being involved - Palestine activism and things like that it is it is liberating, it's like given you a voice that you've never really had before.

Here the participants are describing solidarity with other like-minded activists as having a productive impact on their ability to mobilise, by inducing positive feelings and confidence to articulate and act upon their political motivations. These quotes draw attention to the role played by emotions in enabling activism but also suggest that the absence of such supportive and affective networks can inhibit political capacity. Both participants describe the motivational and empowering influence of others as something that marks emancipation from repressed desires and aspirations in the past. In Beena's case there is an implication that lack of self-belief prevented her from undertaking action for social change and Romana describes how she had buried her experiences of racism until she was able to share them with the 'movement' which was 'liberating'. Other activists are portrayed as playing a causal role in instigating activism pathways and producing emotionally enabling conditions for sustained engagement. However, as with institutional associations, participants are selective about the people they include in their networks and their criteria for doing so are influenced by 'frame alignment processes' (Benford and Snow, 2000:624) in terms of political ideals and aspirations.

Salman: If you work with like-minded people then you know a committed group of ten people, hundred people, can do incredible things and it's about finding that because you all need to kind of drive each other and the

message has to be kind of really important as well and something worth your time and effort.

Sara: I think it does come a lot of it does come down to who your friends are and what their interests are in and whether they're as active as you because you're kind of… you feed off each other…kind of …activism.

These quotes highlight the qualifications for inclusion in solidarity networks which is determined by ideological positions, 'the message', or their willingness to commit , i.e. to be 'as active as you'. As Salman explains, other activists can be a driving force but this is qualified by stating that they have to be 'like-minded' since the 'message' of the social action is also important. Similarly, Sara describes activism as emerging from friendships and similar interest groups who 'feed' each other but there needs to be a shared willingness to mobilise. Sara's quote implies variation in levels of activity and commitment among friends, which is suggestive of the cost implications of mobilisation. This highlights the importance of activism networks to shield members from some of the costs and risks associated with political action.

Chohan: It was quite a sociable experience actually because we were quite a tightknit group of people working together also you could always see I'd hope you know cause it is quite a tension filled arena that whole being part of a certain group that has certain stigma attached to it.

Sameera: You know a lot of the time it can be quite isolating when there is so much opposition to who you are or what you believe in, so in that respect it can be quite hard, but just knowing that there is a community out there indeed a global community that are all fighting towards equality and universality of human rights its really empowering and it just kind of gives you, it just kind of gives you that reminder that actually it's not just me, other people are going through the struggle, we're doing it together.

In these accounts, participants are describing some of the adverse aspects of mobilisation, such as being in a 'tension filled' environment or facing 'opposition', where being part of a collective like a 'tightknit group' or 'global community' offers some personal insurance and security. For Chohan, working together and creating a sociable experience mitigates the tensions around belonging to a stigmatised group. Similarly, Sameera draws succour from the knowledge that other people share her convictions and hardships and this

minimises feelings of isolation resulting from membership of a demonised identity group.

Relationships with other activists are a powerful emotional resource for mobilisation but they also act as a necessary vehicle to appropriate and manufacture another major activist asset, which is knowledge and information. Knowledge emerges as a salient theme in the participants' discourses where politics and participation is conceptualised as a discipline demanding a level of expertise on social issues. This is manifested in the way that participants make assumptions about the anticipated demands and prerequisites of political participation, for instance in the following extract Ameer gives credence to his role as a political activist by citing that he has the necessary expertise.

> **Ameer:** Well I am a born and raised British citizen…but I do understand some aspects of the law… so I am more.. like I said like you know I am a political activist. I mean many people if you see - if you look around you most people don't - you know do not know what's happening you know, you know politics they don't know how politics is, how politics works.

Similarly other participants frame their identities as activists by describing a process of becoming more knowledgeable.

> **Romana:** Like my first real involvement in activism has been with the Palestine Society, cause I've been interested in all of that kind of stuff before, like before I got involved with it I just knew a bit about it and then I basically I went to Palestine with the students, this is like with the Palestine Society, which is a sort of unofficial trip, yeah, so I found out a little bit more about it through that. And then like I sort of learnt a bit about it and then I came back and I like felt like I could channel all that by becoming involved in the Palestine Society.

Both participants talk about knowledge in a way that assumes it is a precursor to activism. Ameer contrasts his own understanding of 'aspects of the law' to ordinary people who 'do not know what's happening' to justify and legitimise his claim to a political activist identity. He also distinguishes between someone who is a 'citizen' and someone who is a 'political activist' by employing the conjunction 'but' in the sentence which suggests that being a citizen is not enough to be an activist, something additional is needed and he qualifies on this score because of his understanding of 'aspects of the law'. This point is further

augmented by highlighting that 'most people' or citizens don't share his knowledge of the workings of politics. Romana's quote is illuminating in how it describes the process of gaining more knowledge about the Palestinian issue which then allows her to feel confident that she can contribute to the cause. The importance of knowledge is marked in this extract by the 'logic of difference' (Fairclough, 2003:88) operating between the 'real' involvement through the Palestine Society and the earlier phase of being 'interested' but only knowing 'a bit' about the issue. This suggests that having a bit of knowledge and being interested does not constitute 'real' involvement but knowing more about the Palestinian issue does qualify for authentic engagement.

Having knowledge is not only seen as a qualification for being engaged in activism but its absence is also seen as a deterrent to engagement.

Chohan: …so I think people's levels of, I wouldn't say ignorance but their levels- that they don't wanna actually get into conversations into deeper things that seems to be the problem.

Irum: What it does it terms of activism is once you get your foot through the door, the hardest thing is knowing and getting your foot through the door so before 2008 I was a nobody because I didn't know where to go, I didn't know who to speak to, you know, I didn't know what was out there, I didn't even know where to go online to search for an organisation that would look at young people' or women's issues I just did not know anything.

Here Chohan is alluding to the general public's lack of willingness to acquire deeper knowledge as an obstacle to political participation. The cautious use of the word 'ignorance' with the qualification 'I wouldn't say' suggests that others would describe the public attitude as ignorance but the speaker would not go as far. However, this is one way to make an argument without being discredited for exaggeration and yet getting the message across that wilful ignorance by the public is a reason for low political participation. Similarly, Irum's description of herself as a 'nobody' prior to 2008, when she became a member of a government advisory group, stresses the point that people who do not have knowledge about the issues they care about are inhibited in political participation.

These discourses reverberate insights gained from previous studies that have highlighted the importance of knowledge and information as a vital

dimension of the cultural politics of social movements (Castells, 2010; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Maharawal, 2011; Melucci, 1996; Nash, 2010). Networks formed through supportive relationships with other activists play a formative part in opening up and promoting communication channels for the exchange of information and knowledge. In the following quotes participants discuss the importance of other activists in learning and gaining desired skills and expertise.

> **Arya:** I seem to somehow have chosen consistently people that would influence me in a way sometimes, not positively, but there are certain skills that I wanna gain and I see them in another person and so I latch on to them just for the sake of learning from them.

> **Salman:** It was a combination I mean I was reading quite a lot …and like you said there was …you had a group of 20 people who were very well tuned to what's happening, not in just their communities but also gen – society in general you know, you had academics, you had doctors it was, just it was an incredible group of really talented people and you know we were talking about …you know all types of things …..so …so it was a combination of reading and the people that I was kind of being exposed to.

These participants are describing the ways in which other activists inspire and motivate mobilisation but the key attributes that are identified as the source of inspiration are the expertise and acumen of these social actors which can be appropriated by the participants to enhance their own abilities. Arya describes her choice of fellow activists in terms of their ability to teach her the skills that she aspires to gain. Salman describes his journey towards activism in terms of the learning that occurred through books and conversations with 'really talented people' which is revealing of the importance ascribed to peer to peer knowledge exchanges in the process of gaining the credentials for activism.

As knowledge is seen as a vital resource in politics and activism, its acquisition through networks is strategic and targeted at others who share the participants' own world views or 'frames' defined by Snow and Benford (2000:112) as 'signifying work or meaning construction' in social movements. This section has revealed that relationships and connections between participants are organised through 'dense informal networks' (Della Porta and Diani, 2006:20) and described the role they play in providing affective support for initiating and sustaining activism as well as promoting the acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills for mobilisation. The presence and importance of such

informal networks also partly explains the shift to more individualised forms of activism discussed earlier, since the networks can act as an organising medium for collective action (Diani, 2007; Portwood-Stacer, 2013). However, this raises an important question as to how these networks operate without formal organisations to coordinate their activities in time and space. This propels the discussion into an exploration of the important role played by digital communications, particularly social media, in connecting network actors as well as producing and circulating knowledge.

Circulation of knowledge and digital media

In this section the role of the internet and social media is explicated to uncover how digital communications facilitate the circulation of knowledge through networks that activists view as authentic and reliable in opposition to untrustworthy mainstream media sources. The analysis also reveals how digital networks are integral to enabling and promoting the production of 'alternative cultural forms' and 'the construction of new learning possibilities' (Stevenson, 2010:209) which are deemed to be essential to the democratisation of the public sphere.

High levels of distrust and dismissal of elite-controlled institutions is even more pronounced when it comes to seeking authentic and reliable sources of knowledge on issues and causes of interest to activists. Distrust of mass media and reliance on alternative, independent and local sources of information is an almost universal theme in the data. Therefore, it is worth reviewing some of the reasons why participants do not trust mass media sources before exploring how they seek and promote alternative forms of knowledge through digital networks.

> **Arya:** I realise that you said 600 Egyptians died in the protest (*demonstration in Cairo on 14 August 2013*)…when in fact Khalid (*not real name*), who had people in the protest in Egypt, had told us that it was actually 2000 and that the media is lying, that kind of thing. A lot of my information actually does come from friends and social media but I do take the time out to watch the news as well.

> **Chohan:** I find myself being a lot more sceptical 'cause I wrote my dissertation on the media's representation of the War on Iraq and since

then all I've looked at is like media and the way how authentic they really are so always like second guessing, questioning everything.

Shoaib: I think obviously there is an agenda by the media whether people like to believe or not it definitely, definitely exists.

In these narratives participants are describing mass media in dismissive terms, expressing mistrust and doubt about its integrity and intentions by citing alternative versions of events where participants have direct links to the protagonists of related news stories. Participants express scepticism about the motives of the media in presenting certain versions of events according to a particular 'agenda', which clearly conflicts with their own readings. Such mistrust means participants are heavily reliant on alternative sources of information, particularly other activists as described previously. In the following extracts participants describe their reasons for trusting sources in their networks rather than mainstream media.

Tehmina: I heard so much about Sudan so, so much is happening in Sudan I've read loads of articles trying to understand the situation in Darfur I just don't get it, I don't get it, you have the Zionist lobby really involved in campaigning for these poor Darfuris but Zionist lobby rings alarm bells in my head for other reasons and so I was trying to understand this like it's just such a strange like mix of confusing mish mash so then I knew there were some Sudanese people at University and there's you know a particular individual who I really respected and thought you know what, I think he'll know what he's talking about so I got in touch with him and very random but essentially asked him, can I have your perspective on this cause I thought it was really important to…. to understand from a Sudani perspective …you know instead of the outsider you know some English American person writing a book or article about it to understand from their own perspective.

Sameera: You know in this country ...the people who have a monopoly on the media - I say people but actually its really you know Rupert Murdoch and his empire and Murdoch is a white, very wealthy, very middle class very able bodied somewhat extremist person almost in his - actually not almost but definitely in terms of his politics and that's going to affect his news stance and that's something that I have a problem with, I don't have a problem with him having a voice, of course I don't, but it's just not a voice

that I particularly agree or will listen to if you like, that's not what interests me. What interests me is hearing news of communities, by those communities, rather than outsiders kind of looking in and making their judgement on it but actually hearing the news from the people whom it's affecting.

These quotes suggest that the social position of informants is key to evaluating the authenticity and reliability of the news and information being conveyed. Both participants prioritise knowledge that comes directly from the source rather than its depiction through second hand reporting. The sources that are trusted are the people on the ground, the people who are directly involved in the situations and their credibility is portrayed as stemming from their direct access to the events. Participants frame these sources as authentic, suggesting that they do not have an 'agenda'. This is despite the fact that the proximity of the sources to the events could be seen as undermining their credibility since they are more likely to be affected by events and therefore have a stake in their reporting. Most participants do not consider that the viewpoints of these alternative sources may also be influenced by their social experiences and positions in ways that may produce a biased view. One of the participants explains why alternatives to mass media should still be given credence as more reliable.

> **Yasir:** People say oh but if you have news on a website which is an anti-war website it's going to be biased …to a point yes and the point of the news is to be you know journalists who are qualified, journalists who have NUJ cards and things like that, neutral unbiased news but the fact is we know the news isn't that, we know that news is - news stations, newspapers, news websites are all owned by corporations. Recently we've found since News of the World before and all kinds of investigations that newspapers are biased, newspapers are not really neutral, newspapers have vested interests in politicians and corporations, they are run by people, therefore there is no real news.

What is being argued here is that representations of the world are always coloured by the social and economic position and interests of the person or group producing the knowledge. While the previous two quotes highlight ethnic, national and racial identities as determining viewpoints, Yasir emphasises differences on ideological grounds between the mass media and alternative

media outputs by activists. Here the separation is between those who have a vested financial interest in the information being presented and those who seek political gains. Yasir's account assumes that commercialism taints the production of knowledge while its absence lends credibility to the informant even if it is influenced by particular political interests.

While the social position is important in determining the credibility of information, identities also matter, as participants gauge the credibility of information on the basis of the ethnic, national or class identities. The way in which participants frame sources closer to their social identity as authentic and unbiased also suggests that information and knowledge is never seen as a neutral commodity that is produced and consumed impartially. Evaluations are influenced by activists own identity and social positions which are linked to the ways in which they view the world and the political values they hold and promote. In other words it's not that alternative sources of knowledge don't have an agenda, what matters is that they have the same agenda as the participants.

> **Salman:** But like I said I have ….a point of view - so for me …Palestine is never the oppressor yeah, it's never the oppressor and so I would look for the news that would ….kind of match that ….you know and for me their resistance, not terrorism, their resistance is sound and just and proportionate to a degree so anyone who says that - Israel what - any news source which kind of favours Israel it completely turns me off (AM: yeah) yeah and I guess that's just …..I guess my bias playing it – playing as well but that's just- that's how I am.

This quote reveals the personal investments that shape how media representations are read as coded to reflect the interests of power in framing of issues which stand in need of recoding by participants. Salman subverts the dominant framing of Palestinian struggles as 'terrorism' by asserting that these are forms of 'resistance'. The personal stakes involved in evaluating the authenticity of information and media representations become more apparent where participants' link biased and inflammatory news coverage to Islamophobia.

> **Khayam:** So in terms of journalistic integrity I mean you have Nick Robinson right ..who straight after what happened in Woolwich is saying 'these people….. that attacked Lee Rigby were of Muslim appearance' ….what is Muslim appearance? …..I have got Muslim appearance have I? I could be Hindu right to anybody onlooking or South American or I don't

know whatever…and even if you look at the attackers ….they could be you know from Kingston Jamaica as much as they could be from Nigeria right and even if they look like Nigerian they could well be - have a Christian appearance so what is Muslim appearance? He subsequently apologised but by then the horse had bolted.

Rabia: You know they've done such a great job of highlighting it's Muslims, Muslims, Muslims and then they expect us to be able to get on with it, we want to get on with them but not everyone's going to want to get on with us, especially those that rely on.. sources like the BBC and you know the Sun and stuff like that people like that aren't going to have any other (*view*) - they're quite narrow minded as it is but they're not going to know any better so they're not going to get on with us so how do you expect us to make a difference?

In these accounts participants express outrage over media messages which are perceived as prejudiced and hostile towards Muslim identities, inevitably making the appraisal of their content deeply personal. As following chapters discuss in more detail activism by young adult Muslims in this thesis is concerned primarily with a defence of Muslim identities against rampant Islamophobia, by raising cultural challenges 'to the dominant language, to the codes that organize information and shape social practices' (Melucci, 1996:8). Digital activism with its 'sheer power of cumulative connections' (Hands, 2011:2) offers a productive and cost-efficient medium to realise these aims. These channels are used to consume and diffuse alternative images and ideas to challenge dominant representations and frames.

Irum: I tend to identify the mood of people through Facebook, Facebook is a really good indicator of how people are feeling what their views are and because they are kind of like my crowd of people that I know and work with and engage with, so for me it's important to understand where they're coming from.

Salman: I guess Facebook actually is quite, and social media generally is quite empowering in that sense because you can get - and Twitter as well you can get access to information from these sources, from people on the ground level quite quickly and quite accurately more importantly, so I think there's - there's no longer a source because the individual affected directly by the issue becomes the source I guess yeah and it becomes available

very quickly and people catch on to it very quickly as well so it's not a case of BBC giving its spin any more …..[ ] ….it's allowed people to kind of get access to real time information . .the truth more importantly not just information cause that could …easily be misinformation but the truth.

As these quotes highlight participants use social media applications like Facebook and Twitter to connect with other like-minded activists through 'frame alignment processes' that link activists' interests and interpretive frames to generate collective action in social movements (Benford and Snow, 2000:624). These are not only reframing efforts but are also the sites where participants can 'realise their identities as cultural producers of meaning rather than being merely consumers' (Stevenson, 2010:204). While social media is central to sharing information and building networks of solidarity this does not undermine the importance of meetings, events and gatherings in real, local settings which are often publicised and promoted through online sites.

> **Zahir:** You can have a thousand friends, a million friends online but it's not the same as having five friends that you can see on a regular basis and I think that regular connection with society is important, hence, the events that I do, I try to encourage people to come along because I spend extreme amount of time online, on social media as you probably know (AM: yeah) that you know for one purpose for people to get away from that and to come and meet people on a face to face level.

However, comparison of social media and local events during fieldwork suggests that online activism can sometimes exaggerate the level of real support on the ground, giving rise to concerns about the internet encouraging an unhelpful form of 'clicktivism' (Gladwell, 2010; Flaim, 2013). This is the phenomenon of activism being reduced to clicking a few buttons online but not promoting any meaningful participation in events that require co-presence such as protests and demonstrations. The role of social media in activism is an emerging and exciting area of study which has generated new debates about the democratising potential of digital communications (Castells, 2012; Della Porta et al, 2006; Earl and Kimport, 2011; Hands, 2011; Fenton, 2008; Stevenson, 2010). One view is that social media and digital communications play a constitutive and productive role in facilitating political participation (Hands, 2011), by enhancing and extending the ability to form networks and generate collective identity (Castells, 2010) and reducing the costs incurred by individuals in mobilisation

(Della Porta et al, 2006; Earl and Kimport, 2011). In a tentative analysis of the recent wave of social movements around the world, like the Arab Spring, Castells (2012:1) argues that many of these protests and mobilisations were enabled by social networks on the internet which created 'spaces of autonomy, largely beyond the control of governments and corporations'. This offered opportunities to counterbalance the disproportionate control of mass media by the state and capital that effectively reduces the participatory potential of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989 in Downey and Fenton, 2003). Castells (2012:4) has suggested that these movements may be indicative of a new form of power available in the network society which he describes as 'communication power'. This power has come about as result of advancements in communication technologies which offer social movements and political actors the opportunity to challenge and reshape the way that dominant social values and meanings are framed.

Fenton (2008:237) has been more cautious in appraising the role of social media in promoting greater political participation and promoting democratisation because new media generate new challenges:

> Non-hierarchical forms of disorganization that make decisions on the basis of collective consensus become harder to achieve the larger and more disparate the collective is. Furthermore, the internet may contribute to the fragmentation of civil society, as well as political mobilization and participation.

While acknowledging the potential of the internet to allow 'citizens to alter their relationship to the public sphere, to become creators and primary subjects' of political participation, Fenton (2008:236) is less optimistic about the democratising potential of internet activism. Given the reversal of the Egyptian revolution in 2012 and the failure of protestors in Europe to undermine neoliberalism and austerity measures there is a ring of truth to Fenton's (2008:244) concerns that: 'Online activism runs the risk of raising our hopes without the likelihood of deliverance'.

Nevertheless, Fenton's (2008) critique is based on the view that internet activism has limits due to its individualism and particularism which inspires hope but cannot move beyond utopia to forge a political project capable of changing the power balance in society. However, it may be argued that despite the reversal of the Egyptian revolution the events of the Arab Spring demonstrated

that internet activism can move beyond symbolic gains to capture real political power with material outcomes, even if the gains were temporary. As Stevenson (2010:215) cautions there is a need for further investigation to determine 'whether these new forms of communication actually enhance the capacity of the civil sphere for dialogue and learning or whether they simply commodify the realm of everyday life.' Thus far, he concludes, there are reasons for optimism but without losing sight of the continuing dominance of neoliberalism in shaping commodified societies.

While the democratising potential of social media is an interesting and important question it remains marginal to the aims of this chapter and the thesis. The relevance of digital communications in the context of this chapter is to highlight its' central place in allowing the participants to become 'cultural producers' (Stevenson, 2010:204) of self-authored corpuses of knowledge in alternative media.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings on the nature and range of activism young adult Muslims engage in, which reveal distinctive features shared with other progressive social justice social movements. Repertoires of political action marked by individualised forms of engagement, lifestyle politics and a reliance on networks operating through digital media rather than formal organisations, resonate the model of cultural politics described in the literature review. Lifestyle politics and individualised modes of activism are closely related to misgivings about the constraints and credibility of institutions, while the reliance on dense informal networks is compelled by mistrust of mainstream mass media. These interlinked characteristics of activism foreground the importance of digital and online networks of like-minded activists in sustaining collective action by providing emotional and security benefits but also as the essential vehicle through which knowledge is produced and promoted as the mainstay of cultural politics. These findings demonstrate that social media plays a vital and enabling role in the activism of participants in this study by allowing them to become cultural producers. However, they also support the claim that 'virtual networks operate at their best when they are backed by real social linkages in specifically localized communities' (Della Porta and Diani, 2006:133).

The presence of informal and somewhat dense networks which provide the level of organisation required to mount and sustain collective action fulfils one of the qualifying dimensions of social movements as defined in Chapter 3. The following chapter discusses how the activism of young adult Muslims qualifies on two further necessary dimensions by explicating how a Muslim 'collective identity' is formed in response to 'conflicts' generated in a specific post 9/11 moment in politics.

Chapter 6: Collective identity, difference and faith

Introduction

This chapter focuses on collective identity and the conflictual relations that shape it through complex but concerted processes of production, signifying that the activism of participants in this study constitutes a social movement with conscious and shared aims and objectives. This is done by revealing the intentional efforts of participants to produce a collective Muslim identity which is a defining and constitutive feature of social movements (Crossley, 2002; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Melucci, 1996). Melucci (1995:44, 47) describes collective identity as a 'process of "constructing" an action system' meaning identity is not only the mobilising force of social movements but also that it's apparent stability conceals 'an active process that is not immediately visible.' He goes so far as to argue that the breakdown of collective identity makes 'action impossible.' Drawing on these insights this chapter focuses on how participants recognise themselves as being part of a collective group worth struggling for, despite the complexities and tensions of producing such a unified entity.

This chapter also reflects on how these findings relate to existing literature on British Muslim identities (Ameli 2002, 2004; Cesari, 2007; Choudhury, 2007; Hussain and Bagguley, 2005; Lewis, 2007; Modood 2010b; O'Toole and Gale, 2013), which highlights the growing importance of faith, particularly less cultural and more reflexive and personal interpretations, among younger Muslims. The findings discussed below add to this body of knowledge by highlighting the political dimensions of a collective Muslim identity and challenging some of the essentialist conclusions drawn from the role of faith in Muslim politics.

Participants in this study, who come from different social backgrounds, national origins, ethnicities and migratory pathways, reveal divergent understandings of the meaning of being a Muslim in Britain today. A multiplicity of beliefs and practices prevail in the participant sample, making activism as a single group challenging due to conflicts and tensions between members. Some participants state that Islam plays a definitive and all-encompassing role in their life while others profess atheism with a cultural attachment to Islam's familiar and

comforting rituals and customs. Despite these fissures and divisions identification with the social and faith category 'Muslim' is strong for nearly all but one participant. In this one contradictory case, while Muslim identity is not denied it is not experienced as an important or primary aspect of the participant's social profile. Not only is identification with the label 'Muslim' strong, participants also defend this identity in what is perceived to be a climate of pervasive and normalised hostility towards Muslims which is attributed to the war on terror.

The analysis is divided into three sections, the first of which looks at the active production of collective identity through processes shaped by the agency of participants. The next section focuses on the complexities of faith identification which confound essential and reductive ideas about Muslim faith identities and finally the role of faith as a political resource is explored.

Unities and fissures in collective identity

The complexities underpinning the production of a collective identity are revealed by participants' efforts to resolve contradictory and multiple aspects of personal identity in ways that do not undermine the coherence of a valued primary identity. Such tensions are conveyed by the contingent ways in which participants' identify with other Muslims but also how they differentiate themselves in some contexts. This is exemplified by Romana's case which appositely represents the tensions and paradoxes participants had to negotiate in constructing a collective identity. Romana describes growing up in a predominantly white area and struggling with feelings of exclusion and marginalisation from an early age, which were amplified after 9/11. Feeling persecuted for being associated with Islam, Romana initially sought to deny her Muslim identity because 'everybody hates us'. However, at University Romana discovered a network of Muslim friends and societies, like the Palestine and Kashmir Societies, through which she formed friendship bonds as well as an activist profile. These 'empowering' and 'liberating' relationships enabled Romana to articulate earlier experiences of racism, as well as to find the language and means to challenge it. Through these networks Romana gained confidence in her faith identity.

> **Romana**: Since I've come to University, especially over the last two years I've sort of felt like - I feel a bit sad that I've lost that, like, I've forgotten how

to pray and I've forgotten like I've forgotten *surahs* (*holy verses*) and things and like I'd really like to learn it again.. and I feel like sort of being involved in all these Muslims - like all these sort of projects and all these things that like involve Muslims I feel like I can sort of engage with it and like slowly come to that point where I can re-learn what I've lost, I feel like… but sort of like I've done it to myself but I've sort of like denied it and pushed it so far out of my conscious that I don't know it any more like, I don't - I don't know Islam and like it's a big part of me that I've just like I've pushed down but it's there like I am religious.. like, but, I've sort of like put it away in a little box and I'm, try like, I feel like I want that to come back to me and I feel like, like being around young Muslim people is like it's really helpful for me.

For Romana a sense of belonging with other Muslims restores and affirms an important part of her identity as a Muslim that has been lost or denied due to troubling experiences of racism and prejudice. This awakening through shared identification reflects insights from social movement studies that collective identities are not a precondition of collective action but rather they are built up and produced within it, through interaction with other activists (Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Haenfler et al, 2012; Hunt and Benford, 2007; Melucci, 1995;1996; Portwood-Stacer, 2013). Romana's account resonates this understanding of collective identity as a process of active production through edifying and nourishing engagements with others in the identity group. However, in the next extract Romana goes on to describe how this network can also produce a contradictory sense of marginalisation inside the group.

Romana: Yeah I mean like there's people like me who like, like the people that did like lose their way a little bit like you're, you feel sort of isolated from the like sort of main Muslim group like ISocs (*Islamic Societies*) and things you feel like, you feel a bit like they look down their nose at you and they don't see you as one of them so you're sort of, you're sort of in limbo a little bit and like you find your own group eventually but like it's sort of like you're not really sort of accepted by them because you're not quite as religious as them like you don't know how they do things and like you sort of.. like… like the way I behave is different, my mannerisms and things just because I'm not used to being in that Muslim setting…… and like they're sort of like they see you as the other, like, they see me how I feel a lot of the time, they see people like me as how I see people like.. like the Other,

who I'm talking about like the people that I went to school with and things
like that.

Although, the contrasting ways in which Romana describes her relationship
with other Muslim students appears to be contradictory, this tension can be
understood through a relational concept of identity, as a process that involves
moments of unity and stillness but at other times entails fluidity and change,
invoking different registers of context-dependent subjectivity (Sen, 2007). Clearly
belonging to the group is important for Romana as the earlier quote reveals and
which is further evidenced by the way in which she refers to herself as a Muslim
who has lost their way, suggesting her natural place is within the group.
However, this quote also suggests that belonging to the identity group can also
be contingent and unstable.

The contradictions in Romana's account disrupt the reified view of identity
based on the notion of 'continuity of subject over and beyond variations in time
and its adaptations to the environment' (Melucci, 1996:71). Although in everyday
parlance the concept 'remains semantically inseparable from the idea of
permanence' (Melucci, 1996:76) this is contradicted by theorists of identity who
emphasise its' fluidity, creativity and plurality (Castells, 2010; Hall, 1993, 2005a;
Modood, 2007; Sen, 2007). It is argued that people can 'simultaneously belong'
to many different categories which call for choices to be made about the 'relative
importance to attach, in a particular context, to the divergent loyalties and
priorities that may compete for precedence' (Sen, 2007:19). Another layer of
complexity is added by Modood's (2007:118) reference to 'individual variability' in
collectivities where 'not all group members, even in the case of any one group,
are all members in the same way.'

As Romana's case exemplifies, individuals relate to collective identities in
different ways, depending on which aspects of their selves, their biographies and
experiences are shared or divergent in a particular context. This contextual
sensitivity plays out as shifting identity positions responding to differentiated
levels of belonging, in ways that do not negate other aspects of identity but rather
brackets them out temporarily and strategically. This reflects Melucci's (1996:76)
insight on collective identity as a 'field containing a system of vectors in tension'
where 'unity and equilibrium are re-established over and over again in reaction to
shifts and changes in the elements internal and external to the field'. Reiterating
Della Porta and Diani's (2006) assertion that collective identities can be based on

different shared dimensions Romana's variable sense of belonging can be understood as representing two different subjectivities shaped by shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. In the first passage Romana identifies strongly with a collective Muslim identity because this allows her to articulate a shared experience of racism and Islamophobia. However, as the second extract reveals differences in religious interpretation and practice constitutes a different vector of inclusion which creates disparities of belonging within the social group. In the latter extract the sense of belonging becomes more contingent since the discursive field has now been rescaled from referencing society at large to the dynamics within the group. This represents collective identity as 'a field which expands and contracts and whose borders alter with the varying intensity and direction of the various forces that constitute it' (Melucci, 1996:76).

Romana's experience also reflects tensions within activist circles to do with '*politicking over lifestyle'* where personal beliefs and practices 'become targets of self-righteous moralizing and other forms of social policing' (Portwood-Stacer, 2013:335), creating hierarchies of status. Such conflicts can turn the negotiation of group boundaries and its terms of inclusion into a political struggle in itself. This is evident in the following extract where Basma talks about her tense relationship with members of the Islamic Society over the issue of wearing head scarves.

> **Basma:** Politically I'm aware that … like for example this, these issues I will not speak about externally to kind of BME or mainly Muslim circles anyway but I know the importance of maintaining a solidarity and a community because .. historically I understand that … certain aspects … I just … like w- like to a certain extent each member is like a victim of a history and for example issues with gender can be traced back to so many other kind of historical- historically colonial incidents anyway and … yeah so like in a sense I'm not aggressive but I try to understand and I know that I have to be there in those spaces regardless of how uncomfortable a speaker's making me feel by saying I have to- not looking at me in the eye but saying you know 'sister at the end of the day if you're not wearing the head scarf you're not going to think that is a respectable practising Muslim woman' so you know, you know having to deal with that I know I have to be there even if I am the only like one of five for example in order to open that space up for others because I don't want them to feel both the internal and external marginalisation.

This reveals how collective identity has to be negotiated, fought for and maintained through constant effort and struggle. Groupness is asserted by drawing a line between what can be spoken about internally within 'Muslim circles' and what must not be said externally. Here Basma is referring to difficult experiences of attending Islamic Society events and facing difficult questions about her identity as a Muslim woman, because she chooses not to wear a hijab. The qualification that this issue can only be discussed within the BME community conveys an implicit knowledge of the public sensitivities and controversies surrounding the role of women in Muslim communities and veiling (Meer and Modood, 2010). Basma even attempts to mitigate the damage her critique may do to the Muslim collective identity by suggesting 'issues with gender' have their roots in colonialism. The presence of such defensive and qualifying statements prior to the revelation that some aspects of being in Muslim spaces are uncomfortable and marginalising suggests the importance of the collective identity despite the conflict between a faith identity and gender identity. The fact that this tension is resolved in favour of maintaining solidarity within the collective Muslim identity is revealing of the priority given to the faith identity in the specific context of external pressures of marginalisation.

Other participants similarly reveal internal divisions and conflicts that remain concealed behind the efforts of a social group to project permanence and stability. Kasim's case is somewhat unique as he is only one of two first generation migrants included in the study, which largely comprised second or third generation migrants. Kasim has lived in the Midlands for the last ten years where he has played a productive role in activism through trade unions and anti-racism/anti-Islamophobia campaigns. Kasim's reflexive engagement with his identity and its' relation to other Muslims conveys some of the complexities and intersectionality inherent in the production of collective identities.

> **Kasim**: I mean my personal challenge is that because I'm a first generation migrant .... connecting with people here, Asians, blacks… African Caribbeans I mean there is - there is an experiential gap so they - what they have experienced is much more dire much more severe and they have in some ways, they have made compromises with it. I'm still struggling with it so it's just..... it does create some kind of a gap and the ... I mean the effort needs to be made to fill that gap across that boundary.

Here Kasim is describing the difficulty of building solidarity with other British Muslims because his experience of racism as a first generation migrant is qualitatively different from settled second and third generation migrants. His isolation is signalled by a 'boundary' between him and others but his commitment to the collective identity is indicated by the need to make the 'effort' to cross it. As with Romana the experience of Islamophobia plays a strong role in shaping his identification with a collective Muslim identity.

> **Kasim:** Yeah this is absolutely right that being Muslim you are going to be discriminated... .. yeah he (*second or third generation Muslim*) won't call himself Bangladeshi or even I mean even his family comes from Bangladesh or Pakistani or Indian or anything like that or black or Asian even sometimes, he asserts that he's a Muslim…. (AM: What do you call yourself?)………I'm black internationalist (*laughs*) yeah I mean I would use being – I would say that I'm a Muslim for specific purposes but that's only for those purposes yeah.

Kasim reveals that he identifies much more strongly with the identity label of 'black' but that the Muslim identity label also occupies a strategic position in his politics which is determined by the ubiquitous threat of Islamophobia. Being from a Muslim background Kasim is unable to escape the inevitability of Islamophobia, even though he neither shares the strong connection to a faith identity nor does he experience marginalisation in the same way that his peers do. He identifies instead with the label of 'black internationalist' which is not widely shared by others in his group. Yet it is difficult for Kasim to disassociate from the Muslim label because of the fact that 'being a Muslim you are going to be discriminated'. The following quote reveals how despite these tensions he is able to summon a collective Muslim identity.

> **Kasim:** I mean this - this is one of the issue which affects Muslim and migrant communities most I mean their primary identity is connected with migration and even if they are born here the stamp of being a migrant is there... it doesn't matter how many...how many generations they have been here.

In this extract Kasim dissolves the 'boundary' between him from other Muslims by uniting them under the 'primary identity' of 'migration'. These efforts reveal the importance of in-group solidarity within a perceived climate of hostility towards Muslims, designating the external pressures that structure collective

identity. While positive identifications with members of the identity group are necessary for collective identity, it also relies on 'negative identification of those who are not only excluded but actively opposed' (Della Port and Diani, 2006:94). Collective identities are relational and involve 'boundary work' which 'entails constructing both a collective self and a collective other, an "us" and a "them"' (Hunt and Benford, 2007:7533). The production of collective identity usually requires differentiation from other actors (Melucci, 1995, 1996).

> **Romana:** I find that like with young Muslim people getting involved with like activism like sort of things to do with Palestine and things like that it's like it's because they're like, they're our people like they're our brothers and our sisters and like we feel that connection with them whereas to us it seems like the lefties they're like sort of.. they're doing it as a token cause like they care about Palestine but they don't care about Kashmir, they don't care about Syria and all these other places so it's a bit like why Palestine, do you know what I mean, so you feel like, it's a bit like they've picked this cause and they wanna support that in part of like their whole leftie scheme with their environmentalism and all these other like issues that don't really concern us, whereas for us it's like the whole idea, the whole movement is about like sort of like… like liberating our brothers do you know what I mean (AM: yeah) sort of getting like Muslims out of the hole, like building ourselves up like getting rid of this whole title of like.. sort of a terrorists and like things like that I mean.

> **Kasim:** I used to I mean.. like was very close to a lot of leftist groups... but ... just you're another whatever they call brown face (AM: Really?) yeah to justify their politics … they have civilised you and… (AM: the left?) yeah I mean the left has civilised these Pakis and whatever.. others so yeah I – and I don't- I would rather be uncivilised barbaric err whatever Pakistani Indian Bangladeshi man that's fine with me.

Here both participants are not only constructing a collective identity through differentiation with a left identity but also highlighting the importance of identity to mobilisation. A collective Muslim identity is constructed by Romana through articulating the shared concerns and issues of 'our brothers and sisters' which is differentiated from people on the left who are merely involved as a 'token' gesture. Romana brings a Muslim identity category into being by bringing various different political conflicts like Palestine, Kashmir, Syria into a single liberation

struggle which joins seamlessly with the stigmatisation of Muslims as potential terrorists in Britain. This creates an 'equivalence' (Fairclough, 2003:87) between conflicts faced by people in Muslim countries and the issue of Islamophobia and prejudice endured by Muslims in the UK, forming a unified global project to defend Muslim identities. This connection is reinforced by citing affective ties to 'our people' which is contrasted with the exploitative motives of the 'lefties' who merely want to promote their own agenda. This presumes that a shared identity translates into a more authentic form of engagement in a political cause and since people from the left don't identify with the people involved in the named struggles their involvement is not as genuine. Kasim further signifies how identity differences undermine solidarity by distinguishing 'leftist groups' and 'another brown face' of 'uncivilised barbaric whatever Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi' origin suggesting dividing lines based on colour and ethnicity. More importantly these quotes highlight how a collective identity is drawn by accentuating similarities inside the group and emphasising differences with others outside the group. Struggles in Kashmir, Palestine and Syria are equated with Islamophobia in Britain while Kasim brings people from different South Asian countries into a unified 'brown face' class of minorities. Also common is the way in which the singular category is connected to the attack on Muslim identities in Britain which are demonised as 'terrorists' and 'uncivilised barbaric'.

These experiences highlight the complexities and tensions as well as the emotional and discursive investments made by participants that are masked by the apparent stability of a collective identity. The different ways in which participants relate to the identity label of 'Muslim' reveals that this is not a given or uncontested unity but rather has to be achieved through the participants' efforts to 'delimit and stabilize a definition of themselves' (Melucci, 1995:45). These extracts reveal that collective identity has to be understood through a 'relational' rather than 'substantialist logic' (Young, 2000:1059) meaning it is not automatically and unconsciously generated from a single marker of group identity but rather, as the above discourses suggest, is constantly negotiated and activated in relation to different internal and external forces. Producing collective identity involves boundary work where the parameters between inside and outside can shift depending on the temporal and contextual configuration of different dimensions or vectors along which collective identity is being constructed. This is evident in the way participants describe divisions within the group which contracts the boundary of inclusion but which gets expanded to a

wider circle when describing relationships with the rest of society. While a collective Muslim identity is produced with an implied homogeneity this is not always experienced personally.

It is argued that studies on Islam and Muslims often reduce the complexity of Muslim identities by paying an inordinate amount of attention to Muslim organisations that accentuate the religious dimension of their collective identity, 'while neglecting the other, often non-religious elements of identity of Muslims and making them more religious than they are' (Bectovic, 2011:1122). This section has tried to address this by revealing the complex and conflicted ways in which young Muslim activists themselves construct a collective Muslim identity. This is not to say that such contradictions are present or obvious among all the participants as some do present faith identities in a more much more primordial and uncontested way as discussed in the next section. However, this also involves a great deal of work to build a relationship with faith which involves agency and choice rather than reversion to tradition.

The role of faith in identity politics

This section focuses on the relationship between faith and activism in the participants' political and civic motivations, which takes the discussion beyond the production of collective identity to its core contents. This is important for demystifying the salience of faith in Muslim identities which is viewed as being in conflict with national identity and evidence of Muslim disloyalty to Britain (Brown and Saeed, 2014; Grillo, 2005; Lynch, 2013, Werbner, 2000). The following quote demonstrates an uncontested faith identity that subsumes all other aspects of the participant's social life.

> **Shoaib:** I mean for me personally being a Muslim and you know for some people it's not such a big issue they don't really care but some others do and …yeah so for me it's like a whole entire way of life and I see literally, I mean even the way in which the first question I recall was you were talking about social, political and civil activities, these are all part of in itself Islam. So you could just write about that, you know, instead of saying can you talk about the different social, political and civil activities you could just rephrase it and say talk about the Islamic activities that you are involved

with, 'cause I see all these part and parcel with Islam so…yeah that's pretty much it really, it's just my motivation regarding my faith.

In this quote the role of faith is presented as being the primary identity through which all over forms of life are refracted. Similar sentiments are expressed by other participants confirming given understandings of the heightened significance of Islam in the lives of young Muslims (Lewis, 2007; Roy, 2004; Parekh, 2008). However, like many other participants Shoaib also experienced a journey towards faith that was reflexively self-determined through independent knowledge-seeking rather than adherence to parental cultural practices.

> **Aliya**: I wouldn't call myself a Muslim growing up because I had no idea what Islam was about. When I was at college I happened to be surrounded by some ...people who...were practising you know and they would talk to me about religion and I became interested and wanted to know more ... so I would say it's my peers really who influenced me to explore religion and try and understand you know what I was born into.

Aliya's quote affirms Roy's (2004:40) assertion that faith identities among Muslims in the West are linked to processes of modernisation rather than a retreat to tradition, indicating particular forms of religiosity which are 'based on individual practices, on ethics and not on culture'. The contemporary positioning of faith comes to light when examining one of the most contested notions in the citizenship of Muslims in the West. This is the concept of the *ummah*, which literally describes a global Muslim community but signifies a collective Muslim identity that functions like a stateless nation or to use Anderson's (1983) frequently cited and apt phrase, an 'imagined community'. Muslim loyalty to the *ummah* sends anxiety levels soaring over fears that Muslims 'could not be trusted to be good citizens' (Parekh, 2008:8). It is useful then to examine how participants' invoke this global unity in describing their motivations to act.

> **Amna:** I think what drives me is like the grassroots people, the people that you don't see out in the open, the people that you don't necessarily come across.... you know people that are going to be out in the snow and rain now protesting against what it is but what really drives me is this… kind of, for me Islam really the history of Islam, the Prophet and the way he kind of fought against injustice and the way that's told us to do that for the rest of our lives for, as long as the *ummah* is alive we have a duty to do this to

stand up for what's right and what's wrong and I think that motivates me the most.

Basma: Well for me obviously I think it's just ultimately the kind of within the *ummah* that understanding that those who are persecuted, oppressed and so on, you will always like fight by their side and personally my ethnic background …. has largely driven me to kind of be quite uncompromisingly anti-colonialist and imperialist……[ ]…the overall source of my drive .. aside from my faith is then the people, the collective people because I think if something's not collective that individual wouldn't be present in that position anyway what - Malcolm X wasn't on his own you know.

Here the *ummah* is cited as an ageless and universal agent of Muslim solidarity but it also invokes a more local and embodied collectivity. The *ummah* is being deployed in these accounts as a timeless global community through reference to Muslim duties that flow from it as long as it is 'alive' but it is also pointing to people closer to home, 'the grassroots people' and the 'collective people'. Rather than a kickback to ancient traditions this merging of the local and global reflects the emergence of 'new politics that can be less accurately described as localisation but as a form of globalisation from below', stimulated by digital communications that have created new possibilities for identity creation according to Stevenson (2010:214). Participants' engagement with such digital technologies was explored in the previous chapter.

The above quotes also suggest a highly politicised reading of the notion of *ummah* since it is being positioned as a threatened object in need of defence, as revealed by references to fighting injustice and being persecuted and oppressed. It is important to point out that the term itself is not widely referenced in the interviews, with only six of the 34 participants mentioning it. Even where participants cite the *ummah* in what appears to be a yearning for a return to the past glories of Islam, a careful reading reveals immediate and personal stakes.

Arya: Really what I am aiming for is to..to do what I can for the *ummah* to become what it was, that is the motivation, I really want us… I want to show the world because, I mean once upon a time Islam was great because everyone knew Islam was great but now Muslims say Islam is great but no one can see that and that's what I want to bring back that people can see that it's true Islam does change society, it makes people happier…yeah bring - it takes away corruption because now when you look

at Muslim countries really when you go down and check out what - where the corrupt countries are you'd find that most of them are pretty much Muslim countries.

Here Arya's reverence for the *ummah* is based on its historical importance but it is also being linked to aspirations to change the negative perceptions of Islam in the political context in which Muslims are currently situated. The way in which Arya describes her mission to project a positive image of Islam, in contrast to the negative image portrayed by corrupt Muslim countries, reflects her symbolic and emotional investment in a collective Muslim identity. The significance of this identity is evident by the weight it carries in motivating her to mobilise in its defence by demonstrating practically that Islam is a great religion that contributes positively to society. This approach suggests a desire for inclusion in society without losing valued aspects of identity.

The way in which references to *ummah* appear in this research do not indicate the kind of atavistic regression that is often ascribed to it in mainstream discourses (Cesari, 2007, 2009; Roy, 2004; Parekh, 2008) but rather reflect concerns for the present politicisation of Muslim identities. The diverse identifications with faith through individualised and ethical idioms rather than traditional interpretations of Islam, revealed by young Muslim activists in this study epitomise Cesari's (2007:113) profile of new Muslims who 'exercise new levels of individual choice in the course of religious observance'. Religiosity is framed through agency and choice rather than conformity to community norms, invoking processes of 'reflexivity' in which identities are shaped by choice rather than tradition (Giddens 1991:214). Indeed it is argued that the breakdown of traditional identities by rapid social change has created a void in which 'people turn to religion for moral certainty, meaning, stability and principles of individual and collective life' (Parekh, 2008:1).

> **Hanif:** I think that's because religion's more of a constant because there's like you're becoming more… it's like getting more of a mix of cultures that people are getting confused about what culture they belong to, like some people they can identify more with being British, some people more like wherever their … their ethnicity, Pakistani or Arab, some people have like a mix of ethnicities so they don't really feel like the ethnicity is - they don't belong to it I think because religion is more of constant, I've seen that a lot more people they focus on religion because it is that constant.

Haseena: In University like for example like when I came to University here there's not like much to do like in terms of like …so - like social life if you don't just wanna go clubbing all the time, so like I kind of found that having like a kind of religious activist circle around me, they're not necessarily religious people like but people of the Islamic faith, it's really helpful and I think it's not just… my faith, for me personally but it's like my faith as a kind of as a kind of way of networking with other people and you know just again it makes you feel like you're part of a community .. so I think it's very important in that respect.

These discourses underline the role of religion as a unifying force where other forms of identification lack intensity or are exclusionary. In Hanif's account religion has the power to be a constant source of identification where ethnic and cultural ties have become diluted and disempowering for many young Muslims in Britain. Where ethnicity, nationality and cultures can have variable resonance in young people's lives, religion provides a universal permit of entitlement. For Haseena social marginalisation from the typical youth or student category can be mitigated by fostering a sense of belonging and community through religious identification. Haseena describes her relationship with other Muslim students using the spatial concept of 'circle' which is suggestive of a boundary marking the group within which community spirit prevails. This boundary is not drawn with religious markers since she specifies that group members are not particularly religious but rather inclusion in 'a community' represents a more welcoming alternative to the clubbing scene which is alienating and exclusionary.

The diversity of ways in which these participants relate to Islam challenges essentialist and reified views of Muslim religious identities as being fixed in an antiquated and culturally backward tradition. The dominance of faith in the political motivations described here suggests that it is central to constituting a 'project identity' in the sense that Castells (2010:xxvi) has defined it:

…when social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, in so doing, seek the transformation of overall structure.

In this respect the role of faith can be seen as a powerful cultural and ideological resource to construct a collective identity capable of unifying diverse individual interests and subject positions as well mitigating against negative experiences of exclusion and marginalisation. These findings support earlier

studies on ethnic minority mobilisations which establish 'how commitment to Islam provides not only a normative and ethical basis for the construction of a 'British Muslim' political consciousness but also a group-based framework and set of symbolic resources to be drawn on in the course of mobilisation and engagement itself' (O'Toole and Gale, 2013:2950). The cultural politics of marginalised groups to reclaim and revive identities through 'individual and collective exploration of the meaning of a cultural group's histories, practices, and meanings' (Young, 2000:1329) can result in fortifying and ossifying the boundaries between groups. For this reason feminists like Fraser (2001) have argued against identity politics which can result in undue pressure on group members to conform to this identity and inhibit the complexity and diversity. However, it is worth reiterating Young's (2000) contention that such efforts do not intrinsically carry political significance and that such differentiated identities become politicised when cultural expressions are thwarted or threatened in some way. The ways in which participants in this study construct a collective faith identity is not only suggestive of such cultural and social conflicts but participants have also stated as much in describing the pressures of Islamophobia and social exclusion. The next section focuses attention on the conflictual relations that have a structuring impact on collective identity for Muslims.

Demonisation, difference and defence

Despite a high level of respondent variability in ethnic, national and socio-economic backgrounds and different religious and ideological intensities, a strong sense of collective identity emerges from the ways in which participants defend Islam and Muslims in a perceived climate of heightened Islamophobia in the post 9/11 context. The following extracts represent a cross-section of views from participants who have very divergent religious practices and beliefs. For instance Dania is unsure about the existence of God but takes comfort in Islamic customs and rituals, while Beena has very strong convictions about God and Islam. The diversity in the levels of participants' religiosity, defined by Roy (2004) as the relationship with faith, is indicative of an externally shaped collective subjectivity. Unsurprisingly 9/11 and the war on terror are seen as redefining the status of Muslim citizenship in Britain.

Dania: I think there is a strong sense of resistance in Muslim identity to ….to kind of to what the - the oppressive.. kind of perspective that's thrown on us and I think most Muslims would - are very kind of anti-government, anti-establishment and they realise that this is all like, for want of a better word, bullshit that they are just ..I think it's not true to say that they're not, that Muslims aren't political because I feel like inherently if someone's like ... ( ) ... especially I think young people coming up post 9/11…everyone - we all - everyone has very much ….developed the understanding and kind of been able to ….so resist that kind of oppression in different ways and we have created our own narrative in which we ..we – which is easier to deal with this and it's one that is just kind of, 'ok this is bullshit what they're saying is not right', we don't like - we don't live it - Muslims don't believe it like we're not, we're not even going try and bow down to and say oh no no we're not terrorists or whatever, people just doing, people are just living a kind of a resistive identity I think.

In this account Dania is talking about a collective identity that is formed through resistance to the 'oppressive' perspective that frames all Muslims as terrorists. She is also claiming that this experience of oppression 'inherently' politicises young Muslims who have no choice but to resist. This argument is made by challenging the view that Muslims 'aren't political', refuting an implicit argument in dominant discourses that Muslims reject Britain's democratic institutions. However, Dania is also revealing the nature of Muslim resistance which presents itself as a refusal to engage in the political debate on the terms dictated by the hegemonic majority, because even denying terrorism would be to 'bow down'. This is designed to justify why the political mobilisation of young Muslims has taken the form of a 'resistive identity'. Dania's views are exceptionally candid and bold in criticising the securitisation of Muslim citizens and stands in contrast to most other participants who are cautious and guardedly contentious in their vocabularies. However, resistive identities in Muslim activism can take many different forms and by the logic of Scott's (1990) distinction between hidden and public transcripts these may not always be overtly manifested. This topic is revisited in Chapter 8 where different models of activism are compared in explicit and implicit forms of resistance.

In the following extract Yasir reinforces Dania's view that Muslim collective identity has been structured by a post 9/11 context.

Yasir: I think after the Rushdie affair and all the stuff that was happening in the 70s and 80s I think Muslims were maybe to a point ostracised as much as any other community cause we were living at a time before 9/11 where although the 90s were – had this illusion of everyone …living a great life and society being wonderful … politically I think…the prejudices against Muslims were equal to the prejudice against black people, gypsies, Irish and so on. So I think that was just kind of follow on from just… the anti-immigration of general society from the 70s, 80s onwards but I think after 9/11 it kind of just singled out Muslims. Muslims became the prime target for everyone and you know before 9/11 you had the sense of community where at least everyone who was a minority, everyone your kind was just like oh well, we all get it at some point but after 9/11 it was like Muslims, including Muslims, who couldn't remember a time when blacks and Irish and ..sort of Asians were treated differently were suddenly the target and it's - it got to a point where for a time you had other communities also turning on Muslims, who should have known better.

Here Yasir is giving a historical perspective on how exclusionary processes have produced collective categories based on shared experiences of racism and marginalisation. However, Yasir contends that after 9/11 Muslims have been 'singled out' as the 'prime target' for discrimination by both whites and non-Muslim minorities. This understanding of collective identity as structured by social arrangements echoes Bourdieu's (in Sen, 2007:27) view that 'social magic can transform people by telling them that they are different'. The presence of such exclusionary forces in the everyday lives of the young activists is exemplified by Sara and Beena who narrate personal experiences of Islamophobia.

Sara: Like once I was in London and I was at a train station and there was erm erm ..what happened with Anders Brevik in Norway and one girl actually said 'oh oh Muslims yeah I don't really like them' obviously unaware of the fact that I am Muslim and because I'm not quite obviously like visibly Muslim and I'm just like quite thrown back because the way people can casually say that and it's like not a big deal and that I think I've become more aware of those kind of comments growing up and stuff and I think it ultimately comes down to the stereotypes and the kind of image of the kind of backwards kind of terrorism kind of Muslim that goes all the way back to 9/11 because I think that's when it all really started.

Zahir: A society which has so many other social problems and then when you label a community as the demons or the different or the 'Other' I think the word is then that can cause a lot of problems and it *has* done with hate crime, especially against Muslim women who either would be dressed in hijabs because there's been lots and lots and lots of headlines against that. So you're seen as the other and as different and somebody commented on social media 'if they don't like the way they live in Britain then they can go home' and I did respond back to one person I said 'if they are born here.. where are they meant to go?' because they would classify themselves as you know the place of where they were born is their origin and therefore they are British legally.

As these accounts reveal many participants experience Islamophobia first hand and their efforts to comprehend this level of prejudice in society leads them directly to 9/11 which they believe planted the seeds of fear and suspicion towards all Muslims. The 'moral panic' (Parekh, 2008:11) generated by the presence of Muslims in Europe has been mounting over the last few decades in response to a series of crisis events, of which the Rushdie Affair and 9/11 are particularly momentous. However, it is also postulated that a paradigm shift has occurred in a 'post 9/11 crisis in which the integration and loyalty of Muslims are the greatest challenge' (Modood, 2007:20). While few of the participants describe stigmatisation and marginalisation of Muslims after 9/11 as the sole reason for their activism, the recurrence of the theme and its association with the demonisation of Muslims indicates that it plays a decisive role in mobilising these participants.

The foregoing discussions have presented an overview of how participants' constructions of collective identity are linked to shared experiences of Islamophobia which transcend the divisive impact of internal diversity and intersectionality. The perception of an external threat helps to explain the highly politicised role of faith in solidifying the boundaries of collective identity as found in Tinker and Smart's (2012:644) research on Muslim mobilisation around faith schools which stated that: 'the expression or mobilization of identifications that emphasize intra-group unity is not evidence of essential group characteristics, but rather the convergence of identities and interests in particular social conditions.' This invokes Spivak's (1988 in Phillips, 2010:2) concept of 'strategic essentialism' when a group under threat or in pursuit of political gains has an interest in asserting a reified category, or as Melucci (1989:46) explains these

are attempts to 'affirm what others deny'. The issue of essentialism re-emerges later in this chapter.

The political role of faith is further evidenced by the strategic and tactical interpretations of Islam which correspond with the participants' chosen modes of activism. In other words, the types of activism that participants engage in appears to influence how they understand and deploy particular aspects of faith in their political discourses. At face value these discourses suggest a form of identity politics that is guided by the demands of faith but a closer reading reveals that there is a great deal of agency and choice operating in participants' engagement with their faith.

> **Khayam**: For me it's about service like the Prophet Salat ul Asalam he said *.....* (*Arabic verse*) that the one who leads a community is the one who serves them so I think there's certain religious rewards I think more than anything so religion is a motivating factor in contributing to civil society that's for sure ….essentially life of service that's a reward in itself to me be honest with you…….[ ]…..I mean it's only now that we've realised that Muslims voluntarily give up so much of their income a year just on charitable causes right so …these are the same people that are being castigated in the media for being extreme and violent and everything and they're giving money to orphans and they're giving money to people that can't feed themselves and they're giving money to people that you know … to educate themselves and stuff like that so yeah people don't realise this.

This participant is justifying his community activism in terms of religious compulsion, which not only establishes and reinforces his faith identity but also promotes an image of Islam as a religion that encourages charity, social engagement and community service. Such discourses can be seen as challenging the negative stereotypes of Muslims as citizens who 'do not wish to and cannot integrate' (Parekh, 2008:11) and make little contribution to the communities in which they live. Within Khayam's arguments there is a mutually constitutive relationship between religious beliefs and the aims of activism. Similarly other participants' interpretations of their faith play a role in reinforcing their political objectives.

> **Saif**: It's like come on man use your intellect. God told you the first word in the Quran says 'to read' that means that you're naturally going to learn and question and challenge, including the existence of God... now that's the

first sign of a believer, I believe is questioning or doubting and then you realise that if any.. any ideology which says to you first off, go and read must be pretty confident within itself that you know what, it's true. Come on man let's just take it, we're academics and that and we realise that the truth - you get to the truth if you read and this is allegedly what God's saying you know, go and read and you'll find God.

Salman: This is what we're trying to harness, we're trying to harness, you know, Sufi side of you, the Salafi side of you, the Tableeghi side of you, the political side of you, the active side of you because that was the Prophet Mohammad *Salalahu Wasalam* yeah and - and so that's why I'm kind of really interested in projecting that message forward and it's - and I think it's sellable, it's easy to sell to people that kind of concept that Islam isn't just about sitting under the tree and reading the Quran. It's not about shouting on the pulpit, it's not about just you know having a *dawa* (proselytizing) stall, it's about picking up the litter, it's about teaching your kids, it's about you know running for public office, it's about all these kinds of things.

For these participants faith provides a sound reasoning and justification for their respective forms of activism. Saif, who is politically active through academia and public speaking, emphasises learning and reading as one of the most basic tenets of Islam. Salman is describing the activities of the national organisation through which he is supporting an education programme for young Muslims. Here Salman is conveying the importance of uniting different sectional interests within Muslim groups (Sufi, Salafi, Tableeghi) to project a unified Muslim image based on the identity of the Prophet himself. By naming the Prophet as the source of his authority Salman can make a claim about how Islam should be practiced in the world, not by 'sitting under the tree and reading the Quran' but by being actively engaged in society as useful citizens. This represents a view of Islam as a religion that inspires civic engagement and not only does this politically challenge those Muslims who contribute to the negative image of Muslims but also resists allegations of self-segregation as a tendency within Islam itself. Most importantly these interpretations of Islam promote Muslim integration in British society by projecting forms of religiosity that are socially acceptable.

The above discourses can be seen to bring both faith and civic or political activism into a mutually reinforcing encounter that also coincides with defending

those aspects of Muslim identity that are currently the basis of stigmatisation. Put more bluntly these arguments defy the view that 'there is something inherent and essentialised about 'Islam' and 'Muslims' that leads to a particular form of politics' (Adamson, 2011:903). The accounts presented above suggest that the politics of these participants are directed towards contesting forms of Islamophobia through defensive strategies which are informed by strategic readings and deployment of faith as a valuable ideological and political resource. As Roy (2004:10) has argued the most important question regarding Muslims in the West is not 'what the Koran says but what Muslims say the Koran says'.

Such strategic interpretations of faith are also evident in participants' challenges to religious authorities in their own community to defend agency and choice by younger or female group members. For example, Beena has experienced community and parental pressures to get married at an early age at the cost of her education, which can be linked to the way that Islam is invoked in her activism on gender rights.

> **Beena**: Oh the role of faith, faith has a lot to do with it I think, especially Muslim women empowerment…as I was saying before like the Prophet *salalaho waslam's* wife Khadija she …you know was a businesswoman, she had an education she proposed to her husband, she was very really, really forward for her time and you know …if you think about it you know (*College*), the college that I'm at they have to - they weren't allowing women in to their college till 1979, they started to accept women and at (*College*) it used to be all, all men.

Here Beena's arguments are serving a dual purpose. Firstly citing the example of the Prophet's wife as an emancipated working woman allows her to defend her decision to delay marriage and go to University and secondly it projects an image of Islam that contradicts the widely held view of Islam as the religion that suppresses women. This is done by highlighting that Muslim women were active in education and business in the time of the Prophet while revered Western institutions excluded women as recently as 1979. A similar strategic role is played by faith in the case of Irum, who is a former member of a government advisory group on Muslims:

> **Irum**: Faith is the reason I got involved because I felt it was part of my duty to do so and faith is the reason I got involved because I feel like I need to protect it from the damage and the punches and the kicks that it's getting

and faith is my tool to defend what I'm doing because a lot of people will say what I'm doing is un-Islamic and then I'll say well actually not really and then you know like Aisha Rozinha (Prophet's wife) she did this that and the other and Prophet's first wife Khadija was this that and the other and you know Rabia al Basri was one of the most famous mystics and writers and you know the first two universities that were opened were by Muslim women so all these things.

Both these participants are describing faith as a means to resisting endogenous and exogenous pressures to conform to subjugated identities. Beena is active in work in the community to bring about awareness and changes to marital and educational restrictions on young women while Irum's activism is also aimed at empowering Muslim women and youth against domination from male community leaders. As such the collective identity to which both participants appeal is an intersectional one crossing gender and faith. What unites these different discourses is the strategic interpretation and projection of Islamic values and traditions to resist the denigration of valued aspects of faith based identities.

So far this section has explored how collective identity is shaped as a political project to defend stigmatised identities. These strategies speak to Solomos' (2001:201) assertion that when cultural racism manifests itself in demands for minority assimilation into the nation, subordinate groups use difference to 'authorize their own representations' and 'seize the category' and invert it by attaching positive instead of negative value to it. An appreciation of the relevance of 'difference' in the above political discourses is really important. This is because the concept of difference, rather than any other identity marker like religion, ethnicity or gender, much more appositely represents the empirically informed analysis of Muslim collective identity presented above. The term difference is used in the sense specified by Modood (2007:37) to describe the significance of multiculturalism as a political ideal in Muslim identity politics:

A better normative starting point is the politics of recognition of difference or respect for identities that are important to people, as identified in minority assertiveness.

Understanding the nature of the political struggles described above in these terms, as the politics of pursuing positive difference, also helps to resolve the tensions inherent in group identities which are always marked by the paradox

of both challenging essentialist ideas about the group and reinforcing them by asserting and amplifying their differences. This points to the danger of identity politics creating a 'strange convergence in the language of the racist right and the black or ethnic nationalists, as both infuse categories such as race or ethnicity with essentialist, and supposedly naturally inherited, characteristics' (Solomos, 2001:201). Modood (2007:132) describes this as a dilemma:

> when one identifies some people as a group one inevitably pulls out one feature of a complex set of features and gives it a primacy. In arguing that Muslims deserve some recognition and representation one is almost inevitably prioritizing religious over other features (such as occupation or locality, for example) and promoting religious Muslims as the representatives of Muslims as a whole.

This problem can be resolved through Modood's (2007:39) insistence that the concept of 'difference' rather than culture or religion should be prioritised in understanding the demands of marginalised groups engaged in identity politics as this is 'to recognize that the difference in question is not just constituted from the 'inside', from the side of the minority culture, but also from the outside, from the representations and treatment of the minorities in question.'

Understanding identity politics as 'the politics of difference' (Young, 1990) enables a better understanding of the way in which collective identity is a response to situated and historical conditions of inequality and disadvantage. The willingness of ethnic minorities, including Muslims, to identify strongly with the identity label of 'black' in the 1970s and 80s signals the salience of colour-racism as the main form of discrimination at the time which produced a collective identity that included all non-whites (Ramamurthy, 2006; 2013). The growing significance of faith as a marker of identity in Muslim identity politics from the 1990s onwards is an indication of the rise of cultural forms of racism that have become encoded in Islamophobia (Lentin and Titley, 2011; Kundnani, 2014; Modood, 2007; 2010; The Runnymede Trust, 1997).

The use of the term difference as the primary concern of identity politics also avoids the reification of groups by allowing space for internal diversity to flourish within collective identities. Accordingly, where the shifting sense of identity and belonging conveyed by some participants in different contexts is discussed above, this can be better understood as politics mounted in defence of difference that does not obscure the activists' multiple identities. This echoes Isin

and Wood (1999:15; original emphasis) who argue that such efforts represent cultural politics that 'acknowledge a simultaneous and ambivalent desire both to *affirm* identities and to *transcend* them.'

The role played by faith in such politics by young adult Muslims in this study can be understood as having a primary but not determining place in the identities that are the subject of their contestations. Such an understanding connects with the framework of multicultural citizenship described by Modood (2007:43) which draws attention to 'the political uses of non-European origin ethnic and related identities, especially in turning their negative and stigmatic status into a positive feature of the societies that they are now part of.' It should be noted that this chapter has been focusing on faith identities in the context of activism and this should not be confused with the entirely separate matter of the participants' relationship to their faith in a spiritual sense, which is not the subject of investigation in this study.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how collective identity is consciously and actively constructed through the agency and choice of participants from within the identity-group as well as its conditioning by external factors of Islamophobia and the war on terror. The complexity and ambiguity of collective identity processes signifies the multiple and relational nature of social identities where Muslim identities can shift with different frames of reference for belonging and shared experience. The internal fissures which contradict and complicate the production of a unified and stable collective identity demonstrate how unity and coherence is laboured for by the participants. The role of faith in Muslim identities discussed in this chapter defies charges of dogmatic conformity to tradition by foregrounding the personal and reflexive as well as strategic and political ways of in which Islam underscores a primary identity. It is also revealed how collective identity underwrites a political project to turn negative difference into positive difference as described in theories of multicultural citizenship (Modood, 2007) in response to threatening levels of stigma and marginalisation in the post 9/11 context. These findings attempt to avoid a fatal fault line in literature on identity politics 'underpinned by the presumption that one's identity necessarily defines

one's politics' by highlighting how 'identity grows out of and is transformed by action and struggle' (Solomos, 2001:202).

In demonstrating the complexity and agency involved in producing a collective identity this chapter has built on the arguments presented in the previous chapter to establish the presence of social movement that is concerned with contesting Islamophobia in the post 9/11 context. Viewed through a lens framed by social movement theory, the activism of young adult Muslims represents a political struggle that seeks inclusion and belonging to British society rather than a withdrawal from it. This dialectic between difference and unity is better explained by Melucci (1995:48) who states that:

> The autonomous ability to produce and to recognize the collective reality as a "we" is a paradoxical situation: in affirming its difference from the rest of the society, a movement also states its belonging to the shared culture of a society and its need to be recognized as a social actor. The paradox of identity is always that difference, to be affirmed and lived as such, presupposes a certain equality and a certain reciprocity.

As this research focuses on individuals and their motivations rather than organisational structures it may be difficult to see how the various forms of activism constitute a 'social movement'. This is not helped by the fact that many grassroots movements 'typically go unnoticed beyond the local context because they operate beneath the radar of national and international media' which makes them less visible than 'large scale protests events' (Snow et al, 2007:198). Despite these challenges this thesis argues that young adult Muslims represented in this study are part of a wider social movement that is populated by diverse, but networked, individuals, small groups, societies as well as national organisations, lobbies and campaigns that converge around common goals to defend Muslim identities against the threat of Islamophobia that has reached crisis point in the post-9/11 context.

Chapter 7: Politics, security and cultural conflicts

Introduction

The two preceding chapters have established that the activism of young adult Muslims in this study is part of a British Muslim social movement seeking to counter heightened Islamophobia in the wake of the war on terror. Thus far the thesis has largely focused on elaborating the distinctive features and drivers of Muslim civic and political activism. If the state has largely been absent from this picture this is because by nature these modes of politics are designated as '*non-state centred activities*' (Norris, 2002:193; original emphasis). Participants confirm this tendency by largely ignoring the state in their reflections on the social world. In order to explore the relationship between the participants' politics and the state, during interviews they were asked to reflect on what they thought about politics and politicians and how these served the interests of citizens in general. The analysis presented in this chapter focuses on responses to that question to explore how participants understand their relationship with the state and to make sense of their chosen modes of activism through subpolitical activities.

This chapter also demonstrates the strategic importance of cultural politics in response to participants' belief that the main arena of political struggle at the current time is the battle of ideas in the hearts and minds of other citizens. This is not unexpected given the elevated levels of hostility and alienation expressed towards mainstream political institutions which are deemed to be inadequate channels for desired social change. The emphasis on cultural contestation is also linked to the high costs associated with participating in more contentious forms of politics, like protests and demonstrations, which is indicative of the operations of a security state.

The chapter is divided into five sections the first of which sets the scene by delineating different attitudes towards conventional politics and politicians through non-discrete and overlapping but distinguishable approaches. In the next two sections participants' rejection of mainstream politics is explored through their normative views on the concept of political representation. The next section discusses the perceived limitations of engaging in protest politics in the wake of

Islamophobia and securitisation, followed by arguments about widespread public apathy and passivity which are seen as being central to the failure of politics in contemporary society.

Politics and activist attitudes

Participants' attitudes to mainstream politics and politicians can be demarcated into four discernible approaches: 'hopeful'; 'disillusioned'; 'disengaged' and 'dismissive'. Derived from the arguments participants put forward these approaches are not mutually exclusive but overlapping, therefore they do not represent rigid positions but suggest some flexibility in participants' views on mainstream politics. The approach defined as 'hopeful' includes a handful of participants who are largely satisfied with the political system but see scope for improvement.

> **Imran**: I mean loads of people say that the politicians are now more out of touch than they've ever been before. I disagree with that… yeah because if you look at … if you look at the politics some decades ago what you really had was very un-transparent government … and for all New Labour's kind of shortcomings they did bring about the Human Rights Act, Freedom of Information…. and successively I think governments have become more transparent.

In contrast to this position is the 'disillusioned' stance marked by intense negative feelings towards politics and a refusal to engage with what is considered to be a corrupt and self-interested system.

> **Rabia**: I don't really like politics as such like…I couldn't care less about politics, the only time that politics matters is when it affects…people or like you know it's because of the politics that there's some harm being done somewhere basically that's the only time but otherwise I couldn't care less about the Labour or Conservatives or anything like that.

A very small number of participants express a 'disengaged' position denoting appreciation of the importance of politics but a lack of knowledge to engage with it.

Arya: Of course we need that, we need people that are higher up and people that can- that understand politics whereas me I'm completely clueless, so I know my strengths and I know my weaknesses and I know that we're a team as Muslims so what I can't do someone else can do.

And finally the position representing the largest number of participants is summarised as 'dismissive', where engagement with conventional politics is seen as futile and ineffective compared to subpolitical forms of activism.

Yousaf: My particular position is… it's sort of like what people say, you know Tony Benn when he left parliament he said so he can…do - spend more time in politics that was his reason for taking - which was obviously extremely witty he wasn't just sort of flippant it was actually very, very true and you see exactly what he means because - and I think that's part of my philosophy for not joining parties, it's not because I think they have no role to play it's because I think it allows me - I can do a lot more from without than from within.

Many participants express opinions that mirror Yousaf's logic, which is central to understanding the salience of cultural politics in this study. This argument can be summarised as the belief that the kind of social change sought by participants is more likely to come through channels outside parliamentary politics. It is therefore worth focusing greater attention on critical views which are not only dominant in the study but also help to explicate participants' preference for politics that are 'non-state oriented'.

Political failure and representation

A primary concern for participants is the issue of political representation by elected members of government, a concept that is vital to the legitimacy of politics but is also a contentious and elusive one (Dovi, 2002; Leftwich, 2008; Pitkin, 1967; Plotke,1997; Phillips, 1995,1998, 2000; Young, 2000). Participants express high levels of distrust and disillusionment with politicians, explaining their failure as political representatives in terms of their existential estrangement from voters owing to their privileged position in society. This existential gap is defined by differences between voters and politicians on the grounds of class, gender, ethnicity and religious belief, as well as life experiences and residential locality.

Haseena: The main issue is that you know parliament is very elitist, very white, very male, very middle class so yeah naturally I just feel alienated from it.

Sameera: Under no illusion do I think we're in a democracy because if we were, where are the working class voices, where are the female voices, where are ethnic voices, we look at our cabinet and it's, well, it's all white for a start, they even got rid of the token ethnic person which was Baroness Warsi.

Such trenchant criticism suggests a deep schism between the lifeworld of the participants and politicians, based on differences which converge on identity. These extracts explain alienation from mainstream politics with reference to the 'white', 'male' and 'class' identities of the people in power which makes them ill-placed to reflect other 'voices'. The way participants here link identity to experience and perspective resonates the arguments of multicultural theorists like Anne Phillips (1995, 1998, 2000, 2007) and Modood (2003; 2007) who support group representation on grounds that a collective response is needed to address the multiple and enduring inequalities and disadvantages faced by minorities. This argument is implied in participants' reference to differences in identity as being essentially linked to differences in political ideals, capacities and agency. The failure of mainstream politicians to meet the needs of marginalised citizens is also attributed to the fact that political representatives do not share the participants' perspectives and interests because of the chasm that lies between their different social positions.

Abid: Ideally we need to start looking at people that actually represent us, getting them into power rather than people who don't cause someone who's gone to a posh middle class school won't have any idea what it's like growing up in inner city (*City*) and they won't have had the same experiences and same you know hardships as someone from a privileged background.

Laila: Although politicians have to be you know, they can't be narrow minded and they have to think about different kinds of people in society, I don't necessarily think that they do .... I don't think they necessarily - they can view the world from a different person's eyes, from a refugee's eyes or you know someone from an ethnic minority or someone from a working

class background and so their policies can sometimes be hindered by that by the fact that they can't see the world in different eyes.

These participants are expressing the normative belief that lived experience is a requisite for politicians to comprehend and address marginalised peoples' needs. Here the emphasis on differences between representative and those who are represented is located in lived experience because it is the basis on which political 'concerns', 'needs', 'hardships' and viewpoints are constituted. For these participants, there is a fundamental dissonance between their political ideals and imaginaries and the politicians who do not live in their local areas or experience their hardships. Participants' pessimistic view on the ability of politicians to reflect their needs, interests and perspectives on the basis of their different identities expresses similar reasoning to Phillips' (1995; 1998; 2000) case for 'the politics of presence', also called 'descriptive' or 'mirror' representation, which argues that the underrepresentation of minority groups can only be addressed if members of the group represent themselves. Participants passionately seek descriptive representation by arguing that the identity of the representative has both symbolic as well as practical value for the political inclusion of minorities.

> **Amna**: Another thing that I have like, it's not a bug bear, it's more of a kind of observation is that we do have … Muslim women representing us in the media such as like Myriam Francois-Cerrah, we have Lauren Booth, we have … what's it called, Yvonne Ridley, there's one thing in common with all those three people, they're all white… and what does that kind of say to me, it says that look, you know, either we women that are brown or women that have come from, you know, my kind of background can't represent ourselves so we need somebody else to represent us or we're not deemed as… able to represent ourselves and we're not given the opportunities to represent ourselves, although I love them for what they've done for us and stuff I just think that it's important to get women like me out there because that's going to dispel some of these myths that surround Islamophobia.

> **Kasim**: Yeah I mean for me it is about power it's about .... people - it doesn't matter good intentions don't matter that much, they matter at times but when we have groups like Muslims ... migrant Muslims or in general Muslims or blacks- by black I mean political black in the sense that people who are non-white.. who are historically at least in the last 500 hundred

years who have been marginalised by brutal force then you cannot talk about like sitting on the same sort of playing ground, being on the same playing grounds, it's just not there, I mean peop- like if you go to a leftist meeting right the people who speak are white people, we don't have a language, we don't have the words, we don't have .. we don't have a voice.

In these accounts participants are strongly advocating the need for ethnic minorities to develop the resources and capacity to politically represent themselves. Both participants are highlighting the reinforcement and reproduction of political exclusion by non-Muslims who dominate Muslim struggles. Being 'spoken for' is seen as perpetuating rather than addressing the absence of minorities from positions of power, giving weight to both Phillips (1998; 2000; 2007) and Young's (1990; 2000) contention that equality of representation and justice requires appreciation of and curtailment of the hegemony of dominant groups. Reflecting this logic participants' arguments in favour of descriptive representation also point to differential experiences of inequality and disadvantage between Muslims and other minorities.

> **Basma**: You engage with the left more within educational spaces, those that are part of it are middle class, quite comfortable you know white young people that are completely disconnected like they're just ... the same as the rest of the people in their universities or college, they're just in different kind of clothing. So for them we're still completely not on the same page, you come from very different ... you know ideas and so it's difficult as well because ... sometimes it's like they talk about aspects of privilege, so class, class, class but actually I'm like, are you aware of your own privilege?

This quote indicates that the exclusion of Muslims is not only attributed to the state but is also seen as being reproduced by other members of the majority population who fail to grasp the exceptional level of Muslim disadvantage. Basma's quote can be read as a claim for recognition of Islamophobia as a form of discrimination against Muslims that cannot be subsumed by the categories of race disadvantage or class inequalities. It also resounds grievances raised by other oppressed groups that left organisations often seek to 'take over progressive groups and to redefine the groups' agendas according to their particular programs' (Smith, 2003:38). This is why among Muslim activists there is a strong impetus to resist attempts to 'hijack' minority causes by those who speak on their behalf.

Haseena: I don't really like the term internationalism because I feel like… I feel like it allows a lot of people to kind of claim other people's struggles or get too involved and kind of take away from .. their self-determination like for example a lot of white middle class… internationalists you know passionate about the cause of Palestine and when Palestinians are free they'll say it was us, it was the BDS it was you know- they won't ever talk about you know the, you know, the woman who's you know who's had to look after her sons who've been in and out of prison you know for throwing stones at - they won't think about people who've been martyred you know for their freedom, freedom of their children and their children but will think 'oh it was our pickets'.

These arguments echo tensions around 'who can best speak for or on behalf of another' raised by feminist and civil rights social movements in the past that fought for recognition of modes of social oppression that class politics fails to address (Phillips, 1995:9). Although Young (2000:1556) supports positive action to enhance minority representation, she rejects 'the logic of identity' in descriptive representation and allows for cases where people with the same life experiences may represent the associated 'perspectives'. However, as the participants in this study reveal this would not suffice, since political resolution of issues is not the sole purpose of representation, there is also at stake the symbolic issue of whose voice is heard and who is credited with political victory. Descriptive representation is sought not simply to bring certain perspectives and interests into play in political negotiation, but to develop the capabilities and resources to act as brokers with commensurate power in these debates. This also relates to arguments supporting descriptive representation which appeal to the importance of role models in breaking symbolic barriers to inclusion. Participants believe the visible presence of Muslims in political institutions would diminish feelings of disenfranchisement and encourage participation.

Romana: It's more representation and things like more sort of make it more accessible to people like myself… but I mean.. I don't think that's gonna happen in politics I mean recently like I don't know if you have a - do you know the Tower Hamlets MP Bushanara Ali, she's like a young Bengali woman like the Tower Hamlets MP …( )…and she got elected like last time, she's young and she's Bengali and like people like that, role models like that, like more people like that involved in politics is really going to help like inspire people like me to get involved.

In this extract Romana is suggesting that mainstream politics would be more appealing to ethnic minorities if they could see those who share their identities in politically influential positions. The aspects of identity that are marked out as important are Bushanara Ali's ethnicity and gender, as well as her age which allows Romana to imagine someone like herself having a place in parliament. The presence of role models has an important symbolic function in empowering minorities to participate in politics by addressing their imagined and anticipated barriers which are as forceful as real obstacles. This reveals the psychological constraints that hamper ethnic minority participation in politics.

> **Amna**: There's so many people in my area that have got University degrees, that are not political, that are not - they don't - I think it's again about a sense of entitlement or a sense of feeling as if they belong in those circles or belong at that position and I don't think that they do.. I think people think 'look you know let's just leave them to it. I can't do anything there' 'cause there's nobody there to empower 'em into that position.

While higher education levels are typically linked to greater political participation (Hay, 2007; Norris, 2011) Amna's quote suggests that for Muslims the psychological barriers are so deep-seated that even enhanced social capital does not mitigate against them. This explains the importance of role models who can populate the imaginaries of Muslims with positive images of political participation by embodying the 'see it to believe it' possibility. However, due to the symbolic importance of descriptive representation it is that much more crucial that the role models own and promote the identities that are currently devalued by the political system.

> **Sara:** I see a lot of politicians whether they're Asian, Muslim and I feel like they've sold their soul like they've been like polished and brushed and everything that they might have stood for, before they were in mainstream politics, they can't express those views because they are a bit controversial or whatever but Salma Yaqoob I feel like she's always stuck to her guns and she's visibly Muslim like she's proud of the fact that she's Muslim and I think that's quite inspirational I think she's definitely .. someone that I would say that yeah I do look up to her.

In this extract Sara draws a revealing contrast between ethnic minority politicians whom she disparages for having 'sold their soul' and a politician that she admires for being 'inspirational'. The distinction is being made on the basis of

the visible and figurative dimension of their politics as well as their 'views'. The inspirational politician is the one who is noticeably Muslim while the ones who are viewed as objectionable are 'polished and brushed' which renders their Muslim identity less visible. Despite being one of the most influential and staunch advocates of descriptive representation Phillips (1998:228) has downplayed its 'role model' function and instead makes a case for the politics of presence by citing the 'appeal to principles of justice', 'particular interests' that might be 'overlooked' and the benefits of a 'revitalized democracy'. However, these discourses reveal that the role model argument also has great traction amongst these participants, for whom seeing Muslims in positions of power is imperative for breaking down barriers to participation.

Sara's quote also raises the important and related concern of co-optation of ethnic minority politicians, whose interests and identities are perceived as being subsumed by dominant political structures as explored further in the next section.

Co-optation and systemic failure

Much of the above critique of mainstream politics coalesces around the identity of politicians, implying that descriptive representation would better serve the needs of marginalised citizens. However, this is only part of the picture as few participants place all the blame on the shoulders of politicians, as the political system itself is seen as flawed.

> **Sara:** As long as we have a political system that doesn't kind of represent- is not representative or doesn't understand mainstream society we're gonna always have kind of disenfranchised and disillusioned and disengaged - I think yeah we're always going to have those people.

Sara is arguing that the failure of politicians to meet the needs of citizens is part of a wider systematic fault which makes political institutions inherently exclusionary and elitist. Here Sara places Muslims within the 'mainstream' that is being failed by politics although elsewhere she viewed Muslims as facing exceptional levels of disenfranchisement. Arguments about systematic failure are premised on the view that politicians are powerless to exercise agency against a monolithic political structure that imposes its own agenda.

Yasir: After 9/11 a lot of people got involved into politics, a lot of Muslims got involved into politics hoping to make that change and they did it through the Peace and Progress Party, they did it by joining the Lib Dems, they did it through the Respect Party they set up new parties, individuals in the Labour Party took a heavy stance, you know you've got Muslim Friends of Labour and all the rest of it but the simple fact is, as time went on they got swallowed up, not all of them but a lot of them got swallowed up, the smaller parties dismantled, had issues, the politicians who had become politicians on the back of things that were happening around 9/11, Muslim politicians, they got swallowed up in the whole party political thing, the stances changed, views changed and as far as public is concerned and as far as young people are concerned they look at that and they think well you know what, I don't really have much faith in the politicians because all those that went on wanting to fight the Muslim corner seem to have given up or they've got other interests.

Yasir is reflecting a common perception among participants of political parties as being authoritarian, demanding submission to centralised rules and policies. This represents a critical stance towards the established norms of representative democracy that demands impartiality from political representatives and expects them to relinquish sectional interests for the common good. Within liberal democracies this has been a 'long-standing feature of political (i.e. governmental) reason' (Hindess, 2012:42) intended to safeguard politics from partisanship and sectarian bias (Phillips, 2000; Dobbernack et al, 2012). This view is taken for granted in the following quote.

Parveen: And it is hard for Muslim MPs to actually you know say something about Muslims cause they don't wanna have that - that link between Muslims and, and themselves and they're trying to further their political career.

Parveen's assumptions are supported by research revealing that Muslim MPs do take pains to distance themselves from Muslim communities to establish their political credentials (Ansari, 2009; O'Toole et al, 2013). Such arguments draw attention to the 'double imperative in party politics' (Phillips, 2000:33) which places representatives of minority groups in a paradox where their selection is often predicated on their ability to represent marginalised citizens but once in parliament they are expected to suspend their particular interests to vote

according to the party line. Such a view is clearly articulated by Yasir who states that many politicians who got into power 'on the back of things that were happening around 9/11' failed to fulfil their mandate to address the issues affecting Muslims as a result of the war on terror. This undermines the principles on which descriptive representation is sought as it fosters a dangerous complacency, where minority presence in parliament is seen as fulfilling the need for representation (Phillips, 2000; Dovi, 2002). For this reason critics argue that 'presence' by itself is not sufficient to address the issue of inequalities in minority representation (Dovi, 2002; Phillips, 2000). Phillips (2000) argues that political party processes must make allowances for minority members to vote in their constituents' interests to deliver real justice. Such concerns are borne out by participants' reservations.

> **Sara**: I know the ones who are openly Muslim, you have (MP) for example who voted for - against an inquiry into the Iraq War and then he I think - I probably stand to be corrected - but I'm sure he approved for CCTV cameras to be implemented in (*Area*) and those kind of things I'm just like where are your interests really, you're supposed to represent .. a certain group of people but your actions state otherwise.

> **Tamara**: The SU full time officers for example I think like you said that's gonna make a huge difference having maybe more BME people there cause they're mostly white now, although there was someone last year, Anil, who was Indian but felt more white than an ethnic minority and that's completely tokenistic like ok, maybe…maybe that'll help motivate someone to wanna run for it and maybe he's gonna, he is gonna motivate ethnic minorities to get more involved which would be amazing or to feel represented but does he actually represent…them I don't think so.

These quotes demonstrate the limitations of descriptive representation to 'revitalize democratic institutions' (Dovi, 2002:735) as presence in political institutions can be 'tokenistic' and against or indifferent to minority 'interests'. For Sara the Muslim MP fails as a Muslim representative because his actions undermine Muslim citizenship. Similarly, Tamara draws attention to the fact that an ethnic minority, in an influential position, who does not act differently from a 'white' candidate, fails to represent minorities in any practical way, although this has motivational value.

To prevent descriptive representation from becoming an empty signifier Dovi (2002) suggests that descriptive representation must be based on some criterion for evaluating who is a preferable candidate for the job and that this should be determined by the candidate's 'strong *mutual* relationships with *dispossessed subgroups'* within the minority group (Dovi, 2002:735, original emphasis). By this Dovi (2002:735) means that the 'representatives and members of historically disadvantaged groups must *mutually* recognize each other'. Clearly the participants in this study fail to demonstrate such mutual recognition as they highlight the failure of Muslim MPs to reflect their perspectives and interests. Dovi's qualification for descriptive representation is particularly sensitive to the issue of 'secondary marginalization' as identified by Cohen (1999 in Dovi, 2002:738) whereby some members of the group subordinate others by regulating and policing the group boundary and membership rules. This references the issue of 'minority within a minority' and the associated problem of denying diversity within groups (Dovi, 2002; Fraser, 2001; Philips, 2007). Such diversity along intersecting lines of division in class, ethnicity, age and gender and the tensions it produces is considered in Chapter 6. That these tensions betray hierarchies of power within the identity-group is reinforced by participants.

> **Amna**: There's definitely this … group of people up there that are all interlinked, they're all patting each other on the back, they all help each other up the ladder and any time they get somebody else that's maybe kind of critical of them or says something that they don't like or they see as a threat, straight away they'll come together and support each other. Most of them are middle class Muslims.. that like come from… that are just not representative of, they're not - they're out of touch, that's my main bug bear with them.

> **Basma**: First (we) need to tackle like the internal stuff the problems that I faced internally have included … certain aspects being overlooked like gender and sexuality and that's problematic …..( ) ….then there's also the gender clashes like let's say members of the ISoc (Islamic Society) the leaders will be male will not consult with me …( )…. they wouldn't sit and have a meeting with me, they'd go - they'd rather go to like a non-Muslim white man than sit and have a meeting with me.

Here participants are describing the ways in which class and gender place certain members of the Muslim identity group within a marginalised space of 'minority within a minority' which limits who might be seen as an authentic representative. For this reason Dovi (2002) insists that descriptive representation can only be effective if subgroups are included in drawing group boundaries. This criticism resonates with participants' alienation from Muslim leaders and organisations that are seen as 'sell outs' for becoming co-opted into mainstream agendas, confirming previous research on kinship or *biraderi* politics which highlights the marginalisation of younger Muslims and women (Akhtar, 2012; DeHanas et al, 2010; Michael, 2004). A recent report on the role of Muslims in British governance by O'Toole et al (2013:6) argues that Muslim leaders can be vindicated on grounds that they do also speak on behalf of the 'common interests' that unite Muslims and therefore reinforce the need to 'focus on the representativeness of claims, not of claims-makers.' However, the discontents and grievances articulated by participants in this study suggest existing arrangements are inadequate to meet the representative needs of women and young Muslims. More descriptive representation is sought that does not simply focus on the nature of the claims but also respects the identity of the claims-makers.

If citizens' 'strength of identification with political institutions' (Open Society Institute, 2010:187) is a measure of political inclusion then clearly these reflections paint a bleak picture. Participants clearly view conventional politics as antagonistic and plagued by issues of co-optation and tokenism. The normative concept of political representation demanded by participants requires descriptive representation to ensure minority principles, values and interests are recognised and given an audible voice in corridors of power. Participants see existing political institutions as a failure and offering a poor means to register political agency or seek social and political change. Viewed in this light disengagement from electoral politics looks like a pragmatic choice rather than signifying a purely reactive form of identity politics as sometimes dismissed by detractors (Dobbernack et al, 2012). However, rejection of conventional politics does not mean participants are automatically pushed into the politics of dissent and protest as the next section examines.

High costs of protest politics

Protests and demonstrations have been on a sharp incline in recent years (Castells, 2012; Della Porta, 2014; Gamson and Sifry, 2013; Maharawal, 2013), transfixing global attention on mass mobilisations erupting around the world. Yet many participants in this study dismiss protest politics as outdated and ineffective, as well as risky and subject to new forms of security and control in Britain. A majority of participants have taken part in activities such as petitions, demonstrations, rallies, occupations and marches but these are not their preferred mode of action. Participants' reservations are based on perceived risks associated with such dissent-based politics, both in exposing participants to criminalisation in the wake of securitisation, as well as exacerbating existing negative stereotypes about Muslims. This significantly increases the costs associated with contentious politics for young Muslims, as formerly predicted by a number of academics (Briggs, 2010; Buck-Morss, 2003; Mythen et al., 2009; O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012).

Amongst many participants who view protests as ineffective repertoires of action, the failure of mass demonstrations against the Iraq War in 2003 to change the political will of politicians has assumed iconic status in symbolising the impotency of such actions.

> **Khalid**: I mean in terms of …the War in Iraq I mean half, more than a million and a bit went out to protest …it didn't change nothing .... I'm sure people lobbied as hard as possible it didn't change anything so…it's a hard process and it needs determination to do it…so if it's not, it's not having an outcome that I can see then I don't think it's worth taking that.

Here Khalid is highlighting the costs associated with activism which is 'hard' and requires 'determination' necessitating strategic allocation of resources to achieve 'an outcome'. As Khalid surmises, participants did not view protests as a productive means to achieving political ends. This is explained as a result of changes in Britain's political culture which has made protesting less feasible due to increased restrictions and regulations. A number of participants cite stifling conditions which restrict marches, rallies and demonstrations to certain locations and times, requiring prior consent from relevant authorities.

> **Shoaib**: You say that there's no limitations regarding protesting here actually there is because when you want to protest in a particular space

there's what you call the free speech zone, basically where it's miles away from any particular government establishment where you are not able to speak upon any particular political matter - you are so far away that literally no political in you know.. individual or.. person worthy of any importance regarding these particular matters can ever hear your message, this is what you call free speech zones so that's quite ironic because we're supposedly in a democracy and you know, freedom of speech and so and so but yet you want to limit our speech so that where you can't hear us.

These arguments substantiate warnings from other studies that the space in which young people can demonstrate and express political agency is becoming very narrow at the current time, due to the security state infringing upon civil liberties in surreptitious ways (Brown and Saeed, 2014; Buck-Morss, 2003; Hyatt, 2012; O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012; Shukra and Ball, 2012; Vertigans, 2010). Participants are also acutely aware of the disproportionate impact that the restrictions on political expression have on Muslims (Brown, 2010; Kundnani, 2007; Hickman et al, 2011).

Sara: For the average Muslim they will probably.. might join in on a protest but they will not actively be involved with like campaigns against cuts and fees against redundancies against the privatisation of – on local facilities and things like that because they….they know - well a lot of - I don't know I'd say some are aware of the the implications of getting involved in politics so, one we're gonna have our fa- we're gonna be on a national kind of database and we're gonna be spied upon and things like that it's just not worth it, two, we'd just rather get on with our degree and get out of here and not get ourselves into trouble and three I think Muslims are just so stigmatised in general that if they do get involved with politics it's …it'll just be kind of counter-productive.

Amna: I don't think that kids these days, especially Muslim kids have the tools or the opportunities to actually… to show what they feel because they've been stifled by Prevent, they've been stifled by all of these stereotypes and things that have been kind of fed into 'em and they get stopped by their parents and that kind of thing as well and there's this atmosphere of fear to get involved in politics and I think that that's something that we need to remove.

These participants are describing the serious and unsettling restraints imposed by the presence of security forces, both real and imagined, on young people's political behaviours. Participants, particularly students, fear being spied upon and ending up on a national database of risky citizens or being labelled a terrorist for attending demonstrations or public meetings. As Amna explains this stifles young people's ability to participate in politics, supporting the findings of a recent study revealing how Muslim students' political choices are severely limited because 'Muslim students in particular have to tread with caution, lest they are accused of being a 'radical'' (Brown and Saeed, 2014:6). Indeed some participants recount the risks of religious societies being targeted or closed down if they dabble in political issues.

> **Basma**: And then when my fellow brothers, like Muslim brothers and sisters are involved like sadly the Islamic Society and mainly they're - their main involvement for various reasons including the fear of being smeared, Islamophobia and being de-recognised and therefore eradicating yet another minor, minor space for BME and Muslim students, they'll just get involved on the fundraising aspect or for the bake sale and even then it's very little.

> **Hanif**: So if like something bad happens to our society (*Palestine Society*) obviously we won't be able to continue so we need to make sure that we can continue first of all, continue raising awareness so that's been the priority over doing something that big.

In these accounts participants explain why Muslim student societies abstain from overt of 'big' political actions on campus for fear of being shut down, refocusing their efforts on innocuous 'bake sale' type of events. This resonates Brown and Saeed's (2014:11) study which found that for Muslim students 'activism is framed as an 'everyday' experience rather than a distinct subset of activities more typical of student protest' because of the risk of being branded too radical and being associated with terrorism.

What is also significant about these discourses is that apart from a handful of participants who have been targeted by security forces, the majority are not relating personal encounters but rather reference the very real prospect of this happening. Securitisation does not pose any immediate threat but has a pervasive and ubiquitous presence in the background of daily life. While this does not dissuade these participants from becoming engaged in civil society, nor

prevent them from expressing dissent, they are very conscious that fear and trepidation deters others from doing so and admit that these concerns play a part in shaping their political choices.

> **Haseena**: You know there are a lot of people on campus who've been really passionate so they've got arrested before and stuff and for protesting or occupying and stuff like, I wouldn't go that far because I, I know that I, I still want to get a decent job and you know raise a family and I don't wanna criminal record so there are certain things even though I know they should definitely- aren't like… aren't actually they shouldn't be illegal, certain things that I wouldn't engage in, certain demonstrations I'd stay away from.

> **Hanif**: Some people they think if they're part of like the even like Islamic Society or Palestinian Society they might be put on a watch list or something and that might jeopardise .. what they can do or even if like on applications if you put that the treasurer of one these support societies that'll look a lot better than if you had the treasurer of the Palestinian Society.

These admissions constitute the strongest evidence of the limits securitisation of citizenship places on the types of actions that are possible in the current political environment, since participants not only fear for their current safety but also apprehend future repercussions. Securitisation is not simply a passing threat it renders insecure the identities of activists in the long term by marking them out permanently as 'suspect' citizens. The pervasiveness of security in this uncertain and surreptitious manner makes it highly likely to have constrained the expression of critical views by participants in this study. This is certainly a plausible suggestion in the light of existing research revealing that experiences and fear of victimisation have led to many Muslims adopting 'strategies of identity management' such as presenting themselves as 'safe' and minimising their 'Muslimness' in public (Mythen et al, 2009:749). Hence, the silence and cautionary stance adopted by participants on the topic of security is a possible sign of self-censorship. At times the awkwardness generated by discussing the subject with a relatively unfamiliar researcher is betrayed by the effort made to normalise and minimise the issue of security.

> **Shoaib**: I mean there is some issues regarding the Student Union, they are quite hesitant regarding obtaining- errr …allowing us to obtain speakers in-which I've noticed is quite unfair due to the fact that yeah usually other

societies of a similar nature, whether they be faith based or otherwise, they're not usually subject to the same protocols of security as the Islamic Society are involved but we always nevertheless get confirmation by security and Student Union but it's just through a more tedious procedure which other societies I don't believe really encounter.

This extract reveals the difficulty of trying to articulate a reasonable description of the exceptional measures being taken against Muslim societies and clubs. While Shoaib refers to the Student Union's policy of vetting ISoc speakers as 'unfair' and 'tedious' he downplays its magnitude by saying Union officers are 'hesitant' in granting permission rather than referring to it as Islamophobic. Although this practice is clearly discriminatory, since it is specified that non-Muslim societies 'of a similar nature' are not 'subject' to it, the injustice is rather passively described as '*just* through a more tedious procedure' suggesting that caution is being exercised in how this information is communicated. Shoaib's subdued response stands in stark contrast to the anger and indignation expressed by other participants who resent such restrictions on their activities. The exercise of caution in relation to security concerns may also explain the absence of any concerted campaigns or initiatives to challenge the exceptional burdens being placed on Muslim citizenship. During 18 months of fieldwork there were only two events where security issues were the focal point, one was a film screening about surveillance of Muslim students at universities and another a meeting to discuss a campaign against the extradition of two British Muslims to the US under terrorism charges. At both events attendees commented on the lack of support from Muslim communities on tackling these issues which is indicative of securitisation resulting in Muslims being compelled to 'validate the self as 'safe' and thus reduce the potential for victimization' (Mythen et al, 2009:749).

While for many participants security constraints place direct limits on action, for others protest politics are seen as unproductive because of the risk of further fuelling negative images and stereotypes about Muslims in the current climate of heightened Islamophobia. Some participants feel that unless a positive message can be conveyed demonstrations do more harm than good to their causes. An example of this during fieldwork was the absence in the UK of any visible or vociferous opposition to the circulation on the internet of a film called 'The Innocence of Muslims' in 2012 which depicted the Prophet Mohammad in a derogatory and degrading manner. While violent riots took place in many Muslim

countries, British Muslims adopted a low-key and appeasing tone in denouncing the film and avoided venting their frustrations in a publicly clamorous manner. Possibly in an effort to distance themselves from the unrest witnessed in various other Muslim countries, many British Muslims organised peaceful demonstrations, such as one event where they handed out roses tagged with statements highlighting the virtues of Islam and the Prophet to members of the public in a busy shopping centre. Although the offensive film fuelled anger at the 'slap in the face for Muslims' one participant explains the need to demonstrate a peaceful Muslim response.

> **Ameer**: Yeah but personally I did not riot against it, I organised a protest against it, a peaceful protest where I spoke - where I spoke to a small crowd you know and I actually calmed them down.

These responses can be read as the emergence of more 'pragmatic Muslims politics' (Modood, 2011:online) but also indicate fears of stoking further Islamophobia by replaying the scenes from the Rushdie riots which resulted in Muslims being widely condemned as enemies of free speech. The fact that the same slur, fanning new levels of Islamophobia, was quick to resurface across Europe after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015 testifies to the need for Muslims to demonstrate inordinate levels of constraint and resilience at the current time. Such an attitude of caution is evident in participants' reflections on the way in which the public perceives Muslim protests.

> **Parveen**: There's no point in burning flags and the burning of city centre, there's no point like.. chanting like all this Arabic *takbeer*s (shouting *Allah hu Akbar*) and all that kind of stuff like, are you getting anything out of it? I mean you're not even creating awareness because you're making people look down on you, like I remember there was one (*demonstration*) Palestinian one in (*City*) a couple- when.. it was on Egypt, I think it was the Egyptian.. when they - happening in Cairo, there was one to….just I think stand in solidarity with them or something and I remember these - this group of guys were just chanting all this stuff in Arabic and the (*City*) security guard was just like..ehhh this is so annoying like what are you doing like… I think if you wanna create awareness there's other ways to do it.

For Parveen protests are counter-productive because clearly the aims to convey a certain message and persuade others to support the cause are

redundant due to the negative perceptions of Muslims in society. This is suggestive of the absence of a receptive and sympathetic audience for Muslim protests and politics. Parveen is projecting the expected public contempt in response to Muslim protestors chanting Arabic slogans in city centres, rather than reflecting her own disapproval. This reflects the importance of 'resonance' for social movement activists who have to work within existing cultural understandings for their political messages to have 'credibility' (Benford and Snow, 2000:619). As Williams (2005:1925) states: 'Movement discourse, ideologies, and actions must be culturally resonant – coherent within some shared cultural repertoire – if they hope to strike bystander publics as legitimate, or neutralize oppositional positions by elites and counter movements.'

This reveals that Muslim participants perceive protests and demonstrations to carry less 'resonance' with 'targets of mobilization' (Benford and Snow, 2000:621) which requires alternative and more creative modes of action that have 'cultural power' (Williams, 2005:1925). Not only are protest politics risky and dangerous in the current conditions of the securitisation (Brown, 2010; O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012; Mythen et al, 2009; Mythen, 2012; Shukra and Ball, 2012) but they are also counterproductive due to the negative perceptions of protestors which diminishes the resonance of their message. These findings reveal the importance of the symbolic dimension of politics where the message and image conveyed by the activists is a central aspect of activism.

The power of people and ideas

As the above discussion implies the symbolic and cultural dimension of politics is significant for participants, evidenced by critiques of mainstream politics for lacking Muslim role models as well as the rejection of more confrontational politics due to their likelihood of inflaming existing negative stereotypes about Muslims. The power invested in the cultural domain of ideas and codes resonates Melucci's (1985:147) understanding that new social movements are primarily concerned with the 'fight for symbolic and cultural stakes, for a different meaning and orientation of social action'. This is supported by participants' reasons for conducting alternative and non-electoral forms of participation.

Laila: I think I view grassroots organisations as an alternative now to party politics because grassroots organisations manage to have.. you know they can manage to deliver change on some level and also they're able to influence people as well so that's why I'm kind of .. I'm not interested by party politics as much.

Salman: This is how it works across the board about making policy and making politics work for you, either one, you make your argument convincing enough to affect the masses, whatever that is, the argument is. Or two, you fund political parties and get lobbying that's the only way, two way street, either you make the country you know care about something enough to make the political class absolutely quake in their boots to change the situation or you donate to parties that make them you know go down certain avenues and take certain positions…. (..) … I've never kind of really spoken to my local councillor or anything like this personally so it's about really just making people aware that they have the civic role to play and that for me to play that role for them to say listen you – it's important that you do this, it's important that you get involved and …..that's definitely where my activism lies.

These participants' qualifications for eschewing mainstream politics are based on the rationale that their political aims can be better achieved through engagement outside the arena of electoral politics. However, these arguments also betray the participants' underlying desire to affect political change through addressing society directly, as revealed in Laila's comment that 'grassroots organisations' have greater influence on public opinion and Salman's admission that his efforts as an activist are oriented towards convincing the public to engage rather than doing politics himself. These political goals that are targeted towards influencing public consciousness are informed by the belief that widespread apathy and political illiteracy among the general citizenry is a causal factor in the failure of politics.

Basma: I think this is the problem with this country is that they're so apathetic it's, it's pathetic, it's so incredible you know like my Mum works in a secondary school and I work with the youth like across the country, they have no idea that A) it's Prime Minister not President, who the hell it is, they still think we're in Tony Blair's period and who's Thatcher and where did she- because the film came out and then finally Thatcher was

understood and then, and then it was with an admiring like … perception of her 'oh the only woman ahh' so all this just *so* .. depoliticised on you know – and then so much so that when things are presented to them, you should hate these people …(..)… so they don't understand they're being racist, sexist, you know homophobic because they've been presented with this as a mainstream point of view and they can't make up their- they can't possibly (AM: think for themselves?) yeah think for themselves in order to, to reach that conclusion to begin with.

In this impassioned statement Basma reveals more than just her frustration towards a politically docile public, she is also suggesting that this passivity is partly to blame for racism, sexism and homophobia because the failure to understand and challenge the political causes of these forms of discrimination contributes to their normalisation. In this extract the attributions are complex because even though the issues of racism, sexism and homophobia are not directly attributed to public apathy, the problem is framed as an issue related to 'apathetic' people who can't 'think for themselves' which is telling of the way in which activists focus on the complicity of other citizens in legitimising inequalities and injustices. While Basma is talking about a wider general population Parveen and Saif are more critical of Muslim communities.

Parveen: I think it's Muslim communities, I think there needs to be a change in mind set on how they look at things, I think they just – they just sit back and do nothing, they don't think it's important to do, you know, to get involved in activism and I think that needs to change, like with the extradition thing they need to realise it can happen to them.. they just don't care, they'd just rather, just you know come home and sit in front of the television, do their own little thing and you know they don't get involved.

Saif: Because you see violence is the easy way, using- smashing someone's face in on the street is the easy way but sitting down and intellectually challenging them is a lot harder, it takes patience, it takes time, it takes knowledge, it's lots and lots of long hours in the library and people don't wanna do it because people are lazy.

Although Parveen had described Islamophobia and foreign policy as motivations for activism, here she blames the failure of Muslim communities to get involved as one of the major obstacles to tackling social injustices. Saif relates Muslim passivity to being 'lazy' since mounting a challenge to the

dominant power structures requires gaining cultural capital which demands commitment and effort. While in these examples the general public is being cited as apathetic and culpable, participants also renounce other activists for wasting time and energy on counter-productive tactics.

> **Haseena**: What we need to do is spontaneously mobilise, many people, so many that you know we can't be controlled and that's you know, that's the only way we can make an impact, not by like you know - NUS demonstration - what the route was very … that out of the way and it wasn't, it wasn't anywhere near parliament so it's just things like that, that if you're going to ask you know.. you know your MP whether or not you can demonstrate and they give you a poxy route you don't, you shouldn't settle for that even just makes us look even weaker and I think .. I think it's better not to demonstrate than have a really small turnout but then I think some demonstrations are you know for the sake of solidarity.

> **Khalid**: Protests I think the…for me the reason that it's there is to empower the people around you… it – I don't think in any way does it affect …politicians also writing to your MPs I don't think it does affect politicians.

These participants raise similar points about the inefficacy of demonstrations, citing the lack of spontaneity as a basis for failure but justifying their participation in terms of expressing solidarity and empowerment of fellow activists. This suggests that protests and demonstrations have a symbolic role in generating solidarity between activists rather than addressing political power structures that were typically the target of such actions in the past. Protest politics is seen as being ineffective due to repressive social conditions as well as non-responsive politicians but criticisms are aimed primarily at other activists who are complicit in this state of affairs through the absence of resistance. This is intimated by the derogatory way in which those who participate in the action are described as settling for a 'poxy route'. The underlying rationale in these discourses is that changing the mindset of other activists and the public can have a transformative effect in society.

> **Ameer**: I believe people should be doing more because their future is at stake, their children's future at stake and some people's grandchildren's future at stake I mean I don't mean to sound like extreme or anything or rude but I believe people should be more willing to do things that will

actually pressure the government you know or possibly bring down the government, like what they did in the Arab world.

Dania: I think change probably that's gonna come, it's not going to come top-down it's gonna come bottom-up like the people probably will create a mass movement and that's the only way we'll recreate equal changes about for everybody.

These views resonate the concerns of a major body of literature discussed in Chapter 3 charting the withdrawal of citizens from politics (Hay, 2007; Kivisto and Faist, 2007; Leftwich, 2008; Putnam, 2000) in what is commonly referred to as the 'democratic deficit' (Norris, 2002; 2011). Embodying new forms of citizen politics that challenge alarmist views of a democratic deficit in politics (Dalton, 2008; Marsh et al, 2007; Norris, 2002, 2003; Nash, 2010) these participants also reveal that public apathy hampers subpolitical forms of activism as much as it imperils democracy.

The power of public opinion and consciousness is also a significant factor in comprehending the dynamics of the securitisation of citizenship. The restraining impact of security, despite the relative absence of more direct experiences of its consequences by participants, is central to understanding why politics is targeted at raising social awareness rather than challenging the state directly.

Kasim: And this again goes back to the... people are too much paranoid and being paranoid the powers are successful, the more we keep our head down the more they will be successful.

Amna: My Mum's quite worried, she's - every time I order a book online like it comes through the post she'll read it, you know if it's a political book, talk about politics, even when I'm watching the news you know or go to a demo, when I went to Palestine, the first thing she says is 'look anti-terror are gonna come and knock through the door' and I think that's why they've won because that's the ultimate aim was to kind of shut people up and scare 'em into not getting involved in this kind of thing and they've won because every single parent that I know has those kind of worries towards their children.

These discourses suggest that activists view the main battlefield in their struggles to be located in the domain of the hearts and minds of other citizens. In

these discourses paranoia and fear acts as a subjugating and repressive force that quells dissent and political agency, evident in the reference to keeping heads down (Kasim) and shutting people up (Amna). While the effects of power are wielded on the body, through preventing people from speaking about certain political topics and avoiding certain spaces, the nature of the force being described is not concrete or material but rather points to symbolic and cognitive dimensions.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the attitudes of young adult Muslim activists towards mainstream politics to understand how they perceive the relationship between citizens and the state. A majority of participants have a 'dismissive' approach to electoral politics which is viewed pejoratively due to deep-seated discontent and distrust of politicians as well as the perception that the institutions of power co-opt and stifle alternative perspectives and interests. The issue of representation looms large in participants' rationale for disengagement from politics, as politicians are seen as being incapable and unwilling to bring minority perspectives and interests into mainstream political debates and decision-making. Reflections on politics suggests participants seek the kind of descriptive representation that has been argued for by feminist and multicultural theorists (Modood, 2007; Phillips, 2007; Young, 1990; 2000) bringing the cultural and identity politics of young Muslims in closer proximity to other movements for social inclusion and justice. As Taylor and Van Dyke (2007: 4536) have asserted it is characteristic of social movement activists to pursue unconventional and alternative modes of action due to 'lack of access to political institutions and other conventional means of influence or because they feel that their voices are not being heard'.

It is also significant that young Muslims not only eschew mainstream political channels but are almost equally dismissive of more contentious and dissent-based forms of activism. This is partly due to fears of criminalisation and Islamophobia which make the costs of expressing dissent much higher at the current time for young Muslims, but it is also related to participants' understanding that apathy, political passivity and illiteracy among other citizens is a major contributory factor in the failure of politics. Based on these limitations

within contemporary political opportunity structures to express political agency, cultural politics can be seen as a more viable political strategy to challenge the dominant codes and norms of society. The political struggles in which participants are engaged are concerned with the 'power to name, construct meaning and exert control over the flow of information' which is 'one of today's central structural divisions' (Stevenson, 2003:4). Public apathy is linked to lack of accountability of corrupt politicians and political structures that are failing citizens, as well as the power of the state to dominate and control both physical and mental aspects of citizen's lives. It is fear and paranoia that paralyses and produces 'docility' and 'submission' in subjects (Foucault,1995:25) which directs activists to seek political tactics to counter their effects. This provides a strong drive to engage in cultural politics oriented towards changing the dominant codes in society by persuading passive citizens to engage with politics. The next chapter discusses the main concerns of the cultural politics of young adult Muslims by exploring their reflections on the concept of citizenship.

Chapter 8: Redefining inclusion in active citizenship

Introduction

This chapter seeks to shed more light on the demands of Muslim cultural politics and explore the scope for active citizenship within such forms of political and civic participation. This follows from the previous chapter's revelations on alienation from mainstream politics and concerns about securitisation of citizenship which foregrounds cultural politics as a strategic and salient mode of activism for Muslim activists. The present chapter elucidates the participants' normative vision of society and their terms for inclusion within it, by focusing on the concept of citizenship which has traditionally been a key site of symbolic contestation within social movements (Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Nash, 2010; Stevenson, 2001, 2003; Young, 1990, 2000). Analysis of participants' discourses uncovers efforts to redefine citizenship in universal, post-national and inclusive terms through a set of demands whose logic 'mirrors those of other equality seeking groups' (Modood, 2010:39).

While a number of previous studies have attempted to understand how Muslim citizens relate to 'British' citizenship, in this research the approach deviated by posing the question from a more generic perspective. This strategy of delinking citizenship from Britishness was adopted from an interest in discovering how activists understand political concepts that carry a weight of analytical and theoretical baggage but it was also conscious of the potentially distorting and highly politicised connotation of 'Britishness' for Muslims in a post 9/11 context. Focusing on 'citizenship' rather than Britishness offered participants more space to express their understandings of the concept without being weighed down by expectations to prove affinity to Britain (Mythen, 2012; McGhee, 2008; Parekh, 2008). This approach did not preclude some participants assuming the question was about Britishness but it did facilitate the expression of a range of responses which disturb the nationalist framework of citizenship and convey civic consciousness in defiance of dominant discourses about the unwillingness of Muslims to fit into Britain.

Participants' conceptions of citizenship discursively resist the hegemony of dominant models of citizenship, particularly the resurgence of nationalism and neoliberal notions promoted by the state in recent decades. Two distinct forms of civic consciousness or models of activism present themselves, one marked by overt and explicit resistance and the other reflecting greater compliance through implicit resistance to hegemonic conceptions of citizenship. The apparent tension between both approaches is resolved by highlighting the agency and choice that participants demonstrate through active citizenship. To qualify the meaning of 'hegemonic' concepts I borrow Nash's (2010:33) reference to the term which signifies 'taken-for-granted as if they simply reflect how things are and must be.'

The chapter is organised in four sections beginning with an exploration of the sense of alienation and marginalisation that underscores negative associations with Britishness. These pejorative ideas of citizenship and belonging are structured by post 9/11 policies and discourses that have framed Muslims as disloyal, suspect and risky citizens (Brown, 2010, Hickman et al, 2011; McGhee, 2008; Mythen et al, 2009; Pentazis and Pemberton, 2009) and dominate explicitly resistant forms of activism. In the next section sensitivity to context in participants' reflections reveals that while Britishness poses serious challenges to Muslim identities, the generic concept of 'citizenship' evokes a sense of civic duty and commitment to social, civic and political participation based on religious and humanitarian ethics which conceptually and existentially subvert the ideals of both neoliberalism and nationalism. In the next section participants' varying responses to Prevent, a counter-terrorism strategy targeted at Muslim 'hearts and minds', are explored to underscore the different models of active citizenship, contrasted as 'explicit resistance' and 'implicit resistance'. It is argued that these are different political strategies of resistance rather than oppositional modes of action. Finally it is revealed how activism is conducted through empowerment strategies which demonstrate how these cultural politics constitute active citizenship in a post-national framework of belonging and political subjectivity.

Counter-hegemony and explicit resistance

This section reveals counter-hegemonic discourses, distinguishable by explicit resistance that is more common among participants who are currently based in Universities. Given prevailing literature on Muslim alienation and

disengagement from 'Britishness' (Ameli, 2002, 2004; Ansari, 2009; Choudhury, 2007; Joppke, 2009) and the constrained relationship with the state, demonstrated in the previous chapter, it is hardly surprising to find that nationalist formulations of citizenship are highly problematic for some participants. Dominant and hegemonic notions of citizenship are challenged on normative grounds by reflecting on contemporary experiences and realities that defy given meanings and reimagining citizenship along fluid temporal and spatial dimensions.

> **Kasim**: Their starting point is basically these are standard values which we have to abide by, these are certain political structures so for example the conception of nation is basically if you create a state boundary you - a lot of men killing, ready to kill themselves or kill other men then it becomes a nation state ...whereas for Muslims *ummah* is a different thing, similarly for a lot of Africans, Ashanti tribe… the tribe, the nation extends to wherever even a single person is, so if a person is living in (*City*) or living in north pole they would say this is their nation.

> **Shoaib**: So regarding citizenship it literally means nothing to me. Me being British has literally no ….. it has no effect on me, yes it has an effect on me in terms of the language I speak and the way in which I dress and the way maybe in which I conduct myself 'cause certain public etiquettes and norms and values and traditions that exist within the British culture and therefore you have to conform to but.. really if I live in another country all these things would probably just go immediately so that's a temporary thing.

These participants are contesting the dominant idea of citizenship by stripping it of primordial essence and affective investments produced by enduring historical and traditional ties (Chernilo, 2006; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1998). This formulation not only questions the established idea that citizenship should be aligned with a national identity and engender emotional attachment, but also the form of the contestation suggests that such a notion is seen to be the norm in society, evidenced by the way in which the arguments are framed in response to this unspoken and taken for granted understanding. As Kasim argues this notion is so pervasive and sanctified by convention that it has the power to compel men to 'kill themselves' reflecting what Yuval-Davis (2006:208) refers to as one of the 'ultimate' and 'gendered' duties of citizenship that is 'the readiness to sacrifice one's life – and to kill others'. For these participants such associations are redundant in the context of contemporary lived experience, as well as alternative

ideologies of nationhood found in non-Western cultures. Kasim directly challenges a 'model of national citizenship, anchored in territorialized notions of cultural belonging' (Soysal, 2012b:385) by contrasting it to forms of nationhood which are defined by personhood and common identity instead of borders. Shoaib's challenge to the permanence and deep emotional resonance of nationalism implies tacit knowledge of a dominant narrative in which Muslim dissonance with Britishness is seen as a sign of disloyalty. Shoaib frames his disagreement in response to such an argument by stating that it is incongruous in a globalised world where increased mobility makes ties to any particular territory a passing arrangement. These contestations respond to a persistent and recriminatory discourse about the failure of Muslims to place their national identity above other forms of identification such as ethnicity and faith (McGhee, 2008; Parekh, 2008). One way of challenging the statist discourse but maintaining the affective dimension of 'citizenship' is to position it as a universal obligation making 'humanity' or 'community' rather than 'nationality' as the significant frame of reference in defining the concept.

> **Dania**: I think to me citizenship is a very kind of a wide and vast thing, like I don't strictly see myself as a citizen of this country or as a citizen in as far as ….my rights and responsibilities I don't - it's not honed only to the UK or to Britain and it's not to Palestine either like I'm kind of … I see myself as having a social responsibility for the whole of the world, like a global citizen.

> **Chohan**: You know getting this international community going like that's the whole thing that you hear about when you're in Palestinian Society or part of any solidarity society, is that you hear about the international community who all come together because they all feel the same - same feelings and they all have these same ideas and beliefs.

Both participants are redrawing the boundaries of citizenship to bring 'multiple actors, groups and communities' (Sassen, 2002:277) into the fold which loosens national claims on personal identification. The concept of community is a contested one, which can refer to either a common geographical space or shared identity features and ideals (Lister, 2010). The way in which community is referred to by participants in this study invokes both these senses of the term, intimating a more universal form of belonging that appeals to the concept of global rather than national citizenship. This echoes a growing tendency to problematise the nation-state template of citizenship by those who posit the

increasing relevance of transnationalism (Kivisto and Faist, 2007; Samad and Sen, 2007) post-nationalism (Sassen, 2002; Soysal, 2012), cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2005; Stevenson, 2003), 'globally oriented citizenship' (Parekh, 2008:248) and 'citizens without frontiers' (Isin, 2012). As Back et al (2009:4) have reported in previous research the 'plural political imaginaries' of contemporary activists, particularly those based on religious faith, 'do not square easily with appeals to participate in the unitary world of the nation state.' However, this universal view of citizenship is not based on a zero sum game where a post-national sensibility negates the significance of national obligations. Rather, it is a more inclusive notion of citizenship that dissolves boundaries and disperses obligations to different levels of belonging including local, national as well as global, demarcated by affinities to people and ideas rather than territories.

> **Yasir**: For me being a citizen is…it's not a nationalistic thing, it's not a political thing, I don't care about nationalism and politics and patriotism, that stuff doesn't really interest me at all and I think people who get hooked on to that misunderstand citizenship, I think being a citizen is like what I said earlier about paying your rent on this earth, it's just the core things and for me it's not about being in this country, it's about being anywhere, the core things are looking after where you live, the environment, looking after the earth and therefore if you live in Britain also looking after the country, looking after the people around you and creating understanding and tolerance and if that all leads to peace, that is citizenship.

Yasir's interpretation is a counter-discourse to the dominant view of citizenship which emerged traditionally through a grand narrative of the 'potency of the sovereign nation-state in control of its borders' (Isin, 2012: 863). Such challenges have been a core function of social movements that have 'significantly blurred the conventional dichotomy between national citizens and aliens' (Soysal, 2012b:385), sometimes giving way to human rights as the basis for equality and inclusion. Such universal obligations resonate in the accounts of citizenship offered by participants in this study, as Yasir's quote illustrates by citing a universal human obligation to pay 'rent on earth'.

Rather than being hostile to Britishness per se the accounts examined thus far reflect the kind of affective disinterest conveyed by young adults in Fenton's (2007:335) research in Bristol, which found 'a significant element of indifference or disregard for national identity'. While the results from this single study should

not be generalised to the wider population it is a significant reminder that lack of regard for national identity is not unique among Muslims, a consideration that is often overlooked in framing them as exceptionally disloyal citizens for prioritising their faith over Britain (Parekh, 2008). However, indifference or disregard represents only one aspect of the diverse perspectives on British citizenship. More profound objections to Britishness could be found among participants who viewed hegemonic constructions of citizenship as politically harmful to Muslim interests.

> **Haseena**: I just feel like I'm not a British citizen cause I know what that stands for, I know what that symbolises, that's you know all the bad things about capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy so I don't want anything to do with that.

> **Amna**: You know there's no clear cut idea of what being British is about. Is it about going down to the chipee and pub every night or is it about the history, well we can't share the history because the history has always been negative towards people that I identify with, my ancestors, so I'm not going to sit here and say 'yeah I'm British' because effectively what you're doing is you're taking on the entire British system so you know identity, the history, the current culture, the current foreign policy all of this, no I wouldn't no. I'm not comfortable with that.

These accounts highlight the problematic nature of Britishness for some participants, particularly its symbolic articulations, which are equated with policies and ideologies that are in tension with the activists' beliefs and identities. For Haseena British citizenship is so integrally tied up with the ideologies that she is actively opposing, like capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy, that it is impossible for her to reconcile her politics and activism with ownership of national citizenship. For Amna the entire British system, including its history, culture and foreign policy is antagonistic to Muslim identities. Such misgivings about Britishness bear out a number of previous studies on the elevated levels of alienation from Britain experienced by young Muslims (Ameli, 2002, 2004; Ansari, 2009; Choudhury, 2007; Joppke, 2009). However, it is significant that underlying these arguments there is an assumed correspondence between British citizenship and the state, since being British is equated with a compulsion to support foreign, economic and domestic policies, rather than representing feelings of a common bond with other fellow nationals. This suggests rejection of

the current conditions imposed on British citizenship rather than alienation from a nation of citizens. The associations being made between citizenship and government policy in these statements bear out a number of academic warnings that recent anti-terror laws and foreign policy are likely to further fuel existing feelings of estrangement and marginalisation among young Muslims (Briggs, 2010; Brighton, 2007; Brown, 2010; Kundnani, 2009; Spalek and Lambert, 2008). However, even where citizenship is framed in terms of relationships with other citizens, many participants struggle to reconcile endemic racism with a demand to avow Britishness.

> **Amna**: When you see your mother walking down the road getting spat at or you know got called a Paki by little kids because that's the culture that they have where they treat us as different, as outsiders, stuck us into our little areas… then how can you identify with that, how can you say that I'm British, it would be a bit of a … a cop out to be honest. I'd feel untrue to myself if I did that.

> **Romana**: I'm not really a citizen of like anything like I don't feel included in this country you know, do you know what I mean like…. you're always like, I mean especially as a Muslim like you're just like, people don't, you know like, they don't want you here, you take, like, you take their jobs like, you sort of… you like murder their parents or whatever.

These discourses are symptomatic of the impact of counter-terrorism and community cohesion policies through which Britishness has come to signify an ultimatum for Muslims to prove their loyalty to Britain (Alexander, 2007; Brown, 2010). They also stress its incongruence as a positive source of identity in the face of persistent exclusions produced by experiences of racism and Islamophobia. While above citizenship is framed in more abstract and universal terms here the focus is on the everyday life which is where Skey (2013:87) argues the nation is produced as an objective reality for citizens who 'tie their own uncertain futures to a more stable and powerful social group.' Clearly for these participants the challenges of citizenship are not just accounted for by top-down institutions of power but are located in the quotidian experiences of being marginalised and excluded from the 'powerful social group'. This reflects the notion of 'national cultural capital' conceptualised by Hage (1998 in Skey 2013:89) which creates a hierarchy of belonging where some are seen as more deserving of inclusion than others on the basis of 'nationally sanctioned and

valued social and physical cultural styles and dispositions'. This capital points to cultural rather than material dimensions of exclusion (Skey, 2013:91) engendered by being 'positioned (by a more dominant group) as an 'outsider'. As citizenship involves an act of 'imagination' (Anderson, 1983; Stevenson, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2006) these feelings of exclusion have a negative bearing on participants' ability to identify with the nation.

These views on citizenship are marked by the sense of contingency and precariousness highlighted in previous studies where membership and belonging is undermined by perceptions of stigma and persecution (Brown, 2010; Mythen et al, 2009; O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012; O'Toole and Gale, 2013). As evident in these accounts, feelings of alienation from Britishness are often explained as a result of political grievances linked to discrimination and exclusion from British society despite the participants' best efforts to fit in.

> **Mona**: I mean you try to be … you try to be a good sort of citizen like you tried your best but then again you're still discriminated against like what are the rules and regulations, like what is a step too far for being an active citizen.

> **Rabia**: …like because we have to make so much more of an effort and that's what makes it worse cause even when you get to that point when you're making more of an effort you're still getting branded as a terrorist.

These discourses indicate that the unfair and discriminatory attitudes of both the state and the general public limit the ability of Muslims to identify with the nation, suggesting a reaction to 'Britishness unfulfilled' (Alexander, 2007:2502) rather than outright rejection. The desire and will to be included is signaled by participants' description of attempts to be good citizens (Mona) and making an extra effort (Rabia). Within the reflections on citizenship described thus far there is an orientation towards global and post-national sensibilities but the concept is also embedded in the everyday and the local, reflecting Isin's (2012:5018) notion of 'traversal citizenship' that seeks to cross borders but is constrained in action and concrete expression within national parameters.

The above discussion conveys that participants' alienation from British citizenship is influenced by the current conditions placed on citizenship, particularly its disproportionate impact on Muslims. These pejorative commentaries on Britishness also reflect forms of activism or active citizenship

marked by 'explicit resistance' characterized by vehement contestation of hegemonic notions of citizenship, reflecting Hands (2011:5) notion of 'rebellion' discussed in Chapter 3, which includes both dissent and resistance but is clearly marked by the 'necessity of action'. These explicitly resistant discourses stand in contrast to other ways of describing citizenship which are more compliant with hegemonic notions, as explored in the next section.

Hegemony and implicit resistance

While 'explicit resistance' represents a significant facet of discourses on citizenship this does not completely foreclose positive evaluations of aspects of national association even among those who hold critical and alienated views on Britishness. In some cases participants express views that verge on affirmation of hegemonic discourses in relation to Muslims, while the individualism and responsible self-reliance promoted by neoliberal citizenship (Brown, 2005; Marinetto, 2003; Soysal, 2012a) also resonates in some interviews. These discourses are largely associated with participants whose activism is interpreted as being more compliant or acquiescent, described here as 'implicit resistance'. This form of active citizenship is conducted through non-confrontational forms of engagement in community work or cultural education in religious organisations or societies. Even in such circles the affirmation of Britishness is circumspect.

> **Arya**: My identity itself is a British Muslim, I'm not British, I'm not just a Muslim, I'm not just Yemeni, I'm a British Muslim that's how I think of it… because I feel like that in itself is a culture.

> **Maz**: I obviously I'm British Asian ... just purely cause it just ...it's the right term I feel cause obviously I was born in Britain and I'm Asian at the same time.

An important aspect of these expressions is that they are appended with other markers of selfhood to signify a hybridised British identity, suggesting the importance of multiple rather than singular identities as discussed in Chapter 6. For Arya being a 'British' Muslim is an important qualification of her identity since she is able to distinguish this from other ways of being a Muslim, particularly to being one in Muslim countries like Yemen. The ownership of Britishness reflects her role as an activist involved in a University based Islamic Society and

community based youth projects to promote a better understanding of Islam and to normalise religious identities in the public sphere. On the other hand Maz's reference to his 'Asian' identity reflects the relatively inconsequential role of Islam in his life, particularly to his role as an elected Student Union officer. The primary importance of Britishness in both these accounts is not only evident but taken for granted. Despite being critical of the state and its foreign policy other participants are able to acknowledge the freedoms and opportunities that citizenship grants, particularly in contrast to the countries from where their parents originate.

> **Laila**: I felt at that point I was extremely privileged to have what I had and … I knew that if my grand - at that point I realised my grandparents hadn't moved to the UK, like they did after partition, I wouldn't have the life that I have now you know.

> **Sameera**: Well actually no matter what struggles I am going through or no matter how hard I might perceive it to be, the fact of the matter is that I was born in the UK and not Pakistan you know there's more rights that I have here than I would do in Pakistan... you know this country isn't by no means perfect but I have more of a voice here, my rights are more respected in the UK than they would be in many other parts of the world actually, so it was that realisation that I actually thought well.... it's almost whether I want to or not it's almost an obligation because of who I am and where I am that I do need to make a stand because there's other peop - counterparts in the world that just can't because ...their lives are on the line you know.

These discourses reveal some of the aspects of British citizenship valued by participants, including the freedom to practice their faith and free speech. Here British citizenship as a legal status and entitlement to freedoms and rights is seen as being a privilege that is valued but also, as Sameera reveals, this is sought for others beyond British borders to whom participants feel a duty of citizenship. This reveals not only appreciation of British traditions of freedom and equality but a confidence to make political claims on the basis of entitlement.

It is also significant that discourses on citizenship, rather than Britishness, tell a different story to the one emphasising alienation in the last section. What emerges from the redirection of attention to a generic notion of citizenship is the appreciation of Muslim civic consciousness and public spiritedness that compels participants to actively and visibly engage in British civil society. It is also important to consider that many participants had not previously given the

question of citizenship a great deal of thought or attention. This suggests these discourses constitute unrehearsed and instinctive narratives, with a greater likelihood of reflecting given and commonplace understandings or in Foucauldian (1995:183) terms the 'normalizing judgement'. Although these themes are picked up again in the next chapter where Foucault's theory of governmentality is applied to these discourses, the task at hand is to contrast these to the previously discussed explicitly resistant forms of citizenship. The following examples reveal how some participants' views converge with neoliberal notions of citizenship underpinned by 'responsible self-help' (Marinetto, 2003:109) as discussed in Chapter 2.

> **Abid**: For me citizenship is about taking that more active role in your area because ultimately what we all want is actually is a safer area for our own kids to live in and our family to be in …[ ].... I'm very all for improving your own local area of where you live cause I do believe you know no one else is going to come from outside.

> **Irum**: Citizenship for me means that … you live your life, you go to work…you're content but where you're not content you have the ability and the capacity to address it so you know for example the bare minimum would be to go to vote.

These normative accounts reveal congruence with the dominant discourses of 'active citizenship' that have emerged in the last few decades where the balance has shifted from the rights and entitlements of citizenship in favour of the obligations and responsibilities of individuals (Brown, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2005; Marinetto, 2003; Soysal, 2012a). Here participants' views coincide with neoliberal ideals to promote the role of individuals in taking responsibility for social order, as citizenship is constituted by the abilities and efforts of citizens who are 'active' and 'content'. These accounts suggest that the dominant discourses on 'active citizenship', which seek to produce particular subjectivities and embodiments of citizenship have become so internalised by citizens that their roots in state mechanisms of power have become obscured. This is particularly evident where participants convey undertones of internalised blame and guilt, bearing traces of dominant policy and public discourses which blame Muslims for failing to integrate into Britain.

> **Tamara**: It's a lot easier to be you know Muslim in this country than it is to be a Christian back in another country and even though we kick and

scream and like let us build more mosques and you guys aren't understanding enough it's like you need to remember that this is a Christian country and that shouldn't be changed.

Beena: I think they have so much to be grateful for in this country, imagine if the white people were in Pakistan and if they had done half the things that Muslims are doing in this country, you know, how tolerating would Pakistan be of that.

Here both participants are stating the limits of what British citizenship can accommodate by suggesting that Muslims expect too much from the nation, a view that is sometimes expressed by liberals and those on the right who consider the demands of Muslim identity politics to stretch the limits of a secular state too far (Meer, 2010; Modood, 2010c; Parekh, 2008). These responses may be read as submission to extraordinary pressure on Muslims to conform to a nationalist model of citizenship but on the other hand it may also be significant that both these participants feel more integrated into British society than many other participants. Tamara reports that she has never personally experienced racism and exclusion from mainstream society and Beena feels the obstacles she has experienced in her life have come from conservative Muslim family and community members. While these views represent a minority perspective in this research they are important in highlighting the absence of unanimity when it comes to views on Britishness.

While some aspects of these participants' talk may be accounted for as the internalisation of dominant discourses, this does not imply co-optation or lack of agency since these accounts also signify critical and resistant stances towards the values and priorities of neoliberal citizenship and nationalist pressures. This is evident in the radically divergent motivations that underpin the participants' normative ideas of citizenship.

Salman: I think citizenship is about ownership I think..it's about …making…a society that you live in and are involved in …a part of your own … I guess an extension of your own existence because… society, the building block of society …you know is the individual or the you know the family unit and if you want a better society then obviously you have to kind of rectify yourself first and make sure that that's taken forward. Citizenship I think is about…..wishing for others what you'd wish for yourself ….it

doesn't necessarily mean Britishness or anything like or whatever that means (*laughs*) I mean these are vague terms.

In this articulation of citizenship Salman places the emphasis on the individual who has become a recognisable emblem of neoliberal ideology (van Houdt et al, 2011) as well as foregrounding it's most central precept of 'responsibility' by equating a 'better society' with the ability of the citizen to 'rectify' themselves. However, he then dislocates this concept of citizenship from the national body of 'Britishness' suggesting a different value system is being invoked in his understanding. A closer examination of such normative ideas and logics brings into view a departure from hegemonic discourses. Participants' underlying motivations for being civically engaged draw from an entirely different moral register compared to neoliberal or nationalist imperatives of citizenship. Respondents talk about the responsibilities associated with being a good citizen as emanating from a value system that subverts the neoliberal market rationality and resurgent nationalism promoted by politicians in recent years by prioritising alternative values of faith, humanity and universality.

> **Salman**: For me it's like I said it's ultimately I would I do what I do because I seek the pleasure of God first and foremost and I know that you know Islam places more of an honour on someone who goes out of his way to help his brother than someone who you know, or helps society, than someone who prays five times a day.

> **Zahir**: Sincerity is something which is very fundamental - is very basic, fundamental belief of Muslims. You do things not for anybody else you're doing it to please your Lord and God… so in a sense of citizenship, it should be why you do things, how sincere are you in what you do, it could be helping an old woman off the bus or helping somebody with shopping bags, whatever it is you're doing it not for the sake of anybody, you're doing it to please, if you're spiritual your Lord and if not, if you do not believe in God you're doing it because it's the right thing to do.

These accounts reference a different set of ideals and aspirations which depart substantially from the ways in which politicians pursuing neoliberal governance link good citizenship to gaining economic and social capital (Brown, 2010; Soysal, 2012a; van Houdt et al, 2011) or promote stronger notions of British national identity (McGhee, 2008). These discourses also reflect forms of resistance to dominant power structures that can be better understood through

feminist scholarship where a focus on the agency of women, another marginalised social group, has highlighted defiance through 'subverting the hegemonic meanings of cultural practices and redeploying them for their "own interests and agendas"' (Mahmood, 2005:6). Mahmood (2005:6) refers to this as a 'recoding that stands as the site of women's agency'. In this way these repertoires of action based on spirituality, faith and humanitarian concerns reflect a very different vision of society from the one promoted by neoliberal self-serving rationalities of consumerism as well as the obligations of nationhood. These discourses represent the particular moral imperatives of followers of Islam which 'implicates a qualitatively different set of concerns from those implicated in the language of 'interests'' (Euben, 1995 in Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins, 2004:341). Reflecting Euben's (1995 in Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins, 2004) observation that for Muslims the relevant unit of social analysis is not the individual but the community, these participants reveal a strong commitment to serving the common good rather than promoting their own personal gains, a theme that is related to the dominance of post-material values in activism discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. It is worth emphasising that while service to the community is of prime importance this does not mean that participants unreflexively submit to community pressures and demands since the social norms and priorities of these participants are framed through personal and individualized political subjectivities. The spiritual, religious and universal concerns expressed by these participants reflect Soysal's (2012b:388) contention that contemporary forms of contestation over citizenship and belonging mark 'a deviation from the earlier forms of claims-making' which 'were attempts to redefine individuals as part of the national collectivity'. In contrast she argues that 'the emerging forms of collective participation and claims-making in Europe are less and less nationally defined citizenship projects. Individuals and collective groups set their agenda for realization of rights through particularistic identities that are embedded in, and driven by, universalistic discourses of human rights' (Soysal, 2012b:388).

Despite these qualifications these discourses of citizenship can also be read as internalisation of 'what appear to be "instruments of their own oppression"', to deploy an expression used by some feminist critics to describe Muslim women who voluntarily subject themselves to 'the hegemonic male cultural norms' (Mahmood, 2005:8). Although such a view is contested in the following discussion, these modes of activism do reflect a more compliant model of civil society activism where the modes of resistance are implicit, non-

confrontational and based on value divergence rather than direct conflict with the state. This is explored in more detail in the following section where the nuances of different modes of mobilisation are explored.

Securitisation, agency and resistance

The discourses on citizenship discussed above cannot be understood in isolation from the context of the 'securitisation of Muslim subjects' (Mavelli, 2013:159) in a post 9/11 political climate. The restraining impact of security on activism is covered in the last chapter where it is revealed that fears of surveillance and criminalisation are likely to place limits on the way in which participants mobilise and the issues that they act on. Securitised citizenship necessitates a more careful reading of participants' discourses on citizenship since this concept is reflective of the relationship between participants and the state (Yuval-Davis, 2006). To offer a concrete example of the complexity of this relationship this section elucidates different responses to securitisation which vary by the types of activism participants' engage in. The policy of Prevent is a good measure of how much the issue of security divides opinion, making it harder to categorise participants' views on citizenship and belonging in any simple and categorical way as either integrated or alienated or hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. Some participants vehemently oppose initiatives like Prevent which they see as a policy to quash dissent.

> **Sara**: Like the MI5 kind of Prevent kind of spying database I think that if we if … I think fear is kind of ….it's used to kind of suppress … like the public and stuff so if you have people who are completely scared of doing anything then you know that you can do anything and no one will speak up.

> **Saif**: Prevent is the manipulative programme that exists - the manipulation is given a very catchall term called 'hearts and minds' but what is hearts and minds? In order to win someone's hearts and minds over you have to alter the basis of their ability to use reason, so don't look at this piece of information look at this piece of information and that piece of information.

In these quotes both participants are expressing a common unease among more explicitly resistant activists that the main motivation of Prevent is to depoliticise and silence Muslims. These anxieties reverberate Salma Yaqoob's

warning (2008 in Kundnani, 2009:40) that: 'The danger of this approach is that it serves to squeeze the democratic space for dissent within the Muslim community.' However, this view is not unequivocal and some participants approach Prevent more ambiguously, with a few even welcoming the injection of much-needed resources into Muslim communities.

> **Parveen**: I don't really see a problem because my opinion was at that time…. just before 7/7 Muslim communities weren't receiving any money…. at all, so then came Prevent and councils had all this money and they didn't know what to do with it so if – if council's going to offer you money to do a project that's gonna benefit Muslim youth then… why not take it?

Although views and experiences are mixed even those who do work with Prevent are aware of its controversial status.

> **Sameera**: Yes I have worked with Prevent in (*City*), I'd be dubious about working with Prevent in other areas just because I know what they're like….[ ] .. I mean don't get me wrong I'm under no illusion what other constabularies and areas you know around the UK are like you know, I mentioned (*Hometown*) as an example that's closer to home but I think with (*University town*)...in particular because they were so straight up about it and because they - when they talk about Prevent it wasn't just Muslim extremism that they're looking at, they're looking at all forms of extremism.

This reveals how counter-terror measures like Prevent, which have been widely criticised in academia (Briggs, 2010; Kundnani, 2007; McGhee, 2008; Pentazis and Pemberton, 2009) are not uniformly rejected by participants in this research. This reflects the diverse experiences of the policy across the country highlighted by O'Toole et al (2013) in a report arguing that although Prevent is seen as a 'highly top-down, securitised and disciplinary model of state engagement with Muslims' this presents a partial picture and that 'Muslim civil society actors were not merely subject to the Prevent agenda, but were actively involved in (re) shaping and contesting the implementation of Prevent' (O'Toole et al 2013:53). Certainly the views of some participants reverberate such an ambiguous view of Prevent with some even welcoming the financial assistance and opportunities given to marginalised Muslim communities through the strategy. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind, as Kundnani (2009:6) has pointed out, that Prevent has created a climate where 'to make radical criticisms of the government is to risk losing funding and facing isolation as an 'extremist',

while those organisations which support the government are rewarded'. This is why as Chapter 2 discussed Prevent is largely viewed as a policy that has criminalised all Muslims by bundling welfare programmes together with counter-terrorism measures which has strained the relationship between Muslims and the state (Brown, 2010; Spalek and Lambert, 2008).

Attitudes to Prevent acts as one of the markers, albeit a blunt one due to the relative silence on the subject, of whether someone falls within the explicit resistance or implicit resistance camp, although these are not hard and fixed categories and sometimes views can be overlapping and ambivalent. However, the distinction is real enough to create palpable tensions between those who are more confrontational and critical of the state and those who prefer to work with the state or accede to its terms. Such divisions and conflicts were observed during fieldwork between dissenting activists who are likely to accuse those who receive government funding as 'sell outs' and 'apologists', while the community based activists criticise the former for wasting time on protests and demonstrations. Such tensions were visibly heightened with the Woolwich murders in London where two Muslim men brutally killed a British soldier Lee Rigby on 22 May 2013. A rift opened up between activists who sought to publically condemn the murders and those who viewed such efforts as apologist. These positions can be contrasted by some of the participants' posts on Facebook on 23 May 2013.

> **Abid**: I'm organizing a PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION on Monday against the killings in Woolwich.

> **Amna**: There is a simple explanation as to why the middle class Muslim elites that run these organisations that supposedly represent us all are perpetually subservient, apologetic and Uncle Tom in their approach. Those who benefit most from empire, benefit most from keeping up the status quo.

These two social media posts capture the divergent positions of the two models of active citizenship that are delineated by the research and contrasted as 'explicit resistance' and 'implicit resistance'. Abid's quote represents efforts by the latter to reassure the public that Muslims are equally repulsed by the atrocities in Woolwich as the rest of society, while Amna captures the concerns of more dissenting activists who view such strategies as inflaming anti-Muslim prejudice. Those who are more implicit in their resistance sometimes express

their opposition to confrontational tactics by mocking the dissenting activists as 'Fanon types', referring to their tendency to cite anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist literature as Amna does in the quote above by citing the 'empire'. However, as Chapter 6 on the processes and production of collective identity has discussed in more detail these different social movement actors are closely networked and publically their differences dissolve when confronting the forces of Islamophobia.

It should be noted that the issue of Prevent and securitisation is a highly sensitive one that is often skirted around or elided by a number of participants which is itself revealing. It would be disingenuous, if not epistemologically suspect, to assume that such silences are simply a result of internalising hegemonic discourses reflecting the interests of power. Participants' failure to confront or challenge the issue of securitisation should not be conflated with lack of agency. This is because the two different approaches to active citizenship distinguished above represent two different strategies for tackling challenges to Muslim citizenship at the current time. In other words it is a case of different strategies of resistance rather than a distinction between resistance and complicity. The modes of activism that are described in this Chapter as 'implict resistance' contradict Hands (2011:4) understanding of the term 'resistance' which he defines as a form of activism where 'acts readily cross the boundary into defiance of authority'. While many of the participants who convey more explicit resistance would certainly agree with Hands (2011) in discrediting 'implicit' forms of resistance as posing no real challenges to Islamophobia or the forces that produce it, the different value system that is promoted by these politics stands in opposition to the dominant values of neoliberalism and nationalism which should not be dismissed. Care must also be taken in using the terms 'resistance' and 'agency' to avoid reading into the participants' actions political motives that are irrelevant to their projects in the first place. As Mahmood (2005:9) has warned there is a danger of assuming that acts like 'resistance' have a universal meaning 'outside of the ethical and political conditions within which such acts acquire their particular meaning'. Bearing this mind it is acknowledged that the participants in question might not concur with the interpretation of their actions and views as resistant. Here, Mahmood's (2005:33) insistence on sensitivity to 'historically contingent arrangements of power' warrants consideration of the disproportionate impact of securitisation on Muslim

citizenship which complicates the ways in which their reflections on the social world can be interpreted.

Cultural politics and active citizenship

So far the chapter has focused on distinguishing and contrasting the different models of activism presented by participants in this study by differentiating their conceptions of citizenship and degrees of resistance to domination. This section focuses on common strategies and political projects that unite the diverse social movement actors in efforts to negotiate citizenship on their own terms, through cultural politics to defy dominant codes of neoliberalism and nationalism. This is evident by the way in which the pejorative views of Britishness and nationalism can be reframed as the need to create a space for Muslims within the nation. Basma demonstrates this reasoning by contrasting the aims of Muslim and non-Muslim activists.

> **Basma**: I see a lot of the white leftie like comrades do focus on that like 'Oh the University gonna be s-h-i-t-ing themselves with this and that and like they're really like laughing at - having a dig at the man but I understand just as you know a slave would happily see the death of his master but that's not our focus, genuinely it doesn't even concern me. ..[ ]… I'm going to work on this because of all these positive aspects and because of my people, that's it, so I don't care what … about the University or anything and to a certain extent I don't want the University's reputation to be tarnished I've got an undergrad and hope - soon to be postgrad degree from here (*laughs*) like I need it, I wouldn't have come here if I genuinely didn't believe that (*the University*) had a lot to offer to begin with. It's not about that, it's not about taking it down, it's about re-shifting and making this everybody's university and space.

Here Basma is qualifying Muslim dissent as a demand for greater inclusion and concessions for Muslims which stands in contrast to the left politics of total transformation through seizing power. While this sentiment about the University cannot be extended to Basma's views on British citizenship, of which she is wholly dismissive, it does reveal that the impetus for her politics comes from a civic concern to make university spaces inclusive of BME students. Williams (2007:1868) has described some of the cultural pressures for social movements

to adjust their demands to fit within established norms which means 'usually they do not ask publics for radical revisions of their conceptions of societal arrangements'. Basma's attempt to make an appeal for change 'in a readily accessible, and hence broadly legitimate, language' (Williams, 2007:1868), particularly by contrasting reasonable Muslim demands with more radical left ones, is broadly suggestive of the cultural limits on Muslim political agency. It also reverberates a sense of entitlement to inclusion that was touched upon earlier by other participants (Sameera) implying an integral logic of belonging that contradicts the expression of alienation found in others contexts. Such expressions reveal a basic level of confidence in citizenship status, particularly compared to previous generations.

> **Khayam**: With the older people because they're a bit more demure…..and they worry a lot ok..especially if they're from immigrant backgrounds they've just come here from a different country and the reality is the freedoms in the Muslim countries aren't great anyway yeah and the rule of law isn't great anyway so they've got a more put up and shut up attitude to this kind of thing whereas the young people don't …cause we recognise we're citizens right, we have that basic right to not be spied on…to not be prejudiced against for our activities in society not to be co-opted that kind of stuff.

> **Mona**: I consider myself a British citizen, I'm born here so therefore I can question what my government is doing regardless of whether I'm Muslim or not, whether- it doesn't make one bit of difference.

These discourses cast the dissent of young Muslims in a different light, demonstrating participants' sense of entitlement to demand that the concept of citizenship and nationhood be broadened to include Muslim identities. The citizen rights asserted in these accounts also indicate a degree of empowerment and the political capacity to articulate such demands despite the securitisation of politics and citizenship. However, the presence of inordinate burdens and pressures means participants still have to express political agency through innovative and creative 'tactics of protest' (Taylor and Van Dyke, 2007:4536), that is the strategies deployed to 'try to shape public opinion and put pressure on those in positions of authority.' These tactical repertoires can be referred to as empowerment and enablement struggles.

Amna: Getting young people involved and that's my main aim really just to get young people in my area, especially more involved in politics.

Abid: A lot of people that get into arts be it drama, be it acting, poetry whatever but not many people get into those spheres to make a difference to people's lives. There's myself I'm the right - I'm going to use poetry as a means for social change, as a tool for social change.

Ameer: Well like I said …. they - that these people they need leadership and it's up to them I can't force people you know to join the revolution but I could educate them and I could possibly, I could try and make them see the world differently you know.

These forms of mobilisation reflect the quintessential concerns of cultural politics made salient by social movements which engage in 'organised struggles over symbols' and 'public contests over how society is imagined' (Nash, 2009:141). While disengagement from mainstream politics and negative associations with Britishness have often been portrayed as evidence of the fact that Muslims are unfit and unworthy of British citizenship (Parekh, 2008), these tactics challenge such reasoning by revealing struggles aimed at inclusion and belonging without '"normalizing" distortion' (Pakulski, 1997 in Stevenson, 2001:3). Participants' tactical repertoires focused on informing, educating and motivating the public have a specific aim to reshape society from its grassroots.

Saif: So basically what I'm saying is this is a new form of activism that people have to take on… and it comes ….from the intelligentsia, simple, as it's the academics that have got to take this on and academics are an organisation within themselves that have the power, they have the respect, they have the standing to operate on all levels so let's go into the community and let's use their language and let's tell them it's ok you know you're pissed off and frustrated that's fine.. but there is a way to relay this, talk to us.

Parveen: I've taken a step back with going on all these protests and that sort of stuff because I feel I can make more of a change if I write stuff where if I'm more of - I've got a voice in mainstream media because yeah I've been to loads of protests and.. nothing has come out of it.

These chosen modes of activism through academic debate and dissemination of knowledge (Saif), community awareness raising and blogging,

journalism and contributing to mass media (Parveen) represent strategic choices in response to purposeful aims. Abjuring more conventional forms of politics, these participants direct their energies towards revolutionising social norms and values which Rochon (1998 in Williams, 2007) argues is a 'contentious struggle' for 'cultural change'. In the case of Saif the aims are to promote learning among members of the Muslim community, while Parveen's efforts seek to address mainstream audiences to dispel misconceptions about Muslims. These quotes highlight two different tactics for shaping opinion, one targeted inwards to members of the identity group and the other externally oriented towards non-Muslims.

> **Haseena**: So it's stuff like that and I think it's more about telling people in our community that you know they don't have to deal with this and that they should be kind of, they should be engaging more in this kind of activism because they should be resisting…. you know and the only way that …the only way that we'll be able to get anywhere is if we keep resisting.

> **Hanif**: If you can educate people about what's happening then.. you know obviously they would feel some sympathy because obviously I feel like you have to so even if you do that then that can help like in even through if it's like elections, electing MEPs, electing MPS, writing letters towards them, getting it through the governmental stages so that it actually gets to the top stages where the government can do something about it. If the government know that this is what the people want to do then the government will have to do that cause it's representative that way.

Haseena is expressing a rationale common to the more explicitly resistant mode of activism that social change can only be achieved by convincing Muslims to directly resist oppressive conditions while Hanif, whose activism oscillates between explicit and implicit modes of resistance, argues that gaining the support of majority citizens would compel those in power to address issues important to marginal groups. Both participants have a very different view of the state's culpability for social anomie, while Haseena's stance suggests the state is willfully creating conditions that necessitate resistance, Hanif's argument indicates public indifference is responsible for state failure. Yet both participants consider it incumbent upon activists to shift public perceptions and opinions to achieve social change. The pressure of trying to balance the divergent tangents

of internal and external goals sometimes calls for skillful maneuvering by participants.

> **Arya**: If you look at all the leaders and the ISoc and the leaders in (*youth group*) and the leaders in anything really they would always choose people that they feel like can - that have enough knowledge to pass on, that can be good role models and *inshallah* I hope to be and then again at the same time we are challenging the outside world because of the things that we do and with (*youth group*) especially the community projects that we're doing that's constantly trying to show people that it is part of our religion to participate in society and communities … (..) .... again another aspect of (*youth group*) and the ISoc is to … is for the youth to come in …learn what they can, change them as much as we can, get them to educate themselves, get the, you know, the whole thing that happened to me where your priorities change and everything, that's the whole point that we're trying to change people to make them better people so we're working on the inside and the outside.

Here Arya is describing the work of the Islamic Society and the youth group in which she has a leadership role which are both aiming to shape the identities of young Muslims in accordance with the correct form of Islam to be good roles models to the 'outside world' in order to demonstrate that Muslims are good citizens. What Arya refers to as a strategy of 'working on the inside and the outside' is indicative of the twofold pressures on young Muslims who face the challenges of Islamophobia from the rest of society but also struggle with the need for reform within their own communities. In the context of post-9/11, the exceptional demands and challenges that render Muslim citizenship contingent and precarious means battling on multiple fronts, within a limited civic space and with narrow margins of success.

> **Mona**: You know even if it takes just one person to sort of... be enlightened by it I think that will be enough for me I don't want- I don't want I mean am I really in a position where I can awaken a whole load of masses, am I leader in that sort of sense, probably not but if it can - if it's one picture that maybe some, maybe somebody visiting my (*photography*) exhibition can see oh you know what's the message behind that like .....if that can make them more politically aware then I think that's great that's like - that's my outcome achieved.

Khayam: Like I say we're late to civil society …the older community were concerned about establishing themselves in the market, concerned about establishing themselves in government and they saw that as sufficient … the reality is that civil society was lagging, now people of my generation, although the challenge is there…. especially organising people and resources………amongst those challenges yes the spying thing is …it's - it hinders you, it makes you hesitate but we'll do it anyway, it just has to be done…if we don't do that you know we're going to be completely disenfranchised from this society.

The above quotes suggest that participants deploy agency and choice in prioritising modes of activism that are viewed as important despite being challenging and indeterminate in their outcomes. These positive strategies of self-empowerment and capacity-building in British civil society defy allegations of apathy and withdrawal. If anything, as discussed earlier these politics personify the type of 'responsible self-help' that contemporary governments are seeking to cultivate in citizens as discussed in Chapter 2. These educational and empowering ventures are motivated by values, norms and aspirations for society which diametrically oppose some of the neoliberal discourses focused on profit, marketisation and consumption, as well as the resurgent demand for nationalist sentiment being foisted upon citizens by politicians. These efforts can be seen as incarnating active citizenship by participants who are renegotiating the notion of citizenship as 'activist citizens' (Isin, 2009; 2012). This term is suggested by Isin (2009:383) as representing the actions of those members of a polity who challenge the status quo in contrast to 'active' citizens who follow 'a script for already existing citizens to follow already existing paths'. Isin's (2009; 2012) definition of 'activist citizen' is useful for exploring the ways in which participants redefine citizenship on terms that disrupt dominant nationalist and neoliberal narratives but even where participants enact active citizenship by complying with hegemonic discourses this can be interpreted as a strategic pursuit of implicit forms of challenge to power. Participants are 'activist citizens' who demand citizenship on their own terms through dissent and rejection of hegemonic terms but they are also 'active citizens' through normative beliefs on civic duty that converge with some aspects of dominant narratives.

Conclusion

This chapter has conveyed the efforts of young British Muslim activists to negotiate some of the multiple challenges posed by new demands and contingencies being placed on citizenship through the war on terror, neoliberal rationalities of governance and resurgent nationalism elaborated in Chapter 2. The analysis focuses on participants' normative understandings and practices of citizenship which reveal constrained and conflicted ways in which citizenship is imagined and enacted, engendering alternative forms of civic consciousness. For many young Muslims their relationship with the British nation is fraught with tension due to their feelings of exclusion, victimisation and a fear of securitisation which contributes to the experience and perception of citizenship and belonging as precarious and conditional. This suggests participants' reject the contingencies to which their membership of Britain is being subjected rather membership itself.

Dominant discourses that frame Muslims as suspect citizens due to their lack of affinity to 'Britishness' are challenged by the presence of positive associations with British freedoms and opportunities as well as participants' understandings of citizenship as a generic concept which reflects notions of individual duty and obligations signifying the type of 'responsible self-help' contemporary governments have been seeking to cultivate. These cultural politics evoke two models of civic and political activism or active citizenship, distinguished by differentiated intensities of resistance to hegemonic concepts of citizenship and nationhood. The different models are contrasted as 'explicit resistance' on the one hand and 'implicit resistance' on the other. However, it is also argued that both these forms of activism indicate different strategies of resistance rather than being antagonistic to each other in their aims as their differences often dissolve in public.

The findings demonstrate that young adult Muslims incarnate active citizenship through engagement in 'tactical repertoires' of empowerment and capacity-building within their own localities and communities, often demonstrating convergence with the hegemonic demand for 'individual responsibility' promoted by recent government regimes on citizenship. However, invoking a very different set of values and priorities to hegemonic notions of active citizenship predicated on personal and material profit or narrow nationalist priorities the participants affirm a strong commitment to civic responsibility and participation on the basis of

faith, humanity and universal ethics. The embodied forms of active citizenship demonstrated by these young activists defy fears that negative associations with Britishness weaken the value and relevance of citizenship. As Soysal (2012b:388) has argued:

> This shift in focus from national collectivity to particularistic claims does not necessarily imply disengagement from public spheres. Neither does it mean the disintegration of civic arenas. On the contrary, it evinces new forms of mobilization through which individuals enact and practise their citizenship.

This research suggests young Muslims are taking up the discursive possibilities and potential offered by the 'interstitial' space between the nation and post-national spaces but their actions are still embedded in the nation. As seen in previous chapters, like other movements for social justice, Muslims traverse frontiers in political repertoires through their 'creative, inventive and autonomous acts' (Isin, 2012:5034). Isin's (2009, 2012) insistence on focusing on citizenship acts and practices to understand the changing meaning and forms of citizenship is important here. He states that 'thinking about citizenship through acts means to implicitly accept that to be a citizen *is* to make claims to justice: to break habitus and act in a way that disrupts already defined orders, practices and statuses' (Isin, 2009: 384, original emphasis). Seen in this way the dissent and resistance offered to hegemonic notions of British citizenship in this chapter represent citizen politics that confirm the participants' stake in British society.

This chapter therefore uncovers how the cultural politics of young adult Muslims has scope for British citizenship but also highlights the continuing presence of structural constraints that impede the better integration of Muslims into British society. The next chapter relates the forms of politics discussed thus far to the macro and abstract level of society by applying Foucauldian analytics of power to the data.

Chapter 9: Contesting power, resisting the 'enemy within'

Introduction

This chapter brings the cultural politics discussed in the previous chapters into dialectical contact with broader configurations of power in society. If the previous chapters engaged in analysis at the micro and meso levels of society then the present chapter takes a much more ambitious leap into the orbit of macro theories of social power. In this chapter I argue that the cultural politics of young adult Muslims responds to two distinct forms of power, delineated for heuristic purposes as imperceptible forms of power that operate through Foucault's concept of governmentality and perceptible forms of power operating through securitisation processes. As the following discussion argues these forms of power are difficult to separate from each other and their combined achievement can be discovered in the effects and responses they produce in subjects of power. The argument proceeds by firstly highlighting what the two modes of power constitute, followed by an examination of how they are reflected in participant discourses. This is divided into two parts, where first imperceptible power is discussed and then securitised citizenship, as a direct kind of power, is analysed.

Two faces of power

In this thesis I argue that the cultural politics of young adult Muslims can be understood as a historical and situated response to particular relations of power in society within which marginalised identities and politics must be understood. This argument draws on Foucault's theorisation of power, knowledge and governmentality, as well as theories of securitisation of citizenship in the wake of 9/11. It is argued that the participants in this study respond to the presence of historically specific relations of power made perceptible by Foucault (1978; 1980; 1990; 1994; 1995), which render cultural politics an inescapable but also a strategic mode of resistance to multiple forms of stigmatisation and exclusion, broadly encapsulated in the notion of Islamophobia. The political discourses and

grammars of action demonstrated by activists in this study not only presuppose such a model of power but also evidence it by deploying appropriate forms of 'counterpower' (Castells, 2012:5) to subvert its' rationalities and operations.

Here it is necessary to reiterate that Foucault (1997:299) conceived of power as a productive force diffused throughout the social body. As discussed in the literature review chapter Foucault (1997:299) did not view power as necessarily 'evil' because some ways of exercising power are 'strategic games between liberties – in which some try to control the conduct of others', which he also refers to as 'games of power'. These do not necessarily involve domination and repression and can be seen as productive forces. The competitive and adversarial tensions between different actors within activism networks, as they negotiate collective identities and political strategies can be seen as such games of power. This contrasts with a 'state of domination' when 'an individual or social group succeeds in blocking a field of power relations, immobilizing them and preventing any reversibility of movement by economic, political, or military means' (Foucault, 1997:283). Between these two limits are 'technologies of government' (Foucault, 1997:299) or in other words the idea of 'governmentality' described more expansively in Chapter 3.

A central claim of this thesis is that the cultural politics of young Muslims in this study highlight two distinct dimensions of power in Britain today, captured by the notion of domination on the one hand and governmentality on the other, that become apparent in the forms of resistance mounted by participants. The manifestation of power through perceptible or concrete forms of domination refers to the securitisation of citizenship in a post 9/11 context while the idea of 'governmentality' underlines imperceptible and diffused forms of power that emerge in the subjectivity of citizens. However, it is argued that both these forms of power are imbricated in reinforcing the relations of power in society as articulated in Foucault's exposition of the multiple and complex technologies of control that characterise contemporary governance. Before applying these theories to the findings it is useful to illustrate how these two forms of power present themselves in the participants' discourses. To exemplify this point two quotes are apposite as they epitomise some of the political aims of the social movement that is being enunciated in this thesis.

Basma: What I'm doing the groundwork for … both on .. whether it's regarding Palestine, BME communities against racism, oppression so on,

or Islamophobic activity whatever - it focuses on the empowerment of those people that I'm addressing that is what - it - what took me a few years to understand, like, there is no point in trying to make your oppressor grow a heart, what the hell is the point on that and what is the point of focusing your energy and your intelligence and your knowledge, everything, money even on the opposition or on the one who'd rather have you killed than have a conversation with you.. yeah so that is what I essentially do, it's about education, educating and empowering your own.

This demonstrates that power is viewed as a concrete object residing in the 'oppressor' but to target this directly is futile and therefore resources are strategically redirected to the subjects of power themselves, the 'people'. The framing of Basma's argument suggests that the state is seen as being in a relation of domination with citizens making a direct challenge counter-productive as well threatening since you can be 'killed'. A different kind of power is conceptualised by Kasim.

Kasim: [The aim is] to try to bring communities... into... in open and say that look we have the power we… delegitimize the power of the powerful and the most important bit I think Steve Beko was absolutely right that the mind of the oppressed is the most powerful weapon in the hand of the oppressor. It is our own conceptions, it is our own understanding of ourselves that we have to reinvent …and this is the aim if we start creating these platforms in which we can say that look we don't recognise this government, we just simply don't recognise these people, whoever these are, we want to organise our community in different ways.

This reveals a strategy of deconstructing and unsettling given understandings of a social order that is conceived as oppressive, by creating public spaces where state hegemony can be exposed and undermined. In this quote Kasim situates power within the state's ability and capacity to shape and manage the political subjectivities of other citizens. Rather than acting on their bodies through concrete forms of violence this is a more diffused and surreptitious form of control that acts on the consciousness of the 'subjectivated' (Foucault, 1995) citizen. While Basma's quote refers to the futility of directly appealing to power, her redirection of political efforts towards educating the people reflects a similar logic to Kasim's view that activism must be targeted at the point at which power produces its most potent effects. This invokes

Foucault's (1994a:217) idea of governmentality that does not impose power but rather employs tactics to create dispositions, tendencies, subjectivities and ways of thinking that produce the outcomes necessary for power to be exercised 'without the full awareness of the people'.

These discourses suggest that the state's power is imagined to rest on two distinct strategies; through its monopoly of violence manifested in the ability to have dissidents 'killed' and on the other hand the power of controlling 'the mind of the oppressed'. These forms of power signify the 'possible field of action' (Foucault, 1994b:341) in which participants mount resistance through cultural politics.

Technologies of government

This section explicates how Foucault's analytics of power explain the cultural politics of young adult Muslims by re-examining participants' discourses on themes raised in previous chapters. The existence of certain technologies of power which operate through cultural mechanisms are demonstrated by the way in which activism is oriented towards challenging them but also how they are appropriated and exercised by activists themselves. So firstly it is established that knowledge is central to power, secondly that it is diffused and nominal rather than originating in a particular location and finally it is revealed how power is exercised through particular technologies which can be resisted as well as appropriated and redeployed.

Knowledge as power

The salience of knowledge as a central concern of activism suggests that this is seen as a critical mode of power that must be addressed and reversed. In Chapter 5 it is revealed that participants construct 'politics' as a vocation that demands certain capabilities and expertise about the social world. Having knowledge is not only seen as a qualification for activism but its absence is viewed as an obstacle to engagement.

> **Irum**: Most people are conformists you know the majority of the readership is the Daily Mail and Sun readership they're all conformists they literally are spoon fed and they just absorb what they're given and they don't think

about it.. and for me that's very detrimental to society… [ ]..… people don't even know, some people don't even know who the politicians are, who the Prime Minister is - I remember when people didn't even know Gordon Brown was Prime Minister it was like…. this is really appalling, really really appalling.

Sameera: I think a lot of it [social injustice] is to do with being uninformed.. because let's be honest education is the great liberator. You know it's really simplistic but it's kind of, if people aren't educated ….do they really know any better, you know.

These quotes reveal the importance of knowledge, particularly about political facts, as necessary for the health of a society and democracy. Irum's quote draws attention to the 'appalling' wilful ignorance of people, a deficit that is seen as 'detrimental' to society. Irum's derogatory reference to people who are 'spoon fed' portrays a view of citizens who are like children at the total mercy of their parents, indicative of the unrestrained power of the state. This is seen as damaging to society since this creates a chasm between citizens and political structures of power but the blame is being attributed to citizens who are 'conformists'. Sameera links the pursuit of social justice to the ability to gain knowledge because of the belief that education has the ability to liberate people from the clutches of power. The focus on knowledge as an object of political intervention suggests that participants view it as a dimension within which power is anchored and can be dislodged. The inherent logic is that knowledge can empower the powerless but also that it is the basis of power itself.

The importance of knowledge as a resource in activism is explored in Chapter 5 where it is revealed how participants build and maintain networks of like-minded activists and supporters to produce and disseminate alternative bodies of knowledge to contest what is seen as mainstream mass media's untrustworthy and biased representation of the social world. Rejection of public institutions and mainstream media is closely related to the need to expose authentic versions of reality and bring these to the public's attention. Tehmina's plans to set up a new organisation to support Indian Kashmiri activists is revealing of this.

Tehmina: But having that space where we can put information about Kashmir because we have a lot of books, we have a lot of reports that have been written by people there, really well documented reports …but they

just haven't had exposure, people haven't had access to them, there's such little .. facts and figures on Kashmir it's unreal ….. [ ]….I had a couple of events at University in 2010 and 2011 and you know, lot of people attended those events but …I was trying to organise a leaflet you know printed off loads of leaflets for those events but it was so difficult to get the facts and figures that weren't controversial, cause Indian government doesn't accept this one duh duh duh you know it's just….ahhh painstaking.

In this quote knowledge about the issue of Kashmir is assumed to be central to the mobilisation of support for the issue but also what is being prioritised is the knowledge that comes from the people, directly from the sources in Kashmir, 'written by people there' which are not tainted by the Indian government's political manipulations or censorship efforts. Here Tehmina is not only suggesting that the real facts about Kashmir are being suppressed but that making them available is the main aim of activism in this project, reflecting the argument in Chapter 5 that challenging false knowledge and promoting the correct version of events is itself an objective of activism.

The prioritisation of education, learning and dissemination of knowledge in political and civic struggles resonates Foucault's (1995) argument that knowledge, produced through dominant discourses, is one of the key technologies of power in contemporary societies. However, this does not mean participants acquire knowledge in an intentional way to consciously counter such power, since such concepts and theories are of greater concern to academics than activists. In these discourses participants are prioritising education, learning and knowledge as a means of achieving political or social capital but they do not refer to the nature of power in society, rather it is implied. This is because such forms of power, operating through discourses and knowledge, are successful because of their ability to function as invisible and neutral forces through established norms of society. This accounts for the strategic importance of cultural politics whereby power can be challenged by resisting and subverting dominant discourses in which knowledge and power join forces as Foucault (1978:101) explained:

Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.

By this Foucault means that discourse is not just representative of social reality but it is also productive of social objects, so a discourse 'not only assumes the authority of the 'truth' but has the power to *make itself true*' (Hall, 2010:76, original emphasis). Therefore, the discursive production of knowledge is a domain in which participants can strategically locate their struggles, which is evident in the unequivocal rejection of mainstream mass media and the cultivation of alternative sites for the production, dissemination and deployment of knowledge. By doing so they subvert the truth claims of the powerful and try to overturn hegemonic discourses on Muslim citizenship.

> **Haseena**: I think that the most important thing is.. like empowering our communities and making sure that we don't feel like we have to…we have to subscribe to you know this dichotomy of like moderate and extremist [Muslim] and that I don't have to apologise for my beliefs I don't have to like be apologetic in every word I say …[ ]… everyone's an individual you know but people only see you as an individual if you're white.. . you know white people aren't all judged by the actions of one person of their race yet every other racial group is judged. I've never had a white person apologise for - they don't even apologise for like colonialism or .. slavery yet I have to apologise for like one terrorist out of how many, billion Muslims you know.

In this extract Haseena is referring to the 'culturalist' approach to Muslim citizenship which essentially views Islam as incompatible with the West and seeks to control its influence by sanctioning acceptable forms of religiosity (Adamson, 2011; Lentin, 2014; Mamdani, 2002; Kundnani, 2014; Roy, 2004). This produces the 'dichotomy' of a 'moderate and extremist' Muslim defined by the level of complicity Muslims demonstrate towards government policy and its principles. Haseena's critique invokes a common mainstream discourse that 'has turned religious experience into a political category, differentiating "good Muslims" from "bad Muslims, rather than terrorists from civilians' (Mamdani, 2002:766). Haseena conveys the implicit understanding that in order to qualify as a good 'moderate' Muslim, she has to apologise for the terrorist acts committed by other members of her faith. As this would entail accepting that Islam is a religion of violence, and thus undermining her own identity, Haseena claims the only way to 'get anywhere' is to resist this hegemonic dichotomy which she views as a form of racism in the way it discriminates against non-whites. Haseena's activism is directed at educating and empowering the Muslim community to resist repressive social discourses promoting Islamophobia.

Another illustrative aspect of Haseena's argument is that it is not clear where community resistance might be directed and who would the empowered community members resist? What agent or institution is it that produces the dichotomy that Haseena refers to, what form of power is it that can bring to bear this oppressive binary of moderate and extreme? These indeterminate attributions in Haseena's statement invoke the Foucauldian analysis of power as a force that permeates different levels of society and which pose as accepted truths about the world through the authority of knowledge. These forms of power are difficult to locate due to their diffused and invisible quality, as discussed in the next section.

Power as diffused and nominalist

Foucault's nominalist theory of power asserts that it cannot be reduced to a particular site or agent because one its mechanisms is to produce dominant societal norms and meanings. This is brought into sharp relief by post 9/11 politics on Muslims citizenship which has generated volumes of new literature emphasising the pathologies associated with this minority religious group, not least of all research led by national security agendas concerned with extremism, radicalisation and cohesion (Briggs and Birdwell, 2009; Choudhury, 2007; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010; Home Affairs Committee, 2005; Quilliam, 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2005). The exercise of power through such regimes of truth which encompass multiple sites of production in the power-knowledge nexus, including the state, media and academia, explicates participants' distrust of all established and elite-controlled institutions in society. Participants' pejorative constructions of politics and politicians explored Chapter 7 need to be revisited to pinpoint the way in which a diffused and nominalist conception of power as 'as a productive network that runs through the whole social body' (Foucault, 1994:120) appears in the data.

> **Basma**: I never think their intentions will ever be pure and they can't be even if they do start out wanting to become a politician with this and this ideal once they get into those seats, those which surround them will drive them away from it. They wouldn't be in those seats to begin with unless they had to compromise on certain things so I think the only thing you've got to focus on is the people and those who are kind of hopefully driving

them to do what they need to do but I don't think we should put any faith (*in politicians*), it's just another white saviour like I said (*laughs*) regardless even if they're black or brown.. the white mask is on (*laughs*) at all times.

Kasim: (*Sarcastic laugh*) Politicians are part of the power… elites so … there might be some people, good people whatever...… they might listen to the similar sort of music I listen to and they might like kids and so on and might be nice when you go to their house, they offer you a cup of tea and so on but that is all apart from what they do as when they are in the.... when they are within the institution, so the power of institution takes over...and we have to challenge their power - their power as institutional broker.

As elaborated in Chapter 7, while participants sometimes attribute the failure of politics to individual politicians, largely, as these extracts reveal, political power is conceived of in terms of systemic and structural domination which lies beyond the influence of individual agency. In Basma's quote power is understood as a coercive force that induces 'compromise' on principles and imposes a 'white mask' as described in Fanon's (1952) anti-colonial and anti-imperial book 'Black Skin White Masks'. Here the reference to Fanon's psychoanalytical insights on the dependency of the racialised subject to white domination has echoes of Foucault's notion of 'subjectivation' (Gros, 2014:344) by power. Similarly, Kasim, who referenced Fanon elsewhere in his interview, makes the point that power lies in the 'institution' rather than with social agents. Although power is being specifically located in a site, it is being nominalised as a force that acts without an intentional agent. These ways of understanding power illuminate the activists' need to strive for political and social change from outside the system but they also make cultural politics more comprehensible since power diffused in society works through cultural modes and objects where it produces its effects in perceptible and accessible discourses and norms.

An important and seminal aspect of Foucault's theory of power is that the use of knowledge as a technology of power is not important from the perspective of evaluating its truth claims. According to Foucault the significance of knowledge as a form of power is that its status as true or false is independent of its political deployment. Indeed, the role of knowledge as a useful and necessary feature of social life is what renders it 'practically serviceable' for political ends. As Gordon (1994:xviii) argues:

The reason the combining of power and knowledge in society is a redoubtable thing is not that power is apt to promote and exploit spurious knowledges (as the Marxist theory of ideology has argued) but, rather that the rational exercise of power tends to make the fullest use of knowledges capable of the maximum instrumental efficacy.

This perspective resonates with the way participants frame their own alternative sources of knowledge as authentic and closer to the truth, in contrast to mainstream sources that are seen as dishonest and misleading. An important and distinctive aspect of Foucault's political thought is the idea that technologies of power are not the exclusive purview of a certain class of actors, as often argued by Marxists, but that they operate in a way that makes them available to all social actors even though the state and elites continue to have a greater monopoly over them (Foucault, 1994b). This suggests power can be used to dominate and control actions but it can also be deployed as a productive force for resistance.

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. (Foucault, 1994c:120)

Such a productive and transformative use of knowledge as power is evident in participants' efforts to construct alternative regimes of truth to challenge hegemonic concepts, policies and practices. To further illustrate the point that technologies of power are available to be appropriated anywhere in the social formation I want to highlight a passage from an interview with Irum, a 27 year old community activist and former member of a government advisory group. It is important to bear in mind that while Islamophobia is a driving force for Irum, another motivation for activism is the marginalisation and oppression of young people and women *within* Muslim communities. In this extract Irum describes the importance of learning about Islam to shift power relations inside the community.

Irum: I'm going to focus next two years hopefully on studying Islam in depth ... so basic knowledge and so that one thing I noticed if you want credibility you need to have that knowledge you know - people will take you a lot more - so instantly you know a lot of men have access to Islamic

knowledge, they go to the mosque, they learn with Sheikh, they have that time to learn so you know instantly they get that credibility and if they - if they are able talk and speak with an - for example if they can quote line from Quran, you're just like 'oh this person is knowledgeable' that's how it is - I don't have the confidence to do that so I'm going to go down that route, so that I feel you know I have the knowledge and the ability to stand my ground and be able to talk about a topic and give my viewpoint with the backing of Islam.

Here Irum argues she must gain expertise in Islam to challenge influential elders and leaders who wield religious knowledge in order to maintain their power and position among other community members. Irum's quote suggests that knowledge is used as a technology of power by religious and community leaders to regulate and control the identities and conduct of other members within the group, usually young people and women. In order to counter this power Irum has to acquire proficiency in religious matters so that she can exercise this kind of authority herself. This quote reveals the diffused nature of power, that operates in society through 'the strategies, the networks, the mechanisms, all those techniques by which a decision is accepted' (Foucault, 1990:104) and it also points to the availability of these technologies for resistance. According to Irum community leaders deploy the technologies of power available to be used as productive forces anywhere in the fibre of society. This also resounds Foucault's (1994b:329) argument that resistance to power usually responds to its most immediate and local effects as: 'In such struggles, people criticize instances of power that are the closest to them, those which exercise their action on individuals. They look not for the "chief enemy" but for the immediate enemy.'

Power, governmentality and subjectivity

Finally the two different models of active citizenship compared in Chapter 8 are recounted to demonstrate how governmentality functions by 'implanting in citizens the aspiration to pursue their own civility, well-being and advancement' (Rose, 2006:147). The said chapter reveals that participants enact two variant forms of active citizenship in response to forces of Islamophobia, contrasted as 'explicit resistance' where power is challenged more overtly and 'implicit resistance' where convergences are found with neoliberal conceptions of

citizenship predicated on individual responsibility. However, both forms of activism represent different strategies of resistance when the underlying moral and ethical values, oriented towards community and humanity, are contrasted with neoliberal aspirations of individual success and profit. The following quotes demonstrate this point more clearly.

> **Changez**: I guess in Islam there's a big emphasis on charity and *zakat* (donations) and all that and responsibility like… you've been born with all this so you're not without responsibility to profit others and all that… help within society that sort of.. I guess that's like … you know why I got involved.

> **Khayam**: For me it's about service like the Prophet *Salat ul Asalam* he said [Arabic verses] that the one who leads a community is the one who serves them, so I think there's certain religious rewards I think more than anything so religion is a motivating factor in civil - in contributing to civil society that's for sure ….essentially life of service that's a reward in itself to me be honest with you …..economically it's not rewarding certainly my Mother would say it's not really you know, you're not going to get much out of this.

Although these discourses evoke the neoliberal drive to promote 'self-sufficiency' and 'responsibility' they also reveal the post-material values (Inglehart, 2000) commonplace in social movements, as the motivations for activism are clearly linked to religious obligation to achieve the common good. Although these discourses reproduce the dominant notion of active citizenship projected as an individual's civic duty to care for themselves (Davies, 2012; Marinetto, 2003; McGhee, 2008; Soysal, 2012a), the authority to which they appeal is not the nation and neither is the benefit personal gain but rather it is oriented towards universal human and social welfare. Nevertheless, the presence of hegemonic notions of active citizenship can be understood through the Foucauldian notion of 'governmentality', a rationality of government that can be found reflected in the subjectivities of individuals who conduct their lives in ways which reproduce the prevailing power relations in society. This is a form of government in which 'the state's power (and that's one of the reasons for its strength) is both an individualizing and a totalizing form of power' (Foucault, 1994b:332). By this Foucault means that power, working through multiple technologies, apparatuses and agents, acts upon the conduct of individual citizens, directing them towards choices which extend to the total body of the

population in a 'kind of political "double bind"' (Foucault, 1994b:336). In this mode of power which has to be studied 'where it installs itself and produces its real effects' (Foucault, 1980:97), the individual becomes the object of control, representing its individualising function. Governmentality induces within the individual the capacity or disposition to fulfil the aims of the state to effect the common good which is its totalizing function. This is achieved through forms of power where it is a question 'not of imposing law on men but of disposing things' (Foucault, 1994a:211). Through such forms of power citizens can be induced to accept and actively reproduce social norms and conditions that serve the interests of power, even if they may be contrary to personal interests and needs. An example of this is the increasing tenor of discourses on welfare dependency, since the 1970s, that have legitimised state reductions in benefits (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Marinetto, 2003). Such moves further imperil minorities who are already structurally disadvantaged (Soysal, 2012a), yet despite being critical citizens who engage in activism to change the social order, many participants echo the narratives of self-sufficiency that legitimates such reduction of welfare provision.

> **Khayam:** And I think it's also really important that we went through some time as a community ….where post….7/7, post 9/11 ….that we lived off the government teat so to speak…and I'm hoping that era's come to an end to be honest with you, because really you're constrained, really you're not self-autonomous in that situation…and… it can be destructive actually.

Here Khayam is suggesting that Muslims have to stop depending on the state and start taking care of themselves as a community, which suggests that the challenges facing Muslims are located in their inability to do precisely this. While developing autonomy and self-dependency is a positive aspiration for citizenship, what is problematic in this context is the legitimation and reproduction of a growing rhetoric by politicians that blames social inequalities and disadvantages on those who suffer its consequences the most (Kundnani, 2007; Fitzpatrick, 2005; Soysal, 2012a). This reflects Foucault's (1994a:217) contention that governmentality creates a continuity between the rationality of the state and the actions of individuals in society 'through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people' the realisation of the state's aims. The normalisation of the discourse that welfare dependency deprives people of 'the capacity to live up to the obligations of citizenship' (Hyatt, 2011:110) is reproduced in Khayam's argument that Muslims must fend for themselves as it is in their interests to do so. Similarly, hegemonic discourses that blame Muslims

for their disadvantaged position in society due to self-segregation (Kundnani, 2007) can be detected in the following quote.

> **Abid**: It's mainly how we portray ourselves as well, we don't get involved in community work, I mean, a lot of people, what we - the doubts made about Islam being a secretive community have come true. If we throw ourselves out and get involved in all the community work that is out there, it could be something simple as coffee mornings or a street clean-ups or going to visit sick in hospital or whatever and that will change people's perception of Islam, 'cause at the moment we're seen as a very restricted, very closed community, don't like to get involved with other people but the more we step out of our comfort zone involved in politics and community organisation and how we all can learn from that, is the more we can change people's perceptions of what we as a Muslim community are doing.

Abid's suggestion that Muslims are to blame for their negative image in society because they are secretive and closed as a community resounds a number of developments in public policy and discourses which have shifted the focus from the structural causes of social inequality and disadvantage to the character, actions and dispositions of citizens (Kundnani, 2007, Lentin, 2014; Marinetto, 2003; McGhee, 2008). While the reproduction of neoliberal values of citizenship are more recognisable in such compliant modes of activism (implicit resistance), the choice of cultural politics in more dissenting and confrontational forms of activism can also be viewed as being inscribed by neoliberal governmentality. This is because even among participants whose activism is interpreted as being counter-hegemonic (explicit resistance), the expression of dissent through lifestyle, cultural production and struggles for education and empowerment can be seen as reproducing neoliberal agendas to shift responsibility for social welfare from the state to citizens. Thus political subjectivities and conduct oriented towards self-development, public awareness-raising and capacity building can be seen as doing little to shift the existing power relations in society. The implication is that struggles over culture have limited scope to bring about any measurable change in the way power operates. As revealed in Cruikshank's (1999 in Lemke, 2000) Foucauldian inspired study of self-esteem movements in California, politics of enablement and sufficiency can serve the state's interests to compel citizens to take charge of their own welfare.

However, this is not to suggest that participants' are mere dupes of neoliberal rationality since governmentality does not simply inscribe certain subjectivities, it also acts by limiting the scope of action. While power through knowledge and discourse allows resistance this is always limited by 'the field of possibilities' available to 'active subjects' (Foucault, 1994b:341). Lentin's (2014:1276) criticism of the 'culturalization' of politics by the state is important to consider in this respect. Appropriating the ideas of Slavoj Zizek, Lentin (2014:1276) argues that 'culture has become the dominant framework for analysing what would once have been considered problems of social inequality, exploitation, power.' A good example of this is the political and policy response to the 'multiculturalism crisis' which focused on curbing 'too much diversity' prompting Lentin (2014:1271) to claim that 'solutions to societal problems said to emanate from an excess of culture of the 'wrong kind', are themselves proposed in culturalized terms.' According to Lentin (2014:1271) the 'culturalization of politics' renders issues like racism 'postpolitical, both reducing the socio-economic to the cultural, and constraining the terms of the debate within a culturalist register'. This restricts the terms of the debate on issues of citizenship, security and terrorism within a cultural register that becomes difficult to escape, limiting the scope for contestation on other grounds.

If the operation of power through governmentality constrains the field of action by producing docility and compliance within the participants' own subjectivities, its effects on other citizens produces additional barriers to political expression at the current time. Some of these limits of activism are described in Chapter 7 where activists' frame public apathy, citizen passivity and political illiteracy as key causes of the failure of politics and the depoliticisation of society. Due to the cultural modes through which solutions to the problems of cohesion and security have been framed in the war on terror Muslim citizenship had become associated with threats to the nation and social harmony. This has rendered public support for Muslims contingent upon their willingness to assimilate to a recognisable British culture and desist from expressing dissent or discontent. This shuts off the possibility of adopting more conventional forms of activism like demonstrations and petitions. This poses a serious challenge to Muslim activism.

> **Chohan**: I think the source of the tensions would be people aren't listening to what we're actually saying or people do not wanna listen to what we're saying…..(..)….I think they need to learn themselves, maybe open up

slightly more and not be afraid to listen to the other side, rather than just block it out and have such a one track mind about things… about what they're going to listen to.

This extract suggests that the inability to find a public audience that is willing to even listen is one of the largest obstacles to traditional forms of political participation. This quote also demonstrates the real and concrete barriers young Muslims believe they face in trying to put forward their perspectives and viewpoints. This invokes Foucault's (1981:52) argument that power operates through processes of 'prohibition' on what can and cannot be said within the discursive field of possibilities, in addition to inscribing certain ways of thinking about social reality (Rose, 2006). Stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslims and related issues are seen as so intransigent that they present themselves as a 'block' that quashes activist voices. If power can be deciphered from 'where it installs itself and produces its real effects' (Foucault, 1980:97) then public apathy and passivity in response to politics can be seen as the work of governmentality that produces such subjectivities within citizens. Cultural explanations for Muslim deviance resonate in public opinion and engender an unwillingness to entertain the alternative knowledges and truths offered by Muslim activists. This makes cultural politics an adaptation to a 'field of possibilities' that are staked out by the depoliticisation of the public sphere.

Power as domination in the security state

Finally this section focuses on direct forms of power that threaten, prohibit and coerce subjects in a condition of domination which invokes the securitisation of citizenship thesis. It is argued that despite the real threat of securitisation, the symbolic and ideational aspects of such forms of power are equally compelling and that the theory of governmentality is well placed to elucidate the conditions that make them conceivable and possible at the current time.

Chapter 2 elaborates the disproportionate impact of counter-terrorism legislation and intensified surveillance on Muslim citizenship to set the context in which activism transpires. As discussed in the same chapter, security has become a central theme within citizenship in the war on terror, with a host of new laws and controls on freedom which pose a distinct threat to civil liberties for all citizens in the 'security state' (Fekete, 2009; Hyatt, 2011; McGhee, 2010; Semati,

2010; Vertigans, 2010). The impact of securitisation on Muslim activists is broached in Chapter 7 where participants reveal its constraining effects on their political vocabularies and choices. Despite an obsessive focus on issues of radicalisation and security around Muslim citizenship in the West, many participants elide the topic in the interviews and any significant critique of the securitisation of citizenship was unexpectedly muted in the research. The relative silence on this topic during nearly 18 months of fieldwork is suggestive of the prohibitive impact of security. This impression is supported by the weight given to the issue by those who are willing to speak on the subject more openly to reveal its chilling effect on communities.

> **Rabia**: My Dad's actually said to me, he goes 'one day we're just going to have these officers.. at the door knocking, looking for you and stuff trying to arrest you for terrorism, yeah but it's because where I live we've had that happen to people around us.

Here Rabia is describing an experience cited by a number of other participants whose parents discourage them from involvement in student activism for fear of attracting the attention of security forces. By conveying that this has already happened to others in her family's residential area Rabia is also highlighting that such fears are not exaggerated or baseless. However, as it is revealed in Chapter 7 despite the very real threat of being targeted by security forces, few participants have personally suffered such encounters. The effects of security are more pernicious in prohibitions acting upon the imagination rather than the body of the subject.

> **Yousaf**: I think one of the major aims clearly has been to depoliticise the Muslim community by simply saying ….building this notion and strengthening and consolidating this notion being….political is being radical …that you've got very, very tiny room for manoeuvre beyond which ….you are a radical, so if you go to attend a talk, if you do anything .. the likelihood is that you're going to be participating or taking part or erring on the side of radicalism whether you like it or not and the best way to be safe is to simply to just not go there.

This quote demonstrates how securitisation influences political choices by producing fear and anticipating danger. The possibility of being branded a radical, and by common association a terrorist, carries real and imminent risks which leads to the ultimate act of negation by 'simply' not engaging. However,

the operation of power does not directly forbid activism, rather it acts by defining the discursive field through the creation of an equivalence between being 'political' and 'radical' which shuts off certain choices and actions. This symbolic and psychological dimension of security elucidates the participants' political grammars of action and imaginaries focused on cultural contestation, although this is not to deny the very corporeal dangers inherent in counter-terrorism legislation through the possibility of arrests, stop and search and extradition.

The presence of security in this research field approximates what Foucault (1982:789) calls a 'relationship of violence' which 'acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities'. However, this does not amount to a 'state of domination' where resistance and agency have become inconceivable or impossible. Rather it is argued that direct forms of threat can also be seen as functioning through technologies of power associated with governmentality, whereby, certain knowledges, discourses and subjectivities, cultivated through technologies of self, limit the possibilities for activism. It is worth reiterating Foucault's (1997:299) conceptualisation of the three ways in which power relations are configured through 'strategic relations, techniques of government, and the states of domination', which he argues are not mutually exclusive. Hence, 'a play of power relations' which permits agency and resistance, 'does not exclude the use of violence' (Foucault, 1982:789).

The operation of governmentality can be deciphered in the cultural imperatives through which securitisation is made conceivable and defensible with the consent of the public. As with the 'culturalization' of politics in the backlash against multiculturalism (Lentin, 2014:1276), securitisation has also been established on cultural grounds. To reiterate Buzan, Waever and de Wilde's (1998 in McGhee, 2010:42) definition of securitisation from Chapter 2:

> If by means of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat the securitizing actor has managed to break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by, we are witnessing a case of securitization.

This suggests that securitisation is not a warranted or proportionate response to danger but is based on an 'argument' that justifies bypassing the normal rules governing democratic societies. As elaborated in Chapter 2 securitisation in Britain, as in the USA, has become normalised through the

discursive framing of security concerns as a matter of paramount importance to maintain public security (Buck-Morss, 2003; Dworkin, 2003; McGhee, 2010). Even though they have been inimical to the freedoms of ordinary citizens, the extraordinary measures introduced in the war on terror have been legitimised through the 'acquiescence and willingness to accept restraints' by the British public 'in order to safeguard their own security' (Vertigans, 2010:26). Such a move is contingent on 'the continual framing of Muslim communities as 'Other' and dangerous' (Brown, 2010:172) in what Kundnani (2014:185) has called a convenient 'displacement of the war on terror's political antagonisms onto the plane of Muslim culture'. Following Stritzel's thesis of securitisation Mavelli (2013:166) argues that the securitisation of Islam is predicated on a 'consolidated discursive realm' which allows notions of security to become easily linked to Muslims. Hence, after 7/7 Tony Blair's defence of the British way of life by condemning certain forms of Islam reinforce the association between terror and Islam by drawing on an existing 'discursive realm' populated by memories of the 2001 riots, Rushdie book burnings, Danish cartoons and various other examples of Muslim aberration. Securitisation occurs through the stated need for 'exceptional measures' in response to the extraordinary threat to not just to the life and limb of citizens but Western 'civilization' itself (Vertigans, 2010:26).

This is the cultural dimension of security which is encoded in the numerous public expressions and displays of fear and suspicion towards Islam and Muslims (Brown, 2010; Morey and Yaqin, 2011; Semati, 2010). One outcome of such securitised readings of Muslim culture is that visible symbols of Islam like veiling become marked with deviance, as Modood et al (2010:105; original emphasis) illustrate in a study on the representation of the *niqab* (full veil) in British media which linked veiling to separatism and terrorism. Summarising the mood of the time Modood et al (2010:105) conclude that 'removing the *niqab* was, for many commentators, an integral part of counter-terrorism.' Since securitisation is framed and legitimised through cultural codes, challenging it becomes impossible without undermining its cultural codes and assumptions. This is why activism is aimed at contesting dominant rationalities which have negative political consequences for Muslims.

> **Yasir**: I've actually been called by young people I work with now an 'extremist' ..which is quite harsh cause I've never been called an extremist by anyone and it was – it is because ..you forget that a lot of people now the You Tube generation have been brought up where the war's always

been going on since they were young, they don't really know much about it but to talk about political things makes you extreme because you've got a viewpoint and I do work with a lot of young people now and a lot of them skirt around issues and they're not very politically aware or politically involved.

Here Yasir is describing a whole generation of people who have come to view politics as a dangerous and risky activity which inhibits political expression because this can be seen as 'extremist'. In the situation described by Yasir other citizens are the agents whose pejorative views of politics yield the 'relationship of violence' which proscribes certain expressions or discourses which cannot be voiced. As such, these young people act as the agents of a 'self-policing' society which Hyatt (2011) argues has emerged in the wake of 9/11 in a transitional phase where neoliberalism gives way to the security state. As a consequence 'the idealised subject of the law-and-order state is now the citizen who both polices and agrees to be policed' (Hyatt, 2011:107). In the empirical context this can be observed as functioning on the ground through the Prevent programme where local community organisations and individuals are expected to carry out the task of surveillance of fellow Muslims in what Wacquant (2001:407; original emphasis) calls '*social panopticism'*. The emphasis on public hearts and minds in government strategies for countering terrorism (DCLG, 2007) can be explained by Foucault's idea of governmentality, which put more succinctly, signifies the 'contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self' (Foucault,1988:19). This is the notion that the rationality of government is reproduced in the subjectivities of citizens resulting in choices, comportments and normalised judgements which advance the existing power relations in society.

This explains why security acts less as a direct threat of force but more as a threatening prospect structuring the fears and paranoia of other citizens, shaping and proscribing the choices of the activists and the public and constraining action or resistance. The orientation of Muslim cultural politics towards reframing public views and building political will and capacity indicates a form of resistance that, consciously or unconsciously, challenges the kind of power that acts upon the subjectivity of other citizens (Foucault, 1994a,b,c). Such a power acts by producing complicity for extraordinary security measures (Vertigans, 2010), reducing the capacity or opportunity for challenge by normalising the discourse of the dangerous Muslim (Kundnani, 2007; 2014) and

fuelling Islamophobic ideas through the proliferation of new forms of knowledge about impending threats and the possibilities of risk and danger within too much diversity (Goodhart, 2004; Grillo, 2005; 2007). As Kumar (2012:175) has warned a 'sense of fear and paranoia' whipped up against Muslims 'can then be used to squash dissent and win consent for violations of civil liberties at home and wars abroad.' Participants' do not need to be aware of these forms of power in order to resist their effects, as the consequences can be experienced without the mechanisms and conditions that make them possible being visible. Cultural politics constitute forms of resistance directed at the effects of such powers which are tangible to activists even if the technologies that produce them remain obscured. While Foucault argues that violence, as a direct force, is always present in society, his view of the state in modern societies suggests that such forms of violence are successfully disguised through practices of governmentality. Arguments about the rise of the security or law-and-order state which legitimates its authoritarianism through a new 'politics of fear' (Fekete, 2004; McGhee, 2010) suggests that modern governance is reliant on cultural dynamics to keep the balance of powers in place to the advantage of some and detriment of others, invoking the governmentality thesis.

Conclusion

Appropriating Foucauldian theorisation of power this chapter argues that the cultural politics of young adult Muslims are a response to two dominant forms of power in contemporary societies like Britain, one a direct form of domination through the securitisation of citizenship and the other an imperceptible form of power made palpable by Foucault's notion of governmentality. Conducting politics through cultural contestation reflects Foucault's argument that modern technologies of power operate through knowledge, discourses and governmentality that shapes and structures the subjectivities of citizens to reproduce existing power relations in society. While the securitisation of citizenship represents a rise in more violent and direct modes of power, this is also predicated on inscribing in citizens subjectivities of fear and paranoia that necessitate extraordinary state measures to ensure their protection.

This is not to suggest that participants consciously plan and conduct activism with the intention of targeting the forms of power that Foucault has

articulated. Rather it is argued that Foucault's analytics of power provide a compelling explanatory account for understanding how cultural politics becomes the dominant site in which these participants invest their energies and resources. What is significant in the discourses and grammars of action explored in this thesis is not that they directly reference the shapes and forms of power described by Foucault but rather that the nature of power relations described by Foucault is presumed by these political repertoires and are also challenged, appropriated and subverted through these actions.

Chapter 10: Conclusions, cultural politics and potentialities

Introduction

This thesis began with ambitious aims to explore and comprehend the political and civic activism of young adult Muslims in Britain against a complex and contentious socio-political backdrop of global proportions that has catapulted Muslim citizenship into a number of polarising debates around diversity, cohesion and security. These issues and the conflicts they engender raise some tough and uneasy questions which do not have straightforward answers. It is not surprising then that while the aims of the study are ostensibly simple, to find out how young Muslims participate in British civil society, beyond electoral politics in sites identified as subpolitical (Beck, 1997; O'Toole and Gale, 2013), the research journey has encountered a multifaceted tapestry of conceptual, theoretical and empirical richness. This complexity is negotiated through a set of manageable questions focused on elaborating the nature and range of activism, identifying the key objectives and aims of mobilisation and understanding the relationship between participants' political repertoires and subjectivities and the social, economic and political context in which they are performed or constrained.

This chapter summarises and synthesises the findings that respond to these research questions by reflecting on the main conclusions of the thesis, organised around a central argument that the activism of young Muslims in this study constitutes a social movement to counter multiple challenges to Muslim citizenship in Britain, captured by the umbrella term Islamophobia. Following a summary reminder of the main research findings, the chapter reflects on the contribution to knowledge made by the cultural politics framework of this study. The chapter also offers some reflections on the implications this has for politics, policy and society beyond this empirical case study, as well as alluding to future research possibilities and outputs that emerge from this study.

Summary of findings

The argument for this thesis is built incrementally by demonstrating that the diverse forms of mobilisation in which participants engage display the distinctive grammars of action associated with social movements. Based on the work of leading social movement scholars Chapter 3 distils some defining features of social movements which include:

- Collective identity/solidarity
- Political or cultural conflict (with or without clearly identified opponents/challenge or defence of extant authority)
- Informal (dense) networks/some degree of organisation

These defining features are successfully identified in the activism of young adult Muslims through an elucidation of the nature and range of activism in Chapter 5 and active processes of collective identity construction in response to social conflict described in Chapter 6. The political repertoires displayed by young adult Muslims in Chapter 5 reveal a number of characteristic features of social movements including individualised, decentralised, non-institutional and horizontally networked modes of activism in pursuit of political objectives that are non-materialistic, symbolic and ethically informed by religious and human rights ideals. Participants' motivations to act reveal 'low negotiability' (Melucci, 1996:102) in that they have little interest in seizing power, making them less achievable through mainstream political channels. Adding fuel to this is participants' lack of trust or respect for mainstream institutions which are seen as epitomising the values and practices that are being challenged through activism. Their aspirations to establish a different kind of social order and norms of political participation necessitate breaking with established and available patterns of political engagement and pursuing alternative ways of living, acting and expressing political agency, through lifestyle politics, religious and cultural education, art, academia, blogging and other creative expressions of political agency. Many participants organise their political and civic projects through networks in both their daily lives as well as online through digital technologies where they can exercise individual control and at the same time generate unity and solidarity with other like-minded activists. This is underlined by an almost unanimous dismissal of what is thought to be false knowledge circulated by untrustworthy mass media and politicians with vested interests. Participants form

their own alternative networks and systems of knowledge, becoming cultural producers to disseminate alternative social codes and norms through social media as well as local events and initiatives like film screenings, lectures, workshops and discussions. These findings support social movement theorists who argue that the role of the individuals in collective action is becoming more pronounced due to the rapid proliferation of digital communication networks (Castells, 2012; Della Porta et al, 2006; Hands, 2011). While claims that new forms of internet based communication radically alter the nature of political participation are yet to be borne out, this research supports growing evidence that digital networks play a very crucial and increasingly productive role in activism (Della Porta et al, 2006; Earl and Kimport, 2011; Hands, 2011). However, it is unable to settle ongoing debates between those who view the internet as representing a potentially radical shift in politics (Castells, 2012) and those who doubt the efficacy of internet activism to substantively change the power dynamics of society (Fenton, 2008).

The case for considering the activism of young Muslims as a social movement continues in Chapter 6 by demonstrating how collective identity is achieved despite plurality, intersectionality and hybridity within the group where tensions between multiple valued aspects of personal identity and different subject positions delineated by class, gender and age, as well as different levels of religiosity and practice, can fragment solidarity and unity. A collective Muslim identity emerges from shared objectives of affirming and defending faith identities which are currently the object of stigmatisation and marginalisation, particularly in the protracted shadow of 9/11. The way in which Islamophobia is challenged through the production of a collective identity based on religious signification despite varied levels of religiosity, including the absence of religious belief among some participants, suggests a need to 'affirm what others deny' (Melucci, 1989:46). This captures the political structuring of Muslim faith identities, further evinced by the way in which participants interpret and project Islamic ideals strategically in congruence with their political and civic imaginaries and choices. This is not to imply that faith has a purely instrumental role in the lives of participants since this would not only be simplistically reductive but also without empirical support. Rather it is argued that such a strategic deployment of faith as a political ideology is inevitable in the context of this research where the focus is on political subjectivities. It is argued that the politicisation of Islam owes more to increasing levels of Islamophobia post 9/11, as well as the securitisation of Islam

which is necessary 'for disciplining and 'producing' 'good Muslims' compliant with the secular order' (Mavelli, 2013:179). Furthermore, the way in which Islam is interpreted through subjective, reflexive and ethical idioms and performances by participants subverts the view of religious faith as an anachronistic retreat to tradition motivated by rejection of Western ideals of freedom and democracy. Here faith can be seen as an identity marker that has become politicised through social denial, misrecognition and denigration but is also reinvented and appropriated by participants through agency and choice in ways that reflect their European lifestyles and sensibilities (Cesari, 2007; Lewis, 2007; Ramadan, 2009; Roy, 2004). Like other marginalised groups conducting identity politics, or the politics of difference, Muslims are placed in a paradoxical position where a singular marker of identity as the object of stigmatisation has to be prioritised through strategic essentialism in order to turn negative difference into positive difference (Modood, 2010b). Religious identification serves dual purposes by allowing young adult Muslims to contest pressures from within the group to conform to outdated, traditional practices and defy oppressive forces of Islamophobia that they view as endemic in British society.

The orientation and configuration of this social movement in relation to the broader social and political context is explicated by analysing participants' attitudes and perceptions of mainstream politics (Chapter 7) and citizenship (Chapter 8). This provides an insight into the social and political opportunity structures that demarcate the possible range of responses available to young Muslims. Chapters 7 and 8 resonate political choices, ideals and praxis that are a recognisable hallmark of social movements, revealing affinities with a recent wave of progressive movements like the Arab Spring and Occupy that 'ignored political parties, distrusted the media, did not recognize any leadership' (Castells, 2012:4). Negative and dismissive attitudes to politics and politicians are therefore anticipated and widespread, although it is evident that this does not unanimously preclude the possibility of engagement with mainstream politics, provided there is structural modification to accommodate difference and dissent. Participants seek reform rather than destruction of political institutions but pursue alternative ways to achieve political influence in society because of the failure of the existing system to tolerate alterity or pluralism. This accords with what Melucci (1996:103) describes as a rejection of political mediation or representation by social movements because it 'tends to reproduce the control mechanisms they fight against'.

Participants' reasons for eschewing mainstream politics are influenced by a range of pathologies associated with politics, including its domination by self-interested politicians from a male, white, upper or middle class background which translates into an intransigent system predicated on a suppression of alternative identities, interests and perspectives. While ideological disagreement plays a significant role, differences in identity are also a major factor in the view of mainstream politics as an alien and hostile space, which compels participants to demand 'descriptive representation'. Also known as mirror representation (Phillips, 1995), descriptive representation requires members of the minority group to directly represent their interests in corridors of power. Although the symbolic value of having role models in positions of power in government is seen as decisive for minorities to participate in politics, the intransigence of the political structure is viewed as so obdurate that current Muslim representatives (including MPs and councillors) are written off as co-opted pawns who simply perform a tokenistic function. However, while mainstream politics is seen as an antagonistic and compromising route to social change, conventional forms of dissent and protest politics through marches, demonstrations and public agitation are also considered to be ineffectual and, more importantly, riskier for Muslims under securitised conditions of citizenship. While these constraints are compelling enough reason to pursue cultural politics, further inducement comes from concerns about public apathy and passivity which are seen as being complicit in maintaining and reproducing unequal and unjust power relations in society. In other words public consciousness is the primary target of activism in cultural politics that seek to 'translate their actions into symbolic challenges to the dominant codes' (Melucci, 1989:12) in order to establish an alternative social and political order.

Participants' perspectives on citizenship explored in Chapter 8 provide insights into how dominant codes are symbolically challenged by this British Muslim social movement. Citizenship represents a contentious and conflicted concept to participants as it invokes tensions over the conditionality and precariousness to which Muslim belonging to Britain is currently subject. On the one hand citizenship, as identification with Britishness, is problematic because government policy criminalises Muslims and renders their identities as suspect and risky (Brown, 2010; Kundnani, 2007; Mythen et al, 2009; Pentazis and Pemberton, 2009; Vertigans, 2010) while on the other hand failure to express such identification is also hazardous and undermines much needed concessions

and support from the state. Citizenship is articulated through two different approaches contrasted in two alternative models of activism or active citizenship. What is referred to as 'explicit resistance' is distinguished by overtly critical and counter-hegemonic notions of citizenship while 'implicit resistance' can be seen as complicit in reproducing hegemonic notions of active citizenship based on individual responsibility and duty that are emblematic of neoliberal and nationalist ideologies (Isin and Wood, 1999; Davies, 2012; Marinetto, 2003; McGhee, 2008). However, the underlying civic values in both approaches which prioritise ideals of faith, humanity, community and universality are starkly contrary to both of the hegemonic models of active citizenship. It is argued that the two approaches to activism are different political strategies of resistance rather than oppositional modes of action, as both are united in their efforts to challenge the values and rationalities of neoliberal and nationalist models of citizenship in different ways. Despite differences in approach and the tensions this generates the activists are well connected through supportive networks that actively engage in the production of a collective Muslim identity to contest Islamophobia in a post 9/11 context.

Participants' discourses in Chapter 8 reveal a normative ideal of post-national citizenship that transcends the constraints imposed by the nation-state and flouts neoliberal rationalities based on personal gain and market oriented efficiency. Demonstrating a strong commitment to civic responsibility and participation these young Muslims defy fears that negative associations with Britishness, or strong identification with the Islamic *ummah,* weaken the value and relevance of citizenship. More importantly their politics mirror contemporary patterns of engagement through 'new cultural politics' that have 'effectively questioned the master identity imposed by the modern nation-state' (Isin and Wood, 1999:155). To put it bluntly the framing of citizenship as a duty to Islam by participants in this study reflects efforts by a growing number of critical citizens to universalise citizenship beyond the nation-state through 'the rise of new forms of allegiances and loyalties' with 'the right to participate in the cultural field both as a producer and as a consumer' (Isin Wood, 1999:157). These demands for citizenship on revised terms support Modood's (2010:39) assertion that although 'Muslims raise distinctive concerns, the logic of their demands often mirrors those of other equality seeking groups'.

Finally in Chapter 9 Muslim cultural politics is examined through macro theories of power to map the field of possibilities and constraints within which

activism is situated. Foucauldian analytics of power elucidate the cultural politics of young adult Muslims as a strategic but cautious response to two dominant forms of power in contemporary societies like Britain - one an imperceptible form of social control captured by the notion of governmentality and the other a direct form of domination wielded through the securitisation of citizenship. To reiterate governmentality signifies a rationality of government where power is exercised in various levels of society 'through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people' the fulfilment of the ends of the state (Foucault, 1994a:217). Governmentality operates by producing in citizens particular kinds of subjectivities and dispositions that directs their conduct towards realising the objectives of the state. Securitisation on the other hand represents an escalation in more direct and violent forms of power in recent years justified on the pretext of an imminent threat, like militant Islam, which necessitates extraordinary measures to curtail certain civil liberties (Brown, 2010; Mavelli, 2013; McGhee, 2008). Both forms of power are concomitant and undifferentiated in their effects on Muslim political and civic activists who adopt cultural politics to negotiate precarious and hostile political and legal conditions in a post-9/11 context. Securitisation itself is understood through governmentality since the exceptional powers seized by the state and security agencies at the cost of civic freedoms have to be normalised and legitimised through public consent.

Foucault's theory of governmentality brings into focus diffused and imperceptible forms of power that operate by 'implanting in citizens the aspiration to pursue their own civility, well-being and advancement' (Rose, 2006:147). This plays out at two levels, firstly in the internalisation of domination evident in discourses of citizenship that reproduce neoliberal and nationalist perspectives and secondly through inducing docility in the public that passively concedes civic freedoms as direct forms of power proliferate in the security state. This framing draws attention to the state's own cultural politics that contribute to the marginalisation and criminalisation of Muslim citizens as emphasised by a number of recent academic works (Brown, 2010; McGhee, 2008; Pero, 2013; Vertovec, 2011). Lentin (2014:1271) has argued that the backlash against diversity in the post-2001 context is marked by 'the culturalization of politics in which cultural, rather than socio-economic or political frames' are invoked to describe and address social challenges. This positions the state itself is the purveyor of cultural politics, a point that is fully elaborated in Chapter 9 where Foucauldian theories of power and governance are deployed to make sense of

the political activism of young adult Muslims at a macro scale. The salience of culture and the cultural forms through which power is exercised in society at present is cited as a compelling explanation for the dominance of cultural politics among young adult Muslims in this study.

Knowledge claims and contribution

In these concluding reflections I would like to address some of the possible political and normative implications of the findings and also contextualise the claims being made in the light of extant literature on the topic discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

The empirical background of Muslim politics and citizenship in Chapter 2 states that existing knowledge on the topic is dominated by 'a series of highly pathologising crisis narratives on ethnic minority young people' (O'Toole and Gale, 2013:17) engendered by an inordinate amount of attention on issues of segregation and disengagement or extremism and terrorism, as well as the tendency to conduct research that speaks down to young Muslims rather than speaking to them (Garner and Selod, 2015; Spalek and Lambert, 2008). In order to gain a more balanced picture this research shifts attention to the relatively unfamiliar area of Muslim politics conducted through non-electoral and subpolitical forms of activism. The importance of these forms of mobilisation follows from growing evidence of changing political repertoires among citizens in the West that have resulted in falling levels of engagement in '*state oriented activities'* (Norris, 2002:193; original emphasis) and the adoption of 'new citizen politics' through direct forms of action beyond voting and elections (Dalton, 2008:8-9). This study follows O'Toole and Gale (2013) in arguing that ignoring this area of political participation contributes to a pathological view of Muslims because it promotes the belief that Muslim disengagement is a product of Islam's incompatibility with democratic secular politics, and that Muslims are only interested in the politics of violence and terrorism. As the findings summarised above confirm Muslim identity politics is deeply influenced by but not dictated by faith. The cultural politics of Muslims is conducted through grammars of action that draw on social imaginaries and political subjectivities common among a number of other progressive social movements seeking to expand the meaning of citizenship by promoting social equality and justice. However, these findings

also vindicate claims that extraordinary burdens and pressures are being brought to bear upon Muslim citizenship which renders regular and mainstream political processes less accessible and feasible for Muslims (Brighton, 2007; Brown and Saeed, 2014; O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012). As this study reveals participants' political choices are indeed restricted due to the exceptional demands placed on Muslims by the securitisation of citizenship and the compulsion to conform to narrow ideals of citizenship.

Literature on theoretical perspectives reviewed in Chapter 3 argues for the relevance of a cultural politics model to understand the politics of young adult Muslims. The findings of this study demonstrate that the emphasis on cultural politics is not simply a matter of epistemology where the use of a particular conceptual lens singles out the relevant features of the data but rather it follows from the distinctive characteristics and political repertoires presented by the participants. This research offers fresh empirical support for Nash's (2001) assertion that there are two arguments for the cultural turn in political sociology. The historical argument suggests that cultural politics play an 'unprecedented role' in contemporary forms of collective action and the epistemological case, drawing on a conceptually different view of politics influenced by Foucauldian theory, claims that culture is 'universally constitutive' of politics (Nash, 2001:77). Both these cases resonate strongly in this study. To reiterate the concept of cultural politics, Nash (2010:37) argues that:

> …contemporary political sociology concerns cultural politics, which is the interpretation of social meanings that support, challenge, or change the definitions, perspectives, and identities of social actors, to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others, across state and society.

As this research reveals, the collective and individual mobilisations of young adult Muslims exemplify such forms of contestation through an active struggle to renegotiate the meanings citizenship and political participation in the wake of the war on terror that has placed Muslims on the margins of British society and rendered their presence precarious and contingent (Brown, 2010; O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012; McGhee, 2008; Meer, 2010; Modood, 2007, 2010; Parekh, 2008). This is not to say that participants' actions and orientations can be understood with reference to culture alone since this is only one aspect of social life that intersects with the material and structural as well as the emotional and the psychological factors. While the cultural dimension is overriding and

significant in the political repertoires investigated in this study, it is also worth remembering how theorists understand the role of culture in contemporary societies.

> Modern culture is relentlessly material in its practices and modes of production. And the material world of commodities and technologies is profoundly cultural. (Hall, 2005b:233)

> Under advanced capitalism the cultures of production and the production of culture are interwoven and the clear distinction between economy and culture may not be possible to sustain. (Isin and Wood, 1999:152).

These understandings imply culture is not discrete and separable from other social objects and experiences in a way that focusing on it elides other important ways of understanding social relations and subjects. What is being argued here is that the notion of cultural politics does not preclude transformation of social structures and material conditions of life but rather presumes these goals as they are seen as being predicated on cultural hegemony. Hence, while Islamophobia is the significant target of activism its relation to economic and material disadvantage is not explicitly stated but taken as read.

Chapter 3 also devotes a great deal of attention to Foucauldian analytics of power which it views as a strong theoretical entry point to new and diverse social practices and activities as sites of political struggle. The thesis reveals the explanatory value of Foucauldian theory for explicating Muslim cultural politics by highlighting the reciprocal relationship where the research data is elucidated by Foucault's theorisation of power but the findings also offer a case study to support his ideas. However, applying Foucault's analytics of power should not be taken as a structural argument to explain Muslim politics. The arguments presented in this thesis are not intended to suggest that the participants are without agency or choice in allowing the rationalities of governmentality to wash over them uncritically. This is because Foucault's theory of power can have structural and determinist connotations but agency and resistance is the very condition of the power relations he has theorised. Foucault (1997:292) states that power relations are:

> …mobile, reversible, and unstable. It should be noted that power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free. If one of them were completely at the others disposal and became his thing, an object on which

he could wreak boundless and limitless violence, there wouldn't be any relations of power.

Therefore, while governmentality explains the participants' discourses and actions, the forms of contestation and resistance mounted through diverse forms of activism is evidence of agency and creativity in subversion of power. However, even though agency is a condition of power relations this also does not imply free rein since social agents are always acting within the limits of 'the field of possibilities' created by prevailing power relations (Foucault, 1994b:341). Such constraints have already been discussed in detail in previous chapters and the summary above.

It should be noted that the salience given to cultural politics in this thesis is not intended to make a normative argument about the relative superiority or significance of such forms of participation over other political modes of action such as party politics or trade unionism. While it is argued that the cultural politics adopted by participants are shaped by the nature of power in society, articulated by Foucault's theorisation of knowledge, discourse and governmentality, it does not follow that such forms of engagement are being advocated by the research. This thesis has focused on exploration, description and explanation of the political and civic activism of young adult Muslims, avoiding normative statements or evaluations as far as it is possible for any research output to do so. However, this thesis is bound to raise questions about the efficacy and practical value of its findings which necessitates responses which cannot avoid normative implications as the following discussion makes more explicit.

Implications of research

There are two important implications arising from this thesis that are suggestive of the value and potential of cultural politics conducted by social movements in strengthening political participation and citizenship. Firstly by framing Muslim activism through a model of cultural politics and social movement theory this thesis offers a challenge to pathological views of Muslim citizenship, opening up new possibilities for addressing issues of cohesion, diversity and security. Secondly the thesis raises questions about how political success and efficacy can be measured and assessed in the light of these politics and their normative vision of society.

The first argument concerns the role of Muslims in politics and society to which this thesis has made an important contribution by adding to a growing corpus of much needed literature on different forms of British Muslim politics (Akhtar, 2012, 2013; Ansari, 2009; Back et al, 2009; Briggs, 2010; O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012; O'Toole and Gale, 2013; O'Toole et al, 2013; Marsh et al, 2007; Modood, 2007; 2010; Meer, 2010; Solomos, 2005). By adopting an ethnographic research strategy and interview methods that prioritise the voice and agency of participants this thesis has been able to challenge some of the essentialist and damaging assumptions made about the disengagement of young Muslims from mainstream political processes and British citizenship. The thesis has presented findings that support a modest body of earlier research suggesting that young Muslims share with many other critical citizens the propensity to favour direct forms of political participation (Norris, 2002; 2011; Marsh et al 2007) which signal their desire to be included in British society rather than indicating separation. This research argues that these forms of activism can only be seen as participation in democratic processes if evidence of the changing political subjectivities and practices of citizens in the West is taken seriously (Beck, 1997; Cohen and Kennedy, 2007; Dalton, 2008; Hay, 2007; Marsh et al, 2007; Norris, 2002; 2011; Nash, 2010). The insights gained from adopting this theoretical lens reveals the common sensibilities, repertoires of action and moral and ethical concerns reflected by other 'egalitarian "progressive" movements' (Nash, 2010:234) that primarily aim to reshape society and make citizenship and the nation more inclusive of marginal actors (Adamson, 2011; Briggs, 2010; McGhee, 2008; O'Toole and Gale, 2013). However, to appreciate the democratising potential of these mobilisations requires expanding the narrow view of citizenship defined by the state and revitalising the concept to meet the demands of the 'new style of citizen politics' (Dalton, 2008:8). As Isin and Wood (1999:4) state the notion of citizenship needs to be more inclusive:

> …citizenship is conceived more broadly not only as a set of legal obligations and entitlements which individuals possess by virtue of their membership in the state, but also as the practices through which individuals and groups formulate and claim new rights or struggle to expand or maintain existing rights.

This calls for state recognition of these dynamic modes of active citizenship instead of the exclusionary rhetoric that condemns dissent or protest by young people, particularly Muslims, as expressions of deviance and disorder which

threatens national security (Briggs, 2010; Brown and Saeed, 2014; Dobbernack et al, 2012; Frost, 2008; Kennelly, 2011; Shukra et al, 2012). The activism of young Muslims in this study reflects a strong civic consciousness which draws on Islamic faith as well as values of participatory and pluralist democracy to demand greater recognition and inclusion of Muslim identities in the national imagination. However, bridges between such critical political subjects and the mainstream political institutions require that the voices, views, interests and ideals of these young people are given respect and credibility as a starting point. This thesis has tried to highlight some of the political aims and priorities of participants in the Midlands and while the sample is too small to generalise it is highly likely that many of the issues raised by participants reverberate concerns felt by other young Muslims across the country, if not also in other Western countries where Muslims live as a minority group. This claim is based on the networked nature of activism where participants share and co-produce political and cultural messages, imaginaries and action systems with other activists and like-minded citizens nationally and transnationally in a complex web that constitutes a distinct social movement. While this research focuses on one section of this interwoven mesh, there are good reasons to believe that the themes raised by this research have resonance with other activists further afield.

The second point to be made about the participation of young adult Muslims in a social movement premised on cultural politics is the question regarding the efficacy of such forms of activism in creating political change. Given continuing concerns about the legitimacy of politics (Beck, 1997; Hay, 2007; Stoker, 2006) and the democratic deficit posed by diminishing engagement in the electoral system (Norris, 2002; 2011) the question is serious one. As Isin and Wood (1999:2) point out:

> To put it simply the political question or perhaps anxiety of our times is whether cultural politics can form an effective resistance to injustice, inequality, domination and oppression engendered by advanced capitalism and institutionalised by neoliberalism. (Isin and Wood, 1999:2)

It would be useful to begin with some obvious critiques of subpolitical and cultural forms of politics that are associated with social movements. A primary objection would be that their overemphasis on cultural change is unlikely to stimulate any concrete programmes or institutional forms that can translate the political imaginaries of activists into social realities (Fenton, 2008). This invokes

concerns about increased individualisation in politics theorised by Beck (1994; 1997) and Giddens (1991) which can diminish the capacity for collective action (Rheingans and Hollands, 2013). Another problem is that political actions that ignore the state have the effect of absolving the most powerful forces of domination in society and diminishing their accountability (Faulks, 1999). A further problem with cultural politics relates to critiques of postmodernist approaches to politics which are said to celebrate difference and marginality 'as an expression of resistance' but which can also represent 'the cultural logic of late capitalism' (Blackman and France, 2001:180). As 'difference is itself attractive to the market as a selling feature' youth cultures of marginality can be 'taken up and exploited economically within a global market-place' (Blackman and France, 2001:180).

While acknowledging that these questions are of vital importance, providing definitive and exhaustive responses is beyond the scope of this work, since this would demand a different kind of focus and research design to the one this study adopted. Seeking answers to such questions certainly indicates the future direction of research in this area, particularly as the outcomes and consequences of social movements are not only hard to define but remain under-researched (Earl, 2007). While these interesting questions emerge from the present study, their answers must be deferred to further investigations that follow on from the point where this research culminates. In the context of this chapter it is only possible to offer some tentative comments in response to the above critiques by citing the relative significance of cultural politics and their place in the larger political landscape in general.

It should be clear that this discussion does not refer to the cultural politics of the state since these are indisputably a source of power and domination in society as previous discussions have stated. The value of cultural politics, as typically conducted by social movements, is above all in the symbolic work that is done under its rubric. Isin and Wood (1999:2) state that the 'fragmentation, incoherence and symbolism of cultural politics are precisely its political strengths'. Isin and Wood (1999) contend that the distinction being drawn by many critics of cultural politics invokes classic disagreements over the politics of redistribution and recognition involving theorists like Nancy Fraser, Iris Young, Anne Phillips and Seyla Benhabib. However, these academic debates demarcate lines that have lost their visibility in the endeavours of social movements that dispense with such analytical categories, removing distinctions between 'culture

and economy, culture and social, and, hence between redistribution and recognition' (Isin and Wood, 1999:2). The findings of this study support this view and in doing so question Giddens' (1991:210-214) distinction between 'emancipatory' politics as being concerned with liberating citizens from exploitation and oppression and in contrast 'life politics' being simply concerned with choice, lifestyle and self-actualisation. The young Muslim participants in this study clearly do more than just exercise choice to enhance self-actualisation. They consciously construct collective identities to serve a much broader social project aimed at emancipating Muslim citizens from an oppressed and disadvantaged social position that has both symbolic and material aims and consequences. This thesis agrees with Rheingans and Hollands (2013:551) that this 'too easy a separation' between emancipatory and life politics is untenable in the face of contemporary movements such as Occupy and the student campaigns in Britain that struggle for both symbolic and material forms of justice.

Critiques of cultural politics that are premised on their inability to demonstrate immediate or measurable political gains fail to appreciate difficulties involved in not only defining political gains but also measuring them, particularly where cultural change is the desired outcome (Earl, 2007). While some social movements have policy and legal change as their targets (Della Porta and Diani, 2006) the role of many social movements is in bringing about deeper and more enduring social and cultural changes, sometimes through paradigm shifts from the grassroots. Social movements reveal their results or outcomes in gradual and diffused changes with momentous impacts over time, such as the effects of the feminist movement that has transformed gender roles and attitudes over generations (Earl, 2007; Nash, 2010). The cultural politics of social movements are prefigurative in their aims to reshape society by changing dominant codes and meanings through diffusion and ultimate normalisation of new political values and ideals. The most important function of social movements is that they bring new and thus far invisible, unimagined or marginalised issues and causes into the public sphere (Nash, 2010). As Melucci (1989:12) highlights in his seminal work on social movements:

> [Collective action] raises questions that transcend the logic of instrumental effectiveness and decision-making by anonymous and impersonal organizations of power. Contemporary social movements stimulate radical questions about the ends of personal and social life and, in so doing, they warn of the crucial problems facing complex societies.

This prophetic function of cultural politics in shaping the subjectivities of fellow citizens is all the more explicable in the light of the theorisation of power presented in this thesis, since this is the domain in which the cultural politics of the state can be detected in the 'conduct of conducts' (Foucault, 1994b:341) through governmentality. In order to resist such forms of power participants have to act outside mainstream political institutions and fight on cultural ground. Despite their limited access to power and the numerous challenges that confront their struggles, social movement actors aim to 'create far-reaching and deep-rooted changes in perspective, the redefining of interests, and, hence the reconfiguration of hierarchical social relations' (Nash, 2010:231). It is worth concluding with Beck's (1997:100) reminder that the power of subpolitics should not be underestimated in the age of reflexive modernity:

> In a society without consensus, devoid of a legitimising core, it is evident that even a single gust of wind, caused by the cry for freedom, can bring down the whole house of cards of power.

Limitations of study and future prospects

As most research is an abstraction from social life, the account presented here is provisional and based on a relatively modest piece of work involving a limited sample of Muslim activists. Therefore, the generalisation claims made by this research can only stretch as far as to argue that given similar conditions and participant profiles the results are likely to reflect similar outcomes. This claim is strengthened by the congruence and convergence found between some of the findings in this study and other similar works conducted previously (Akhtar, 2013; Briggs, 2010; Brown and Saeed, 2014; O'Loughlin and Gillespie, 2012; Marsh et al, 2007; O'Toole and Gale, 2013; Stacer-Portwood, 2013). This suggests the findings are likely to have resonance beyond this case study.

As already specified, the issues of security and terrorism were not explicitly foregrounded in the design and aims of this research and therefore their treatment has been somewhat contextual and peripheral. However, security emerges as an important and almost dominant theme in the study, albeit in a subtle and shadowy way, leading to suggestions that the relative scarcity of action around the issue of security during fieldwork might be linked to the constraining impact of securitisation. However, during the writing phase of this

thesis events took a slightly different turn with a number of new campaigns around securitisation emerging in the research field, including protests against the arrest of Moazaam Begg and campaigns to challenge the new counter-terrorism bill anticipated in 2015. As fieldwork had ceased by this stage the thesis was not able to incorporate these fresh developments into the analysis. Hence, these represent vitally important areas for future investigation, especially since the implications of such developments remains unclear. They could be reflective of a maturation of Muslim political capacities or an intensification of securitisation or more likely a combination of both factors and others that are yet unknown. Security around Muslim citizenship in the West remains a crucial concern, as witnessed by the frenzy surrounding the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015 and the subsequent political responses which signalled an even greater will on the part of European states to encroach on civil liberties through increased regulation and surveillance of citizens. In this respect there is a continuing need for research to investigate how the securitisation of citizenship is impacting on Muslims and other citizens in the West.

Similarly other important areas for future research stem from the underdevelopment of a number of key themes that are prominent in the data but had to be regretfully relegated to the sidelines in order to maintain an analytical focus on broader issues related to politics and citizenship. Therefore, important themes like gender, social media and class which all present themselves as significant dimensions for deeper analysis could not be fully explored due to limitations of space and time. However, these areas present openings for further research into promising lines of inquiry.

The topic of gender identities and activism is a particularly important one with a rich potential for further study since the role played by women activists in the social movement being theorised in this study is decisive and conspicuous. A number of female participants display strong leadership qualities, evident in their ability to mobilise and inspire others to support and follow them. However, in the context of this exploratory study such a focused examination of the role of gender could not be justified since this required engagement with a body of literature that could potentially be the subject of another full doctoral thesis.

The research carried out during this doctoral study also identified the area of Muslim activism as a promising one to contribute to some of the nascent debates on the democratising potential of new media (Castells, 2012; Earl and

Kimport, 2011; Hands, 2011). Although data was collected from social media sites with the intention of conducting a full discourse analysis this became an overly ambitious plan that was distracting from the main themes of the study and was placed in abeyance for future paper-writing and further research opportunities. Debates about online activism and the role of social media in promoting or shaping political participation is an area of continuing interest across disciplines but stands in need of further empirical evidence and theorisation. This study highlights the importance of social media in facilitating organisation and networking opportunities but this only touches the surface of the topic which represents an exciting and fruitful area for future research activity.

Going forward

Although the main purpose of this study is clearly to produce an academic treatise it would be disingenuous to claim that the intended target audience was limited to scholars in this field. The writing of this thesis has always been conscious of the diverse readership that may have an interest in the themes covered here, not least of all government officials, politicians, media professionals, lobbyists of various persuasions, as well as activists themselves. While this thesis may not make for easy reading by many of these readers, due to the sociological language and conceptual framing, it is intended that the study form the basis of more accessible publications in the future, including a book. This is because it offers important insights that may help to dispel some of the negative myths and stereotypes about Muslim citizens and in doing so alleviate some of the pressures that render their citizenship precarious and challenging. This is important not simply in relation to Muslims but touches on issues of difference and diversity that should concern all marginal individuals and groups who can in principle be targeted by the same processes and prejudices that are currently directed at people associated with Islam. In identifying the barriers and obstacles experienced by young Muslims to participation in British politics and citizenship the findings of this thesis can be a valuable resource to government, policy-makers and other stake-holders interested in addressing concerns around youth disengagement, integration, security, social cohesion and citizenship. Most importantly the research has allowed voices that are often muted or absent in the public sphere to speak out and it would be an insult, added to existing injury, if these discourses were not taken to a wider audience.

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Appendix 1: Participant profiles

Fictional names	Gender	Age	City of residence	Role
Abid	Male	25	City 1	Poet and charity worker
Aliya	Female	37	City 1	Communist activist
Ameer	Male	33	City 1	Community activist
Amna	Female	31	City 1	Student activist
Arya	Female	19	City 2	Student and youth activist
Basma	Female	25	City 1	Student activist and student union elected officer
Beena	Female	21	City 1	Student activist
Changez	Male	20	City 1	Student activist
Chohan	Male	22	City 2	Charity volunteer
Dania	Female	23	City 1	Former student activist and pro-Palestine activist
Hanif	Male	20	City 2	Student activist
Haseena	Female	21	City 1	Student activist
Imran	Male	17	City 1	Former anti-war activist. Aspiring politician.
Irum	Female	28	City 1	Community activist
Kasim	Male	35	City 1	Community activist
Khalid	Male	19	City 1	Community and youth activist
Khayam	Male	23	City 2	Community activist and charity worker
Khizar	Male	21	City 2	Student activist and SU President candidate

Laila	Female	19	City 1	Student activist
Maz	Male	23	City 1	Student union elected officer
Mona	Female	27	City 1	Political photographer, blogger and graphic artist
Parveen	Female	25	City 1	Activist blogger and journalist
Rabia	Female	23	City 2	Student activist and student union elected officer
Romana	Female	20	City 1	Student activist
Saif	Male	27	City 2	Academic activist
Salman	Male	27	City 1	Community activist
Sameera	Female	21	City 2	Student activist
Sara	Female	19	City 1	Student activist
Shoaib	Male	22	City 1	Student activist
Tamara	Female	20	City 2	Student union elected officer
Tehmina	Female	25	City 2	Community activist and charity volunteer
Yasir	Male	31	City 1	Community activist
Yousaf	Male	34	City 2	Activist journalist
Zahir	Male	27	City 1	Youth and community activist

Appendix 2: Organisations involved in the research

Organisation	Type of activism
Ceasefire Magazine	Online social justice publication
Craft Space	Local community project
Engage	National campaign group
Envision	Youth empowerment campaign
Hear My Voice	Local youth empowerment group
Himmah	Local social justice campaign
Injustice (Anti-extradition campaign)	Local political campaign
Islamic Society of Britain	National religious society
Mercy Mission	Local voluntary social welfare group
MPACUK	National campaign group
Muslim Association of Britain	National religious group
National Union of Students	Student representative body
Palestine Solidarity Campaign	National campaign group
Stop the War Coalition	National anti-war campaign group
Student Islamic Societies	Student cultural/religious society
Student Palestine Societies	Political student society
UN International Citizens Service	International voluntary aid service
Young Muslims Advisory Group (No longer active)	National government funded consultation group

Appendix 3: Recruitment materials

What do you think?
Active citizenship, civic participation and youth

Please contact me in complete confidence

If you are:

- **Aged 18 to 35 years**.
- **Active in civil society** through student or trade unions, charity work, political activism (anti-cuts, anti-racism, anti-fascism, anti-war, social justice) or run a blog or campaign for social change.
- **From a Muslim background or family** (whether religious or not).

I'd really like to hear your views. My research is about the experiences, perspectives and stories of young people from a Muslim background who engage in different forms of active citizenship in Britain. I am trying to learn about the range of civic activities that young people engage in and to understand what it is like to participate in these activities in the current social, economic and political climate.

Researcher: Anisa Mustafa, PhD Student (Sociology)
Email: lqxam10@nottingham.ac.uk
Facebook: Anisa Iqbal Mustafa
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The University of Nottingham

Appendix 4: Information for participants

The University of Nottingham

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Information for Participants

Active citizenship, civic participation and Muslim youth

What is it?

This is a PhD study, funded by the ESRC, in which I am setting out to explore the experiences, perspectives and stories of young people from a Muslim background, who engage in different forms of active citizenship in Britain. I am aiming to learn about the different forms of activism and participation that young people engage in and to understand what it is like to participate in these activities in the current social, economic and political climate. The aim is gain some insights into the issues and concerns that motivate young people from a minority group to mobilise within civil society. The study hopes to find out how this relates to themes of citizenship, participation, democracy and multiculturalism within contemporary Britain.

What does it involve?

I am seeking to interview participants aged 18 to 35 years. If possible and permitted I'd also like to observe the activities that they take part in. The types of activities that I am focusing on include student and trade unionism, charity work, engagement in activism (anti-racism, anti-fascism, anti-war etc), campaigns for equality, social justice, emancipation, human rights, civil liberties, educational projects and awareness-raising initiatives. The interviews can be recorded or informal but are confidential.

What will the data be used for?

The outcome of this research is going to be a PhD thesis, which will be read by academics and students primarily. Other outputs may include journal articles and conference presentations as well as articles for the media and policymakers. The identities of the participants will remain anonymous in all these different outputs and every effort will be made to prevent readers from identifying the participants through indirect means. The data will be stored in accordance with data protection laws. All participants who agree to take part in this research will have the option to withdraw at any stage of the research.

Are there any risks?

There are no known or anticipated risks to anyone taking part of this study. All the information provided by the participants will be strictly confidential, and although it is not anticipated that this research will uncover any illegal or harmful

activities it is my obligation as an ESRC funded researcher to disclose such activities to my supervisors, if I am made aware of them.

Contacts

The details of the researcher and associated staff at the University of Nottingham can be found below.

Researcher: Anisa Mustafa, PhD Student (Sociology)

Supervisors:

Dr Andrew Yip -
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/sociology/stafflookup/andrew.yip

and

Dr Davide Pero -
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/sociology/stafflookup/davide.pero

Complaint procedure

If you wish to complain about the way in which the research is being conducted or have any concerns about the research then in the first instance please contact the supervisors by email:

Dr Andrew Yip is available on: **andrew.yip@nottingham.ac.uk**

Dr Davide Pero is available on: **davide.pero@nottingham.ac.uk**.

If this does not resolve the matter to your satisfaction then please contact the School's Research Ethics Officer, **Dr Christian Karner** (Tel. 0115 8467594, email Christian.Karner@nottingham.ac.uk)

Thank you for your help with this research.

Yours sincerely

Anisa Mustafa

Email: lqxam10@nottingham.ac.uk

Mobile: 07951 764795

Appendix 5: Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Active citizenship, dissent and civic consciousness: a study of the political and civic activism of young British Muslims

In signing this consent form I confirm that:

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw from the research project at any stage, without having to give any reason and withdrawing will not penalise or disadvantaged me in any way.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, any information I provide is confidential (with one exception – see below), and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. No identifiable personal data will be published.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that the researcher may be required to report to the authorities any significant harm to a child/young person (up to the age of 18 years) that he/she becomes aware of during the research. I agree that such harm may violate the principle of confidentiality.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I agree that extracts from the interview may be anonymously quoted in any report or publication arising from the research	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that the interview will be recorded using audiotape/electronic voice recorder	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that data will be securely stored	Yes ☐	No ☐

I understand that the information provided can be used in other research projects which have ethics approval, but that my name and contact information will be removed before it is made available to other researchers.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that I may contact the researcher *[or supervisor]* if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Officer of the School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to take part in the above research project.

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____ _____ _____
Participant's name (BLOCK   Participant's signature   Date
CAPITAL)

_____ _____ _____
Researcher's name (BLOCK   Researcher's signature   Date
CAPITAL)

2

Active citizenship, dissent and power: The cultural politics of
young adult British Muslims

PhD Thesis

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UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA