

**RELIGION, MORAL HEGEMONY AND LOCAL
CARTOGRAPHIES OF POWER:**

FEMINIST REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION IN LOCAL POLITICS

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Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Sukhwant Dhaliwal

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Abstract

This is a comparative feminist analysis of religion in local politics within two London boroughs: Ealing and Newham. Starting from the observation that there has been a de-secularisation of relations between the state and civil society in Britain, it draws upon the feminist and anti racist critique of multiculturalism to produce new reflections on the shift to multifaithism. This thesis argues that the shift is the result of a double movement - from above and from below - and enables moral hegemony. By re-orienting an analysis of the religious-secular to local cartographies of power, this thesis makes smaller claims that run alongside and pose questions for a growing consensus within feminist theory that seeks a distance from secularism, that emphasises solidarities with faith based mobilisations and seeks to uncritically defend religious minority claims. The data comprises 47 in depth interviews with 'secular', 'religious' and 'state' actors. This is supplemented with ethnographic observations from public meetings, religious processions and other events. The empirical analysis discusses the following key themes: the way in which religion is welded to electoral politics; religious commitment as an ontological, aesthetic and affective source for social responsibility and political engagement; the shared pastoral-policing functions of religious organisations and the state; the emergence of religious 'election' as a new way of re-ordering local areas and access to welfare services; the negotiation of a new wave of Muslim political identifications in the context of the War on Terror; the perpetuation of a unanimist Khalsa norm and its implications for making religious claims; and a closer consideration of religious groups in alliance, the darker side of faith as social capital.

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Acronyms

BNP – British National Party

BPAS – British Pregnancy Advisory Service

CADAA – Campaign Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse

CAMPACC – Campaign Against Criminalising Communities

CARF – Campaign Against Racism and Fascism

CCR – Centre for Constitutional Rights

CCRT – Community Cohesion Review Team

CCCS – Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

CFSOT – Centre for the Study of Terrorism

COF – Citizens Organising Foundation

CPA – Christian Peoples Alliance

CPI – Communist Party of India

CSM – Christian Socialist Movement

DCLG – Department of Communities and Local Government

ELM – East London Mosque

FCCBF – Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund

FOIA – Freedom of Information Act

HT – Hizb ut-Tahrir

IAF – Industrial Areas Foundation

IFE – Islamic Forum of Europe

IWA – Indian Workers Association

IWA (GB) – Indian Workers Association Great Britain

IWA (Southall) – Indian Workers Association Southall

JCWI – Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

JI – Jamaat-e-Islami
JLC – Jewish Leadership Council
LMC – London Muslim Centre
LSP – Local Strategic Partnership
MAB – Muslim Association of Britain
MCB – Muslim Council of Britain
MSF – Muslim Safety Forum
NEC – National Executive Committee
NMP – Newham Monitoring Project
NNDP – Newham New Deal Partnership
NPAC – Newham Public Affairs Committee
NVSC – Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium
PVE – Preventing Violent Extremism
RAN – Radical Activists Network
SACRE – Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
SAD – Shrimoni Akali Dal
SASG – South Asia Solidarity Group
SBS – Southall Black Sisters
SGPC - Shrimoni Gurdwara Parbhandal Committee
SGSSS – Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall
SiC – Strangers into Citizens campaign
SMG – Southall Monitoring Group
SWP – Socialist Workers Party
TELCO – The East London Community Organisation
TMG – The Monitoring Group
TUC – Trades Union Congress
VHP – Vishwa Hindu Parishad

WAF – Women Against Fundamentalism

WLC – West London Citizens

WLUML – Women Living Under Muslim Laws

YMO – Young Muslims Organisation

Introduction

This is a qualitative study encompassing a broadly feminist epistemological framework accompanied by grounded theory and a comparative analytical approach. This study draws simultaneously upon the feminist and post-colonial critiques of empiricism to emphasise the transformative nature of research (Gross, 1986), to disentangle and reveal power relations within normative practice and dominant discourse (Said, 2004). In order to take account of the multifaceted nature of subject positions occupied by both the researcher and research participants as they move in and out of spaces, this study takes its lead from Donna Haraway's (1991) privileging of 'ways of seeing' over more limited 'ways of being'. Moreover, as with Haraway's work, this study only lays claim to 'partial vision' and 'situated knowledge' that is contingent upon access to limited information and tempered by interactions between researcher and research subjects. This thesis does not seek to make generalisable claims but rather positions smaller local claims alongside a growing consensus about religion and secularism in the current moment. By turning to the local arena, it seeks to tell different stories, some of which can pose questions for or dislodge assumptions at the heart of dominant feminist discourse.

There is some degree of tension on the question of how to characterise the current moment in British politics. My starting point is the growth of religious mobilisations and a sense that there has been a de-secularisation of public policy, particularly of relations between the state and ethnic minorities. This is distinctly contrary to the starting point of much current feminist research on religion, which stems from claims about the assimilationist tendencies of secular imposition and is motivated by the problematisation of the secular normative foundations of political mobilisations and public policy (see for instance Brown, 2008; Butler, 2008; Braidotti, 2008; Bracke, 2008; Fadil, 2011; Mahmood, 2005). There has been a distinct methodological distancing from secularism; critique is no longer thought to be situated there.

This reproach links back to the wholesale transformation of academic debate since 9/11, or rather since the War on Terror. Paradoxically, there has been little feminist scrutiny of the gradual growth of fundamentalist mobilisations. Needless to say that Guantanamo and the invasion of Iraq were hugely significant in releasing feelings of dissociation, embarrassment and shame at US and British imperial claims to be carrying the mantle of human rights and particularly to be the harbingers of women's and LGBT equalities, re-iterating the new-old place of gender in governance, the problem in Gayatri Spivak's words, that 'gender has become an alibi'. Moreover, a new wave of liberal commentary, European racist populism and new streams of fascist mobilisation are pinning their claims to the feminist critique of multiculturalism to push their assimilationist agendas. This has turned Spivak's (1985) reference to 'white men saving brown women from brown men' into Fekete's description of the return of this Orientalist fantasy as 'a call to white men to save Muslim women from Muslim men' (2006:16). The critique of secularism emerges from these combined concerns and is part of an expose that inheres violence within the concept by attempting to draw a neat line between a long list of Enlightenment projects - humanism, liberalism, universalism and indeed feminism - with each term invoking the other. Moreover, anti-racists like Fekete (2006) have collated the right wing assertions of some of the most controversial feminists to point to feminism's collusion with the production of a 'cultural code' that oppresses minorities.

Feminist academic interventions have been concerned to produce their own critiques of a revival of 'civilisational discourse' where cultures and religions are ordered in a hierarchical fashion according to allegations about sexual (un)freedoms and gender (in)equality (Brown, 2008). In the process, minority religions are characterised as derided and contained. Butler (2008) condemned this as a 'cultural assault' on minorities. Post 9/11 there appears to be a growing consensus amongst feminist writers that 'sexual freedoms have been elevated to a sacred status' and exist as a panacea towards which countries and communities are expected to progress (Werbner, 2007: 161).

Rosi Braidotti (2008), Sarah Bracke (2008) and Saba Mahmood (2008) have drawn connections between the explosion of interventions on the problems with liberalism and secularism to additional points about the feminist project. In a sense they are encouraging feminism to adjust its terms, attached so closely to anti-clericalism, in order to take account of a new wave of religious mobilisations thought to constitute a 'post secular age'. Saba Mahmood's work has been hugely influential and used to make the point that feminism denies its own affective dimensions when it questions the religious commitments of others. Stewart Motha (2007) for instance has argued that feminism is not able to deal with the simultaneity of polity and piety, of autonomy and heteronomy.

It is my contention that feminist academics looking at religion and secularism in the current context have not really been cognisant of multiplicity or intersectionality but rather have made decisions to prioritise either one of two 'ways of seeing': either by reading 'race' through the lens of gender or by reading gender through the lens of 'race', most commonly the latter. In moves to embrace religion as critical alterity or in the search for newness, many have overlooked the empirical reality of transformations in British public policy and its implications for local power relations. Meanwhile, local women's organisations, like Southall Black Sisters, are still recounting the concerns of ethnic minority women under the weight of religious imposition by both state and civil society (see Patel and Sen, 2011). Moreover, in the UK context, minorities have long since been subjected to different governing rationalities that particularly rely on the reification and imposition of religion. The other stories that this thesis seeks to tell are insights into local initiatives, the views of actors in local neighbourhoods, the proactive mobilisations of the religious Right and the religious dimensions of the development of British public policy.

My 'ways of seeing' are borne of an affinity and close personal engagement with the perspectives of two London based women's organisations - Southall Black Sisters (SBS) and Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF). This thesis emerged out of experience in the voluntary sector in each of the boroughs during the 1990s and early

2000s and a concern about changing local landscapes. I recall SBS and WAF's problematisation of religion in the public sphere and particularly the growth of fundamentalist mobilisations of all hues. I reflect on local developments from a place of doubt and locate concerns about minority voices, dissent and the religious Right at the heart of this analysis.

I make a lot of use of two particular terms developed by Back et al (2009) - 'local cartographies of power' and the 'glocal' - to refer to the shaping of relations of power within local urban spaces by the multiple interactions between: governmentalised institutions of governance; transnational networks of religious, ethnic, caste or kinship affiliations; and also local communitarian sources of organising and identification. Each articulates with the other to create glocal registers for doing politics. This thesis also makes extensive use of Chetan Bhatt's detailed insights on the substantive dimensions of religious Right formations, their global reach and local incidence. Or as Michael Keith (2005) has noted, for the way that Bhatt's work draws out 'the geopolitical realities (that) undermine both casual theorisation of "the west and the rest"' and reveal the multiple ways in which 'transnational political spaces inhabit the cultures of diaspora populations of the contemporary metropolis'.

I have also drawn on a body of work critiquing multiculturalist practice to produce new reflections on the British slide into multifaithism. By recognising that this is the result of a dialectical relationship between state-led policies from above and religious mobilisations from below, subsequent chapters are organised in a way that attempts to capture both of these developments, the confluence of interests and the interactions that bring them both into being. Many of the chapters are divided between observations about the possibilities and the problems, each noting the conditions that enable the emergence of religious political identifications but also the tendency of religious communitarianists to push for closure, strong boundaries and sealed spaces of governance over which they can exercise influence and control. Moreover, at every stage, the chapters highlight the gendered dimensions of discourse, engagement and claims making.

This thesis is a comparative analysis of events, groups and local actors within two London boroughs – Ealing and Newham. Appendices A and B provide ward maps of each of the boroughs to give a sense of the physical organisation of the local areas. Newham and Ealing have interesting and comparable histories as well as divergent features. Both boroughs are characteristic of London's 'super diversity' quality and the main religions reflected within these areas are Sikhs, Muslims, Christians and Hindus. It could be argued that each of these is 'differentially racialised' at a national level and within dominant discourse. Moreover, both boroughs have a history of activism in relation to class, gender and 'race'. They are home to prominent workers' associations, Black feminist and anti racist organisations that have engaged with political mobilisations, intervened in the formulation of public policy and contributed to the shaping of local landscapes and histories.

This is a qualitative study that combined 47 in depth interviews of 'secular', 'religious' and 'state' actors with a series of ethnographic observations in order to capture and understand two local life worlds. Appendix C contains a list of all the fieldwork. Topic guides were developed and tested for the interviews and adjusted according to the particular public position of each actor. Appendix D provides an example. The topic guide was intended to reflect the key research concerns for the overall study and comprised a series of open-ended questions with additional probes in order to enable a 'guided conversation' (Fielding, 1996) rather than a structured or prescriptive interview or survey. The in-depth interviews were complemented by ethnographic observations (detailed in Appendix C) of local and London wide events including religious processions, public meetings, demonstrations, consultation sessions, elections and festivals. These enabled a 'thick description' of various 'moments' in the construction of local public spaces and systems of representation and also an analysis of the discursive tropes, concepts and strategies that are employed in constructing or erasing religious identity within the public sphere. Particular attention is paid to the way in which these events, spaces and discourses are gendered.

Chapter 1 is a review of the key sociological debates that form the backdrop of an analysis of the empirical data within later chapters. In particular, it reflects on the critique of the multiculturalism frame, noting its implications for representation, group rights and the ordering of local peoples' relationships with the state. Chapter 1 also notes the many ways in which state policy, largely initiated by New Labour, created a clearing for the reinvention of communitarianism and the instigation of religion as a new structuring principle for governance. This has given rise to a new 'faiths' literature, which is reviewed alongside a note about the surprising level of continuity between New Labour's 'faith agenda' and the current Conservative Party's concept of Big Society.

Chapter 2 provides background information about the two boroughs in the context of a discussion about religious entanglements in local level electoral politics. In the last decade, religion has surfaced as an important source of opposition in both boroughs. This chapter reveals the many ways in which religion becomes welded to existing complaints and enters spaces that may have been vacated by other sources of critique. I also begin an important distinction between the conditions of possibility and the modalities of identification. I note the multiple factors that enable religious identification to surface and gain weight as political representation namely: problems with existing political parties; a lack of accountability and transparency; a lack of energy and dynamism; the absence of clear political goals; individual careerist manoeuvring; and the impact of evolving transnational affiliations. These points are balanced with reflections on the problems with religious or faith-based opposition, attempted in Ealing by galvanising Sikh identifications and in Newham around Muslim and Christian identifications.

Chapter 3 gives space to the voices of 'religious' interviewees. It emphasises the ontological, aesthetic and affective appeal of engaging religious commitment as an antidote to the contemporary neo-liberal context, to inject dynamism into activity, to inhere social responsibility and create political change. However, as with the

openings-closings format of the other chapters, a critique emerges from a place of doubt, raising concerns about social control, displaced agency and the very real abuses of power by religious hierarchies.

Chapter 4 looks at religious co-option into state-led agendas and New Labour's emphasis on strengthening religious leaderships. This chapter reveals a confluence of interests and pathways between the state and local religious groups organised around shared pastoral and policing functions. In turn this raises questions about power, the inside and outside of state or civil society and the ability to make clear religious-secular distinctions. This chapter notes concord on the question of welfare provision and the desire to police boundaries, territories, behaviour and surprisingly also on questions of authority and sovereignty. The second half of the chapter focuses on interfaith alliances, predominantly encouraged by New Labour funding sources from the centre but kept at arms length by the local Newham Labour Group. As part of an emergent critique, I focus on the way interfaith activities consolidate religious sources of domination and persecution that transcend national boundaries and are often disguised within new regimes of governance, in particular through the proliferation of multifaithist (and highly gendered) notions of 'tolerance', 'decency' and 'respect'. These interfaith initiatives extend the already existing 'community of communities' principle of multiculturalist practice to turn seemingly benign sources of interfaith understanding into strength for the supremacist ideologies of the Hindu Right and the normative institutionalisation of an aversion to Ahmadiyyas. Paradoxically, it is the local Labour Group that offers a critique of religious leaderships and a commitment to safeguard the rights of women, LGBT people, and dissenting minorities.

A conversation about contested Muslim leaderships, authority and sovereignty flows into Chapter 5. Long-standing anti-racist activists talk about their attempts to negotiate the terrain of a resurgent Muslim political identity in the context of the crushing civil liberties impact of the government's 'War on Terror'. Chapter 5 highlights the transformation of political identities in recent years and the situations

that arise for civil liberties campaigners when religious groups, Muslims in particular, become the objects of state surveillance rather than its allies. Moreover, this chapter enters a discussion about the nature and problem of proximate relations, drawing out counter accusations about political alliances in the context of the securitisation agenda of the state on the one hand and Islamist mobilisations and networks of religious violence on the other. It explores the difficulties of turning intersectional frameworks into the praxis of defending the indivisibility of human rights within this new context of religious mobilisations and the War on Terror.

Chapter 6 seeks to extend earlier critiques of the culturalist and ethnicist turn in anti-racist politics to take account of the state's support for Right-leaning religious projects. It shows the ways in which community formations develop at the local level to reinforce the moral agenda of the state. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the consolidation of a Khalsa norm for Sikh representation by looking at the particular fortunes of one organisation, the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall. It provides some of the backstory to their theo-political leanings, their proactive positioning as a significant and authoritative voice on Sikhism, as well as their symbiotic colonial and post-colonial relationship with the British state, the realisation of mutually supportive nationalist projects and hegemonic concerns about morality and the breakdown of society. Moreover, this chapter considers the emergence of local systems of 'election', where religious organisations gain the complicity of both the local and national state and civil society to make religious incursions into social welfare provision with the resultant effect of re-ordering of local areas and access to services on the basis of categorical religious affiliation. This chapter links back to the points made about Ahmadiyyas in Chapter 4 and forwards to the discussion of the East London Mosque in Chapter 7 to propose that local areas are becoming re-ordered according to new systems of religious election.

Chapter 7 focuses entirely on the movement from below in the form of a surprising but hugely influential Christian-led socio-political mobilisation called Citizens UK. During the stretch of the fieldwork, this political formation moved from an emergent position to become a central player in the construction of civil society, state and also

political opposition narratives about the role of religious organisations as moral antidotes and 'swords of moral justice' against neo-liberalism and bureaucracy. This chapter adds new reflections to a growing but celebratory body of literature on Citizens UK campaigns. In particular, my critique focuses on problems with their Strangers into Citizens campaign, the socially conservative limits of their interests, and the way this faith-based political alliance acts as a source of legitimacy for local branches and fronts of fundamentalist organisations.

The Conclusion draws together the key components of my critique of the power relations at the local interface of religion and politics. I return to the importance of making a distinction between the conditions of possibility, or the push factors, that have enabled religious organisations and religious identities to thrive as sources of political action, on the one hand, and then the modalities of identification, or the substantive dimensions of political projects and mobilisations, on the other. In particular, I identify the push factors as broadly comprising: ever-present legacies of colonial relations, multiculturalist governance and the Establishment position of the Church of England; the burgeoning gaps within the public sphere as a consequence of the undemocratic tendencies of the state and markets and a significant welfare state deficit; the dynamism, ontological, aesthetic and affective possibilities offered by religious frameworks to inhere political commitment and energise political action; the glocal impact of the rise and rise of transnational religious mobilisations; and the relationship between a perceived growth in religious affiliation and the importance of majoritarianism within politics. The substantive problems with faith based interventions and an emergent multifaithist practice are discussed across the following points: the symbiotic relationship between Right leaning religious organisations and the British state as mutually enforcing nationalist projects; the utility of anti-racist, human rights and multiculturalism registers for the proliferation of supremacist politics at a normative local level; the use of political alliances by fundamentalist organisations to gather legitimacy and accrue other benefits; the pursuit of moral hegemonic agendas about sexuality, marriage and the family; the structuring, particularly gendered dimensions, of 'tolerance' and 'respectability'; and the emergence of new local systems of 'election' where local areas are re-ordered

according to religious beliefs with consequences for access to limited resources.

Chapter 1: Governing the Public Sphere, Religion and Civil Society

Introduction

This thesis is a comparative feminist analysis of the normative implications of religion and local politics in two London boroughs. This chapter provides an overview of the key policy debates that act as a backdrop for the discussions in the following analysis chapters, which, I argue, are largely framed by a shift from multiculturalism to multifaithism. This has involved a double movement, from above and from below, from state led interventions in the constructions of the social and also from the impact of social movements and international events on the political identifications of local populations. Therefore, this chapter begins with an exploration of the key aspects of the multiculturalism frame, particularly noting its implications for representation and the ordering of local peoples' relationships with the state. I then detail the many ways in which the last decade led to a shift in this state-civil society framework towards multifaithism, where religious identities and affiliations are given primacy in decisions about social policy and delivery. I then move on to note the specific ways in which the Labour Party's reinvention of itself as New Labour developed a model of governance in which religion and communitarianism were key structuring principles. The final section discusses the emergence of a 'faiths' literature in very recent years, largely because of the significant changes brought about by New Labour's 'faith agenda'. I end this chapter with some brief points about the incredible continuities between New Labour's 'faith agenda' and the Conservative Party's relationship with religion and religious organisations. This feminist analysis seeks to highlight the implications for local relations of power at each turn and particularly notes the gendered dimensions of these debates.

At every stage, this chapter moves towards laying the foundations for an analysis of the empirical material in subsequent chapters, to identifying the key theoretical

debates within which the fieldwork is located and to specifying the proposed contributions of this thesis to existing knowledge.

From Multiculturalism to Multifaithism

This section reviews established discussions about multiculturalism and its critics covering points about recognition, representation and intra relations of power. The section moves towards defining the emergence of multifaithism as a demand and as a growing practice in relations between the state and civil society, particularly ethnic minorities. I start however, with a few generic introductory points about the contestatory nature of developing frameworks and practices for relations between state and civil society.

When brought together, social democracy and liberal political rationality seek to quell opposition by drawing social movements into various 'settlements' (Hall, 1988). Two particular 'settlements' are central to this thesis: the welfare state - a post-war settlement between labour and capital; and multiculturalism - a settlement between the British state and its post-colonial migrants. Gordon Hughes (1998) provides the following definition of a 'settlement':

(T)he term 'settlement' in this context is used to capture the complex compromises and negotiated positions reached by competing interest groups and power blocs in specific historical contexts. The concept of settlement does not thus exclude political and ideological differences but instead points to the bounded limits to such differences. A settlement thus establishes the frameworks of reference within which conflict, negotiation and shifting alliances take place.

[Hughes, 1998:21]

The welfare state relies on specific and limited constructions of three particular institutions: the family; the principal (male) earner and the nation state (Orloff, 1993; Walby, 1994; Lewis, 1998; Morris 1998; Lister, 2003). Groups that challenge these constructions or lie outside them - such as the long term unemployed, single parents

and migrants - hold 'precarious claims' to welfare services and benefits (Morris 1998) and neo-liberalism has given rise to various forms of 'differentiated' citizenship rights and entitlements (Ong, 1999; Clarke, 2004). Moreover, transnational and international rights now cut across those awarded on the basis of residency and nationality (Morris, 1998) and give rise to even more complicated permutations of interest, rights, citizenship, community and belonging (Soysal, 1994; Yuval-Davis, 2006). An appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, for instance, has been a particularly important tool for ethnic minority women wishing to extend notions of citizenship to accommodate religious demands and diversity (McGoldrick, 2006; Phillips, 2007; Wallach Scott, 2007).¹

Whilst some commentators have characterised social policy as wholly oriented towards the needs of capitalism, this thesis shares Orloff's (1993) perspective that 'politics matters' - that social policy is also the result of a mobilisation from below. The interface between state and civil society represents a particularly tense and dynamic zone where attempts to manage populations, subjectivities, representation and claims-making is highly contested (Li, 2007: 11). Claims and constructions are linked to political projects and there is a vying for their validation and legitimacy (Clarke and Cochrane, 1993; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

¹ A particularly good example is the case of *R (Begum) v. Headteacher and Governors of Denbigh High School* [2005] 2 All ER 396 eventually decided in the House of Lords on 22/03/06, where Shabina Begum, a 12 year old school girl, made use of Articles 9, 2 and 14 to argue that she was being prevented from accessing a state education because of the conflict between her religious convictions (which for her meant she should wear a full length tunic known as the jilbaab) and the school's uniform rules. In another case - *R (Watkins-Singh) v Aberdare Girls' High School & Anor* [2008] EWHC 1865 on 29/07/08 - school girl, Sarika Watkins-Singh, aged 14, used the Race Relations Act 1976, which recognises Sikhs as an ethnic group, in order to challenge her school's claim that wearing the 'kara' (Sikh bangle) breached the school's uniform policy which prohibits the wearing of any jewellery.

The multiculturalism settlement

Multiculturalism can be a descriptive or normative term that simply expresses an ideal situation where people of different origins live harmoniously alongside each other. As a state policy, multiculturalism was born of a political rejection of assimilation and promoted a simple message of cultural tolerance (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). It has been the dominant frame through which relations between the state and ethnic minorities within Britain have been defined and organised for a number of decades. Multicultural policies have taken many forms including legal judgements and exemptions in relation to dress codes and food production, the expansion of the school curriculum and the funding of culturally specific service provision or autonomous organisations (Bano, 1999; Banting and Kymlicka, 2006).

The recognition of cultural group rights has been viewed as part and parcel of challenging racism in so far as it hopes to shift negative normative constructions of ethnic minorities (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995; Modood, 2007). One of the strongest advocates of multiculturalism policy, Charles Taylor (1994) bases his argument for cultural pluralism on the necessity to recognise the dialogical nature of being and therefore to find ways to sustain the cultural practices that minority communities draw upon for their own moral reasoning. Moreover, starting from the premise of misrecognition, dehumanisation and the need to correct historical injury (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995 and Modood, 2007), multicultural demands necessarily imply corrective measures intended to rebuild self-esteem, to right the wrongs of the past, to determine the characterisation of one's own culture, ethnicity or religion and are concerned with ensuring means of reproducing practices and identities into the future. One of the strongest advocates of group rights, and more recently of faith-based organisations, Tariq Modood (2007), made the following case:

Identities are relational and so on, just like difference, are constituted partly from the outside. But the concept of identity (like ethnicity and culture as opposed to race) allows the "inside" more space, more agency. This is not just in relation to individual self identification but in relation to outside perceptions, treatment and social expectations... that is to say the subordinate group in question does not begin to take charge of its positive self definition, of revaluing the group, but also to define the

ways in which it has been inferiorised, its mode of oppression. The group begins to speak for itself, not just in terms of positivity but also about its pain.

[Modood, 2007: 43]

However, this can have the effect of creating discretely bounded cultural (or religious) units with their own internal logic, commonly referred to as 'a community of communities' (Commission for Multi Ethnic Britain, 2000; Parekh, 2000). This vision of multicultural Britain, which has been extensively critiqued for promoting a series of separate, more or less self managing units, is being replicated through the concept of *coexistence* which underpins the more recent turn to multifaithism and is often referenced against the idealisation of the Ottoman millat system.

The problems with multiculturalism

Multiculturalism has been critiqued from many different directions. One of the most prominent concerns is about multiculturalism as a system of representation. In practice, when multiculturalism becomes state policy it necessarily carves out a role for the state in a process of rebuilding or protecting the self-esteem of minority peoples through the legal and institutional recognition of practices and identities as well as ensuring their reproduction into the future. This necessarily involves the state as an *adjudicator* on cultural and religious matters. The state then enacts this role with the assistance of whomsoever they recognise as authorities on these issues. The result has been that multiculturalist practice trades on a particular characterisation of communities determined by the interaction of the state with so called 'community leaders' who tend to be from religious institutions (Ali, 1992). In turn, this has given rise to a system of power relations where social divisions and hierarchies within communities are ignored. Moreover, the fact that the British state has long since privileged the religious categorisation of south Asians and built a relationship with religious institutions, has led to the imposition and legitimisation of their role as mediators between the state and civil society (Sahgal, 1990; Narayan, 1997). Meanwhile, feminist concerns have been discarded on the grounds of 'inauthenticity' and 'Westernisation' (Narayan, 1997).

The implementation of multiculturalist policies by service providers has tended to involve narrow assumptions about the needs of ethnic minority communities including by superimposing religious over other identities (Patel, 1991; Sahgal and Yuval Davis, 1992; Gupta, 2003). Whilst never denying the right of religious affiliation and practice, Black women's groups in Britain have argued that the tendency of the British state and other agencies to look at south Asians primarily through the lens of religious ascription can have catastrophic consequences for vulnerable women and children fleeing violence and abuse (Siddiqui, 2003). For instance, this has led to local authorities delivering young women fleeing violence into the hands of particularly conservative foster parents who then condemn them for leaving their families rather than provide effective alternatives and supportive spaces (Patel, 1991; Dhaliwal, 2003).

Furthermore, the codification or recognition of culture, ethnicity and religion in law or social policy leads to the homogenisation, reification and simplification of cultural practices. Whilst the process of codifying has the propensity to be a 'dynamic dialectical process' between civil society and state institutions, it nevertheless 'freezes' culture (Benhabib, 2002). Needless to say that the recognition of difference itself has the tendency to create and perpetuate 'deep ontologies' (St Louis, 2009). This could lead to situations where in order to comment on Shariah Councils or on state funded Sikh schools, one has to be Muslim or Sikh respectively, and then not just born Muslim or Sikh but to be considered 'practising' and even more than this, to be able to make one's contribution to the debate through recourse to a religious discourse. Such authenticating criterion has been a structuring principle for multiculturalist practice and can have the effect of excluding feminist voices (Narayan, 1997; Patel, 2004).

As Seyla Benhabib (2002) has pointed out, many theorists appear to have supported cultural and religious reifications despite their contradiction with constructivist tendencies within sociology. Indeed, the 'dirty work of boundary maintenance' (Yuval

Davis, 2006) necessarily means that group rights advocates reproduce 'the same epistemic premises' as those on the political Right; namely, that cultures and populations are incongruous, that cultures are innate and clearly defined wholes (Benhabib, 2002). The literature on mixed relationships most clearly challenges claims to cultural purity (Ifekwunigwe, 1999) highlighting the organic and fluid nature of identities and cultures that draw upon a range of repertoires and defy desires to fix them (Gilroy, 1996). Indeed, people's social locations and their positions within matrices of power are, as Yuval Davis (2006) has pointed out, 'virtually never constructed along one axis of power, although official statistics - as well as identity politics - often tend to construct them in this way' (2006: 200).

The empirical reality of migration and multiculturalism gives rise to 'multilayered, multi-textual and contradictory meanings' forming a dialectical experience that offers a radical potential for transformation (Ifekwunigwe, 1999). However, relying as they do upon unanimity or the erasure of difference and diversity within groups, the assertion of group rights has a tendency to push out and devalue the antinomian and more organic streams within minority communities (Gilroy, 1996). Moreover 'religious leaders' and religious groups claiming to represent minority communities are demanding an epistemological separation of religion and culture, pushing for a literal return to the text and restricting the spaces for interpretive and syncretic representations of religions and traditions (Sahgal, 2006). Of concern to this study is the way in which the 'transruptive' (Hesse, 2000) and subversive (Gilroy, 2000; Sayyid, 2003) potential of diasporic formations to unsettle and prevent the closure of national identities appears to have been challenged, if not undermined, by the contrary movement of authoritarian ethnicist and religious groups that are promoting absolutist, hermetically sealed identities (Bhatt, 1997).

Deliberative democracy is often presented as a way out of this quagmire. Following on from Jurgen Habermas' (1996) intervention on 'publics', Seyla Benhabib (2002) has argued that if one were to approach group rights from the perspective of 'democratic theory' rather than 'multicultural theory', one would tend to focus more

on processes of inclusion and equality rather than distinctiveness. Benhabib (2002) advocates the application of a deliberative democracy model 'that permits maximum cultural contestation within the public sphere, in and through the institutions and associations of civil society', that seeks to interrogate claims and 'accepts that the political incorporation of new groups into established societies will result most likely in the hybridisation of cultural legacies on both sides' (2002:12). Whilst she also notes the need to ensure some universal individual rights (as most advocates of group rights now do) her approach seems to suggest that some forms of violence against women, such as female genital mutilation, might be up for discussion. A particular difficulty for those that seek to retain a case for group rights whilst nominally acknowledging individual rights, is that they don't really tackle the central question of how power works, its institutionalisation and the alignment of patriarchal interests. Indeed Benhabib (2002) has a tendency to argue that cultural essentialism is imposed on communities from the *outside* rather than recognising and debating how to tackle *internal inequalities* in real terms. She rarely, if ever, acknowledges the active propagation of such representations by actors, such as the religious Right, from within ethnic minority communities.

Anne Phillips (2007) notes that two kinds of alternatives are posited as a means of short-circuiting the hazards of group rights: the overriding authority of regulation and the possibility for individuals to exit groups. Although this study is more concerned with the development of new forms of group claims and group rights through 'the faith agenda', Phillips' discussion of regulation raises an important question for the consideration of faith based organising. In particular, would increased state regulation of these services, such as the compulsion to teach the national curriculum (especially closer monitoring of the delivery of sex and relationships education), or revised admissions policies, make the state funding of faith based schools alright or even desirable? Or are there additional questions related to their normative implications that need to be taken into account?

The practice of multiculturalism also imposes a normative pressure within

communities to comply and the effects on ethnic minority women are widely evidenced by their disproportionate representation amongst statistics on suicide and self-harm² as well as the incidence of domestic homicide and honour crimes.³ Indeed the normative implications of 'community' pressure extend to wider questions of autonomy, freedom of expression, the right to dignity as well as the ability to imagine other possibilities and to live out non-conformist lives.

Indeed, Sahgal (2006) has argued that the role of the state should be focused on protecting individual rights rather than endorsing group rights of any kind and even Phillips (2007) suggests that where autonomous groups are formed, they should not be able to make representation claims. The idea is to retain 'rights bearing' status for individuals rather than for groups (Phillips 2007: 162). The tension between group rights and individual rights also reveals divergent views about the role of the state in

² According to Shazma Thabusom, the suicide rate for Asian women is twice the national average (See Thabusom, S (2005) *Mental Health and Asian Women: A Qualitative Study of Women's Experiences*, Doctoral thesis submitted to School of Health and Social Sciences, Coventry University and Department of Psychology, University of Warwick, May 2005); and 50-60% of women with mental health problems have suffered domestic violence at some point in their lives, one third of women that have attempted suicide or self harm have experienced violence or abuse whilst for Asian women this figure is closer to 50% (see *Domestic Violence and Mental Health* posted on 24/01/05 at <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-articles.asp?section=00010001002200040001&itemid=940>);

Asian women complained specifically of cultural constraints and the pressure to marry as a reason for attempted suicide and self harm (see Dinesh Bhugra and Manisha Desai (2002) *Attempted suicide in South Asian Women* in *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* (2002) 8: 418-42

³ Conservative cultural and religious values play a significant role in the enactment of homicides against Asian women (see Hannana Siddiqui (2005) *There is no honour in domestic violence, only shame! Women's struggles against honour crimes in the UK* in Hossein, S and Welchman, L (eds) *Honour: Crimes, Paradigms and Violence Against Women* published by Zed books: London); the Association of Chief Police Officers estimated that around 17,000 women are being subjected to 'honour' crimes including murder (see <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/a-question-of-honour-police-say-17000-women-are-victims-every-year-780522.html>). Most victims of 'honour' crimes are ethnic minority women.

civil society as somewhere between protecting individuals and providing welfare services. The difficulty with attempts to separate out the individual from the group is not only that it potentially excludes the provision of specialist ethnic minority services and advocacy groups that exist because of evidence of discrimination, lack of awareness, cultural or linguistic skills within mainstream service provision, but also that it fails to take account of the significant *group dimension* of individual legal claims. Two such legal claims about religious accommodation within state schools, both taken by ethnic minority girls - Shabina Begum⁴ and Sarika Watkins-Singh⁵ - appealed to (and had their appeals assessed against) group representations of religious injunctions to subscribe to particular dress codes (the jilbaab) or adorn particular symbols (the kara). Begum was represented by her brother, an active member of the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, and Singh had her claim confirmed by the Network of Sikh Organisations. In Begum's case, the school was able to ward off her legal challenge specifically because it qualified her claims against interpretations of Islam, provided by two other Muslim groups and Muslim parents, which affirmed that existing school uniform rules had already been appropriately adjusted to take account of religious 'needs'. In the Singh case, the fact that she defied other religious injunctions by cutting her hair (also one of the five Sikh symbols - 'Kesh' - if one subscribes to the Khalsa norm) did not appear to come to the notice of any of the third parties - religious, civil liberties and anti racist groups - defending her claim. Moreover, both claims are also discussed in relation to other equality strands - the implications of school dress codes for 'racial' or ethnic groups with Singh's case and 'young women' as a group in Begum's case.

The point being made here is that whenever someone makes a claim to culture, ethnicity, religion or any kind of difference, it is validated in relation to evidence about requirements and practices. The desire to identify 'religious authorities' to confer with, to qualify, to provide guidance or to adjudicate in relation to such claims becomes part

⁴ R (Begum) v. Headteacher and Governors of Denbigh High School [2005] 2 All ER 396 is a UK law case, decided in the House of Lords on 26/03/06.

⁵ R (Watkins-Singh) v Aberdare Girls' High School & Anor [2008] EWHC 1865 on 29/07/08.

of the process of resolving them and indeed acts to consolidate the position of religious groups. Perhaps then this is more an issue of *divergent group claims* rather than a tension between individual and group rights. This is particularly highlighted by what has come to be known as 'the recognition versus redistribution' debate.

Recognition versus redistribution

Nancy Fraser (2001) has attempted to challenge what she sees as a false dichotomy between recognition and redistribution. She notes that each of these has, in turn, been argued in relation to theories of ethics which imply value judgements about what constitutes 'the good life' (cultural politics) on the one hand and theories of morality or social justice and objective rights (social politics) on the other. She advocates drawing recognition struggles into the realm of social justice and rights by seeing these more as 'status models' and for redistribution struggles to incorporate an element of recognition so that they are also seen as challenges to normative assumptions - gay marriage as a redistribution claim because it challenges social relations and cultural assumptions for instance. Whether she would also support polygamy if presented as a claim by a religious or cultural minority is uncertain as is the question of what constitutes *normative* if religious claims are accepted on the grounds that they are challenges to Christian privilege but also contested by ethnic minority feminists on the grounds that religious groups and leaders have a stranglehold on their communities and are imposing a patriarchal order. Fraser (2001) argues that 'an expanded concept of justice' leads to difficult philosophical questions concerning 'the relation between morality and ethics, the right and the good, justice and the good life' (2001: 22).

Actually, a range of contributions from anti racists (Sivanandan, 2006) to critical 'race' theorists (Gilroy, 1987; Hall, 1994) to feminist activists (Patel, 2004, Sahgal 2006) and feminist academics (Fraser, 2001; Yuval-Davis 2006; Phillips 2007) provide some semblance of an answer to the group rights conundrum. In particular, they all appear to suggest a distinction between two versions of group rights based upon an assessment of the *orientation of the group*. On the one hand, theorists like

Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, Will Kymlicka and Tariq Modood focus their argument for group rights on the need to create spaces that sustain cultural practices that enable people to build positive images of their culture or religion and of themselves through their contact with others from the same group. This is an act in and of itself and has an *internal* orientation (Fraser 2001). On the other hand, for Iris Marion Young, Jurgen Habermas, Seyla Benhabib (and I would add the Institute of Race Relations, Southall Black Sisters and Nira Yuval Davis where they may have sympathy for group rights) the focus is rather on the *external* orientation of the group; on the need for minority communities to have an organising space to enhance their ability to engage on a more equal basis in the wider political process. For instance, Sivanandan's (2006) recent reiteration of his earlier distinction between culturalist organisations and anti racist organisations (supplemented by Sudbury's (2001) response to Modood (1997) in defence of political blackness as a form of solidarity politics) suggests that collective mobilisation is rather about tackling axes of power. Importantly, it is concerns about religion in the public sphere that has prompted such assertions.

Towards multifaithism and de-secularisation

The slide from multiculturalism to multifaithism needs to be seen as the result of a double movement: of state policy from above and the demands of civil society actors from below. Some group rights had already been recognised for minority religions through race relations legislation and as part of a 'multicultural drift' (Bano, 1999). Also, there is some evidence to suggest that minority religious political groups have been accessing state funding for some time; Sahgal (1992), Anthias and Yuval Davis (1992) pointed to the GLC's funding of the right wing Hindu organisation, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, on the grounds that they were providing cultural activities and education. However, the last few decades saw the ascent of religious political movements that asserted themselves in an ever-expanding ideological void, as alternatives to consumer and market led neo-liberalism on the one hand and authoritarian versions of communism on the other. On an international level, some of these had already developed as part of Independence struggles (such as in India, Pakistan and Egypt) and continued to thrive as post colonial articulations (e.g. the

Muslim Brotherhood and Hindutva).

In Britain, the resurgence of religion as a political identity began in earnest amongst Sikhs mobilising support for a separate Sikh state of Khalistan in the mid 1980s (Cohen and Bains, 1988; Das; 1996; Dhaliwal, 2003) but it was the Rushdie Affair in 1989 that crystallised a growing religious identity into a larger de-secularisation of relations between the state and ethnic minorities. Religion became a new frame for highlighting inequalities and for making recognition demands. Coupled with the Gulf War in 1991, the Rushdie Affair was used by Islamist groups to galvanise a coherent Muslim political identity that would assert a range of demands to accommodate Muslim 'needs' including: on schools for the accommodation of religious dress; on colleges or local authority offices to provide prayer rooms and halal meals; and on the judiciary to extend blasphemy laws to include Islam and to recognise Shariah ordinances (Bhatt 1997; Bano 1999). Moreover, supplemented by evidence of a growing racist discourse about Muslims, a range of organisations recast Muslims as a specific marginalised and discriminated section of the British population (and international polity) that defied existing social group categories. The Runnymede Trust (1997), for instance, criticised the inconsistent application of the Race Relations Act 1976 with regards to religion because of its recognition of Jews and Sikhs as 'ethnic groups' but not Muslims in spite of the incidence of Islamophobia.

Broadly speaking there have been two streams of sociological contributions on the resurgence of religion in the public sphere that are relevant for the subsequent empirical chapters. Firstly, the struggle within liberal political theory between those that wish to extend notions of citizenship and individual rights to make space for religious claims and those that view religious incursions into the public sphere as far more problematic than accommodating culture for instance. Secondly, a civic republicanism or deliberative democracy mould which is again divided between those that defend some level of differentiation and others that see religious organisations as having a revitalising role to play in democratisation.

Jose Casanova's (1994) seminal study of the conditions of possibility and types of Christian interventions in the public sphere across five countries has been an important building block within the deliberative democracy stream. In particular, he questioned the existence of a single theory of secularisation, for a long time the foundational frame for thinking about religion and modernity, and rather pointed to three different referential points for debates on secularisation: the 'decline of religious beliefs and practices'; the 'differentiation of secular spheres from religious institutions and norms'; and the 'marginalisation of religion to a privatised sphere' with its own separate internal logic. In particular, Casanova challenges those sociologists that have claimed causal relationships between levels of religious belief, urbanisation and secularisation. I would argue that the flaws in Norris and Inglehart's (2004) large-scale quantitative study are one such recent example of this point. Casanova's points on levels of religious beliefs are important with regards to reflecting on the reproductive effects of introducing a religion question in the UK Census and also the increased concern for religious demands as part of the sway of majoritarianism discussed in Chapters 2, 4 and 7.

For Casanova, differentiation can be sustained even where religious belief increases and religion becomes deprivatised. Moreover, he challenges the sense of 'a return of the sacred' simply because he does not see religion as ever having gone away, just weakened, marginalised or disestablished. His thesis lays claim to the 'deprivatisation of religion in the modern world' on the basis of findings that the differentiation of autonomous spheres (he names the state, the economy, science, education, law and art) not based on religious norms are still a significant dimension of modern life but the failure of secular regimes lays open a more public role for religious groups especially disestablished, denomination of voluntary religious associations. He does not see religion, politics and citizenship as incompatible. Rather, he argues that:

(t)he term deprivatisation has three different connotations, one polemical, the other two descriptive. The term is used first of all polemically against those versions of the theory of secularisation and those liberal political theories that prescribe the privatisation of religion as a modern structural trend necessary to safeguard modern liberties and differentiated structures. This study has shown that such an

indiscriminate position against all forms of public religion is unfounded, that there are some forms of deprivatisation of religion which may be justifiable and even desirable from a modern normative perspective... Namely it is my contention that the rejection by certain religious traditions of the privatised role to which they were being relegated by secular modernisation theories and by liberal political theories, that the role of the Catholic church in processes of democratisation, and that the public interventions of religion in the public sphere of modern civil societies can no longer be viewed simply as anti-modern religious critiques of modernity. They represent, rather, new types of immanent normative critiques of specific forms of institutionalisation of modernity which presuppose precisely the acceptance of the validity of the fundamental values and principles of modernity, that is individual freedoms and differentiated structures. In other words, they are immanent critiques of particular forms of modernity from a modern religious point of view.

[Casanova, 1994: 220-222]

From my perspective, there are two immediate difficulties with Casanova's propositions. He makes a large claim about the causal relationship between the negative impact on levels of religiosity wherever religious organisations resist modern differentiation. Secondly, Casanova's work does not take account of the now interrelated spaces of state, social, civil society and polity, as reflected in the empirical chapters of this thesis, nor the governmentalisation or marketisation of the public sphere as spelt out in the section on New Labour below. Indeed it might be difficult to apply Casanova's work to the Establishment position of the Church of England and also their active role within civil society through bodies like Citizens UK (discussed in Chapter 7) without categorising these as simply hegemonic and disregard their moral-practical interventions on labour market exploitation or vice versa. Also, his assertion that 'ultimately only public religions at the level of civil society are consistent with modern universalistic principles and modern differentiated structures' (1994:219) is taken to task in Chapter 5 of this thesis by Gita Sahgal's critique of fundamentalist gains through political alliances within civil society, where civil society itself is structured by power relations.

However, the greatest problem for this thesis with making use of Casanova's insights relates to the one country-one religion structure of his case studies which leaves little room for understanding the impact of minority religions as anything other than potential activists within civil society. How, for instance, would one make sense of the institutionalisation of religious leaderships, that do not occupy Establishment positions, and their overlapping interventions through state consultation systems, political parties and also civil society without simply putting these down as voluntary associations engaged in productive democratising interventions through civil society alone?

Talal Asad (2003) challenged Casanova's assertion that secularisation does not necessarily end as religion becomes deprivatised and indeed this is a contradiction because religious interventions have a stake, a view, for instance, of what should be publicly funded or how education should be organised. So once religion comes out of its separate sphere and begins to exert influence over the other autonomous spheres, Asad argues that we are talking about hybrid secular-religious spaces not secularism. Moreover, Asad is of the view that Casanova's support for the deprivatisation of religion is highly restricted to historically specific religions that fit with the modern liberal project but one can take issue with Asad's response on the basis that liberal political discourse can, as Chapter 5 of this thesis exemplifies, be utilised by religious organisations of many different political leanings and ambitions as registers for advancing their particular political, even undemocratic, visions. The Women Against Fundamentalism definition of fundamentalism is precisely that these are modern religious projects that utilise state apparatus and machinery to impose their version of religion, to restrict dissent and control sexuality. I do however agree with Asad's following assertion only that his writings digest this point in the context of an international and US specific discourse around the War on Terror rather than the potentially very different landscapes of the local:

The point here is that the public sphere is a space necessarily (not just contingently) articulated by power. And everyone who enters it must address power's dispositions of people and things... The enjoyment of free speech presupposes not merely the physical ability to speak but to be heard, a condition without which speaking to some

effect is not possible... To make others listen even if they would prefer not to hear, to speak to some consequence so that something in the political world is affected, to come to a conclusion, to have the authority to make practical decisions on the basis of that conclusion – these are all presupposed in the idea of free public debate as a liberal virtue.

[Asad, 2003: 183-184]

Importantly, Jose Casanova and Tariq Modood share the tendency to refer to feminism's testing of the boundaries of the public-private divide in order to make different kinds of arguments for the uses and validity of religious political forms in the public sphere. Casanova states:

(t)he analysis incorporates Seyla Benhabib's synthesis of a radical proceduralist discursive model of the public sphere with a feminist critique of the privatisation of gender and the feminine sphere. Such a move allows us to view the deprivatisation of religion in analogical terms as an agonic resistance to attempts to confine religion and morality to a private sphere (home) and as a normative critique of the amoral public sphere of 'work' – economic and state institutions. As in the case of feminism, this normative critique leads to a dual challenge of established boundaries. The deprivatisation of religion has a double signification here in that it simultaneously introduces publicity, that is, intersubjective norms into the private sphere (analogous to the feminist dictum the personal is political) and morality into the public sphere of state and economy (the principle of the common good as a normative criterion).

[Casanova, 1994 : 217]

However, Casanova does not appear to be defending religious claims per se but rather the possibility of religious organisations to be one active part of a diverse civil society holding the state, the polity and the market to account. This is similar to the now prominent discourse of the Good Society and Blue Labour discussed within the last section of this chapter and influenced by Citizens UK, analysed in Chapter 7. Yet Casanova does suggest that religious interventions in the public sphere are fruitful because, even where these are the anti abortion campaigns of Protestant

fundamentalists in the USA, they still 'serve an important public function' because they test existing normative structures. It's my view that without an invested feminist perspective, Bhatt (1999) is right to argue that one can not override the erasure of ethical judgement that comes with the cultural (now religious) episteme.

Post 9/11, Jurgen Habermas' (2006) revised interventions were a sign of the times where theories were rethought in the context of widespread human rights abuses and critique of secular modern nation states. Habermas stepped away from his own scepticism about religion to open up his communicative theory of the public sphere. In an exchange with Joseph Ratzinger, he conceded that as long as the legislative system continued with its own autonomous, secular and legitimate processes, a diverse range of voices, including religiously inspired interventions, could be part of a necessary active and thriving public sphere to contribute to norms setting. The problem with this intervention is not his call for a diverse, and vibrant interaction between as many voices as possible as an important element of thinking about what democracy means but rather the question, as is noted throughout this thesis, of which voices are heard. Moreover, the distinct difference between Habermas' expanded democratic spaces (including the right of religious people to truth claims and to make their interventions in religious language) and Ratzinger's acknowledgement of the scope of religious ethics to curtail the excesses of science whilst secularism could act as a counter to the pathologies of religion, is that Ratzinger asserts the validity of 'natural law' and Creation as the ultimate foundation for human engagement. Indeed he precisely asserts the problems with majoritarianism as a reason for appealing to (and even stopping at) a transcendental source.

In the British context, liberal political theorists, but particularly Tariq Modood, renewed their efforts to formulate an academic argument for the state recognition of religion as a basis for group rights and particularly as parity arguments in relation to new waves of Muslim political identities and a specific form of discrimination. Modood (2005) identified two particular chinks in the debate about difference and prized these open. The first claims an inconsistency in the critique of the public-

private separation. He charges feminists and multicultural theorists with critiquing the public-private in order to expand notions of entitlement on the one hand and yet acting to reinforce this division to prevent religious demands from being accommodated, on the other. He specifically notes Will Kymlicka's aversion to including religion as a form of polyethnic rights. Secondly, Modood (2005) argues that it is the increasing realisation on the part of ethnic and religious minorities that the British state has never been secular - in respect of the constitutional position of the Church of England, the prolonged state funding of Christian schools, the blasphemy legislation that protects only Christianity and the Church representatives in the House of Lords - that has paved the way for claims related to religious parity.

Indeed at the heart of the secularism literature is a critique of the (religious) neutrality of the British state. Arguments about the Christian character, or rather bias, of 'western' nation states has been a central plank of a diverse range of interventions including Giorgio Agamben's (1998) and Talal Asad's (2003) analysis of the religious antecedents of law, liberalism and humanism to Women Against Fundamentalism's (1995) calls for the disestablishment of the British state to Saba Mahmood's (2005) critique of Orientalist reactions to Muslim women's agency.

Moreover, Modood (2005, 2007) challenges two kinds of objections to recognising religious group rights - that religion is ascribed whereas gender and 'race' are given and that religious groups are intolerant. With regards to the former, he notes that this is both scientifically and sociologically contentious and with regards to the latter, he berates the disproportionate application of women's equality arguments to Muslim demands and notes that gender equality is not a pre-requisite for recognising other forms of collective association. He doesn't address concerns about heterodoxy or apostasy. For Modood (2007) religious diversity and particularly the numerical strength of Muslims is an empirical fact that necessitates appropriate institutional recognition. Moreover, within the current climate of anti Muslim discrimination, he believes that the question of Muslim group rights cannot be sidestepped. Equally, one could question the wisdom of such majoritarian arguments where numbers take

precedence over a critical engagement with the demands that are being made, especially where a commitment to equalities is being sidestepped as a requirement for their incorporation.

The specific discrimination that Modood described in the early 1990s, found voice in The Runnymede Trust's report (1997) entitled 'Islamophobia: a challenge for us all'. The report pointed to 'unfounded hostility towards Islam... (and)... practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs' (1997:4). It notes that such hostility ranges from discourse through to increasing levels of physical assaults and socio-economic disadvantage. Needless to say this has been corroborated in more recent expositions of the 'War on Terror' and its impact on Muslims across Europe particularly in relation to the incidence of physical attacks, raids on mosques, police harassment and the association of all 'Muslim' charities with terror networks (Fekete, 2004; Kundnani, 2007a). It is important to note the Institute of Race Relations preference for the term 'anti Muslim racism' or 'Xeno-racism' rather than 'Islamophobia' in order to view this as a strand of racism rather than religious discrimination (see Sivanandan, 2006; Kundnani, 2007a). This has significant implications for the way in which it is tackled - as having some continuity with other struggles and as one aspect of a wider struggle against racism rather than to see this as a religious issue requiring a religious response.

Moreover, a number of problems exist with Tariq Modood's argument and reverberate throughout this thesis. Firstly, as with the voices of other religious groups, his demand for parity for Muslims hinges on a fundamental contradiction - that Christianity occupies a privileged place in Britain on the one hand and an argument about widespread 'secular intolerance' or 'secular hegemony' on the other (1995:1). It is my view that the history of 'heterogeneous time' in governing ethnic minorities in Britain (discussed below) has meant that, even if secularism has been the dominant discourse, religion has consistently been an important marker in the

relationship between ethnic minorities and the state. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that responses to religious identity at a local level are highly variable. Far from imposing secularism or insisting upon it, some teachers within state schools, for instance, view their schools as 'multi-faith' and are reluctant to use the term 'secular' (Dhaliwal and Patel, 2007). This does not of course undermine the suggestion that racism plays a part in the delivery of services and that anti Muslim racism is one virulent stream.

Furthermore, Modood's characterisation of Muslims in Britain, their needs and their experiences, reproduces the same kinds of over simplification that form the brunt of his critique of blackness as a political project. He glosses over the significantly divergent experiences and socio-economic positions of Muslims to reinforce their political representation through a few highly problematic organisations. Others have pointed to the complexities of identity and the experience of discrimination. Claire Mitchell (2006) highlighted the *multidirectional* relationship between religion, ethnicity and nation where the religious aspect of identity can manifest in many different ways including: where religion may organise or order ethnic or national identities, by providing some of the symbols and rituals and therefore the content of difference; where attendance at religious events may just be a marker of ethnic or national affiliation rather than an insight into levels and strength of belief; and where ethnic identities may become sacralised by political interventions so that religious concepts are used to provide a language of 'moral superiority'. In addition to this, Vered Kahani-Hopkins and Nick Hopkins (2002) found that different political groups construct 'muslimness' and interpret key Islamic concepts in divergent ways dependent upon the respective political ends that they have in mind. This is a reminder that Islam is a contested source of knowledge and practice. Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins (2002) provide the following illustration of how two groups claiming to represent Muslims in Britain - the Muslim Parliament (referred to as Parliament) and the Islamic Party of Britain (referred to as Party) - make use of the concept of da'wah:

(A)lthough sharing this condemnation of Muslims' failure to move beyond the ritualistic, their characterisations of da'wah were strikingly different and shaped so

as to advance their respective projects...For the Party, da'wah is construed so as to bring into being a sense of community which includes non-Muslims. For the Parliament, da'wah is construed so as to bring into being a sense of community based upon a particular ideological commitment; British Muslims were to distance themselves from the West and identify with an Islam (and Muslim activists worldwide) committed to the realisation of power.

[Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins, 2002: 301]

The multi-faceted nature of identity and socio-economic position needs to be reiterated here because of a growing tendency to collapse these into problems pertaining to religious categories carrying its own reproductive effects, such as the need to consult or liaise with religious groups to resolve these issues. Notably, the appropriation of socio-economic disadvantage amongst Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi women) to make larger claims about British Muslims and the incidence of poverty and discrimination.⁶ However, Avtar Brah (2001) noted the multiple factors at play in understanding the under-representation of young south Asian Muslim women in the labour market in Britain. She argues that these are difficult to disentangle (or reduce to one factor) and include: the process and timing of migration; concentration in sectors that were later restructured or went into demise; the experience of racism in securing work and re-employment; and the prevalence of cultural constraints which meant that some south Asian Muslim women were confined to low paid, unregulated and unrecognised work in the home. In particular, Brah (2001) issues a reminder of:

(t)he importance of studying the articulations - between and across relations of gender, class, ethnicity, racism, religion and so on - empirically and historically as contingent relationships. The young Muslim women narrate the contradictory codes of such articulations in their daily lives.

⁶ For instance, on 7th September 2006, the TUC issued a joint statement with the Muslim Council of Britain stating: 'The TUC report Poverty, Exclusion and British People of Pakistani and Bangladeshi Origin published in 2005 demonstrated that many people from substantial parts of the Muslim community suffer massive disadvantage and discrimination: 69 per cent classified as poor compared with 22 per cent of the country as a whole. Overall British Muslims are three times more likely to be unemployed than the population as a whole.'

[Brah, 2001]

One of the most important problems with Modood's work is that his approach to assertions of religious 'need', 'identity', 'experience' and 'location' are wholly uncritical. Despite his call for reflexivity on the question of blackness, this is nowhere to be found in his writings on Muslims. As with the Runnymede Trust reports, his starting point is the heightened identification of Muslims as a *consequence of* anti Muslim racism during and after the Rushdie Affair. If there is any acknowledgement of the years preceding this event, it is to characterise Muslims as reacting to the monoculturalism and Christian privilege of the state. Moreover, even though he talks about 'political multiculturalism', he overlooks the political processes that may have taken place in order to shape and assert particular demands. Whilst this thesis takes on board his critique of multicultural debates as having moved away from the *politics* of multiculturalism towards analyses of legal judgements, it seeks to produce more critical reflections on the claims that are being made and to unravel the many factors at play.

Indeed, systematic research into the politics of multifaithism at the local level has been limited to a few anecdotal accounts including Yasmin Ali's (1992) points on schooling in Bradford, my own account of youth work in the London borough of Ealing (Dhaliwal, 2003) and Ed Hussain's (2007) detailed narrative of his Islamist activism in Tower Hamlets and Newham. More recently, Pragna Patel and Udit Sen (2010) located their interviews with ethnic minority women within the context of policy and funding shifts in Ealing. However, I believe there is considerably more that can be revealed about the intense and the mundane political exchanges that have led to normative shifts in the local landscape. This thesis makes a contribution in that direction.

Nevertheless, as Habermas (2006) states, there is widespread acceptance within contemporary sociology that we now inhabit a postsecular world:

This refers not only to the fact that religion is holding its own in an increasingly secular environment and that society must assume that religious fellowships will continue to exist for the foreseeable future. The expression postsecular does more than give public recognition to religious fellowships in view of the functional contribution they make to the reproduction of motivations and attitudes that are socially desirable. The public awareness of a postsecular society also reflects a normative insight that has consequences for the political dealings of unbelieving citizens with believing citizens. In a postsecular society, there is an increasing consensus that certain phases of the “modernisation of the public consciousness” involve the assimilation and the reflexive transformation of both religious and secular mentalities. If both sides agree to understand the secularisation of society as a complimentary learning process, then they will also have cognitive reasons to take seriously each other's contributions to controversial subjects in the public debate.

[Habermas, 2006: 47]

New Labour, Religion, Equality and Communitarianism

This thesis began during the dynamic and transformative tenure of a New Labour government. There has been a transfer of power during the course of writing but I believe that New Labour's 'faith agenda' and communitarianism provided the step change in thinking about religious organisations and the public sphere that continues to dominate contemporary conceptions of governance, the social and civil society. This section provides an overview of the legacy of the New Labour political project in so far as it created the space for religious organisations to input into public policy and access public funds and also accelerated a process of de-secularisation that began within civil society in the 1980s.

Whilst the Thatcher era was clearly discernible as a political formation that combined economic neo-liberalism with a social authoritarian agenda (Hall, 1988), New Labour's ideological focus was rather more difficult to establish. New Labour was variously described as: a combination of economic neo-liberalism and social democracy (Hall, 2007); as a 'combination of liberal individualism and socially conservative communitarianism' (Jordan, 2005); and as 'economically conservative

but constitutionally radical' (Phillips, 1999). It is important to note the extent of people's desire to believe in the social democratic aspects of New Labour after a prolonged period of Thatcherism, unfettered marketisation and neo-conservatism but also that the contradictory nature of New Labour drew people into a chaotic, uncertain space which Anne Phillips (1999) described as a period of 'dislocation'. This contradictory nature was highlighted by the following: the introduction of a range of social democratic equalities measures; devolution and democratisation of the state; but also reform or rather gradual privatisation of public services; a greater centralisation of ideological and decision making power and tough anti terror or surveillance legislation.

New Labour was constructed through a refashioning of policies and priorities to ensure a very public (albeit problematic) transition from what has come to be known as 'Old Labour'. An instrumentalist perspective on New Labour as driven by political expediency (Chadwick and Heffernan, 2003) was counter-posed by Anthony Giddens' (1998) writings (and Tony Blair's pronouncements) on the 'Third Way'. Giddens articulated the strongest argument that New Labour represented an ideological project that emerged out of and sought to respond to a vastly changing political context. His work is based on a number of premises about the contemporary political context which reverberate throughout the empirical chapters in this thesis: that communism and socialism have proven untenable (Giddens does not distinguish between the fall of communist states and the perceived unviability of socialist politics); the decline of class affiliation and a significant growth in the number of non aligned and shifting electoral voters (who Giddens nonetheless assumes occupy a centrist space); the durability, sophistication and dynamism of capitalism and markets; the absence of a viable alternative; and problems with welfare provision for having 'perverse consequences' such as creating cultures of dependency, decaying housing estates and rising crime.

A string of related terms provided the discursive framework within which New Labour sought to distinguish itself from Old Labour: 'reform'; 'modernisation';

'renewal' and 'relevance' (Newman 2001). Moreover, remoulding itself whilst in popular Opposition, New Labour actively co-opted phrases that had been associated with civil society struggles including: 'equality'; 'participation'; 'empowerment'; 'choice' and 'community' (Jordan, 2005; Clarke, 2007). However, it became clear that, whilst New Labour had a tendency to 'speak with a forked tongue' (Hall, 2003), its' social democratic or constitutionally radical strand was subordinated to an economic neo-liberal strand (Hall, 2003).

New Labour's 'faith agenda'

Formal state recognition of faith communities actually dates back to the establishment of the Inner Cities Religious Council in 1992 by the Conservative Party. This body continued under New Labour but was moved to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and located within the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. Religion constituted an important component of New Labour's political project. New Labour radically transformed the place of religious groups in the public sphere. Tony Blair's administration in particular was actively involved in a state-led extension of the role of religious groups, particularly as representatives of ethnic minority communities and even as providers of public services. This de-secularisation of public policy and service provision was most obvious in the following measures. Firstly, within education: the extension of voluntary aided status and state funding for ethnic minority faith based schools; the identification of religious groups as key partners in the management of Trust Schools within the Education Act 2006; and because the overwhelming number of City Academies were owned and managed by religious groups and leaders. Secondly, through the introduction of the 'Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund' administered by the newly formed 'Faith and Cohesion Unit' within the Department for Communities and Local Government. This was the first time that a British government directly funded religious groups from the central purse. It had the effect of institutionalising religious identities within State structures. Thirdly, New Labour extended the equalities legislation to include religious discrimination in employment and service provision through the Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003 and through the Equality Act 2006. It is important to note, however, that they faced a

great deal of opposition to proposals to extend positive equality duties on public providers (already in place on 'race' and gender) to promote equality in religion and belief.

There is significant evidence that these commitments trickled down to State apparatus at national, regional and local levels, including the Greater London Assembly and government-led quangos, which began involving religious organisations as key players in the formulation and delivery of public policy at every level of government.⁷ Moreover, this central government commitment to consulting religious groups gave rise to the establishment of national umbrella bodies, such as the Muslim Council of Britain and the Network of Sikh Organisations. As a result, religious organisations began determining policy and practice on a wide range of areas but *also* in areas such as domestic violence where they not only lack expertise but where they have previously been criticised for perpetuating inequality, violence and abuse.⁸

The particular problem of how such a practice has been rolled out *uncritically* across state structures is evident from a number of GLA reports including 'Praying for Peace: Domestic Violence and Faith Communities' published in November 2006 which reports on a meeting of religious leaders at which they discussed the role of religious organisations in tackling domestic violence. This meeting was organised and facilitated by the Mayor's Policy Advisor on Women's Issues. Moreover, research and policy funding related to the development of faith based services or to

⁷ For instance, the document 'Consulting London: A Framework for the core GLA, LDA, LFEPA, MPA and TFL' published in September 2003 clearly identifies 'faith groups' as 'stakeholders' and institutionalises their place in consultation mechanisms.

⁸ For accounts of how religious groups have been involved in perpetrating violence and abuse against women and children or mediating women and children back into violent relationships see Southall Black Sisters (1990) *Against the Grain*, published by Southall Black Sisters and Siddiqui, H (2003) 'It was written in her kismet: forced marriage' in Gupta, R (ed) *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers*, Zed Books: London.

consolidating the input of religious groups in policy formulation is exemplified in a number of Housing Corporation projects including the 'Faith in the Future' project (funded through their Innovation and Good Practice research grants for 2001/02).

The New Labour literature acknowledges the overt religious affiliation of a number of Cabinet ministers at the time and Blair himself has been described as a 'Christian Democrat' rather than a 'Social Democrat' (Marquand, 2003). Indeed Blair's 'missionary zeal' did not go unnoticed and is thought to have underwritten his belief in himself as a 'destiny prime minister', to have spilt over into his commitment to family values and to have influenced his decisions on Iraq in 2003 (Martin, 2007). Stuart Hall referred to Blair as having a 'quasi-religious air of righteous conviction' that worked well with his confessional style of politics (Hall, 2007). There is also some commentary on the religious motivations of other Cabinet ministers, such as Ruth Kelly (a member of the Christian Right organisation Opus Dei) in debates on areas of social policy such as education and health (Brindle, 2007; Martin, 2007). Indeed, the speculation that Ruth Kelly's resignation in 2008 reflected her inability to see through Gordon Brown's commitment to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill 2008 was viewed as a clear manifestation of the contradictions between the religious convictions of individual New Labour politicians, the political opportunism that appears to cement the 'faith agenda' and the social democratic and secular tenets of other New Labour commitments.⁹

However, beyond these surface and journalistic accounts of New Labour's quandary

⁹ For a discussion of the divergent lobbying by Catholic MPs and patients groups on the issue of admix embryos see The Times online 'Q&A: Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill' by Mark Henderson on 26/03/08 available at:

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article3606523.ece>

With regards to the tensions within New Labour on attempts by Catholic Labour MPs to oppose elements of the Bill and support amendments on the issue of abortion see Allegra Stratton's article in The Guardian newspaper on 23/10/08 entitled 'MPs back embryology shake up but abortion row continues' and available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2008/oct/23/stemcells>

over religion, there is very little discussion of the pressure that religious groups, as political formations and long-standing Labour Party allies, brought to bear. Indeed, the 'faith agenda' occupies a relatively silent enclave in the New Labour literature that both defies and appears not to be worthy of explanation. This thesis suggests that the 'faith agenda' could either express some kind of continuity with New Labour's overall objectives or, alternatively, can be viewed as disruptive and contradictory. Religion sat comfortably with both the communitarian and individualistic strands of New Labour's policies. Nevertheless, the 'faith agenda' had its own momentum and lead to unintended consequences. The empirical analysis within subsequent chapters attempts to capture some of these.

Self-regulating individuals and communities of allegiance

New Labour can be seen as a curious dance between neo-liberal economics and social democratic tenets, often with neo-liberalism taking the lead, what Stuart Hall (2003) termed 'New Labour's double shuffle'. New Labour's break from the past involved a rethink of its understanding of equality - now seen as equality of opportunity rather than as redistribution. Implicated in this rethink was the reinvention of the role of the state. One of the promises on which New Labour were elected was to counteract the bleak Thatcherite message that "there is no society, only individuals and families" (Gilbert, 2007). Tony Blair committed New Labour to recognising, valuing and reinvigorating the voluntary sector (referred to by Blair as the Third Sector) and social provision (Blair, in Chadwick and Heffernan, 2003). However, he wanted to do this without giving rise to the kind of anxiety associated with a 1970s Labour government where "nationalisation" became the Conservative Party's drumming baton. This involved a considerable rethink of the role of the state from the state as provider to the state as enabler; under New Labour the state would intervene in society through "social investment" and "social cohesion" rather than extended state provision (Gilbert, 2007). Communitarianism was New Labour's tool for attaining this end. Communities and neighbourhoods were given a new lease of life within social policy.

Nikolas Rose (2001) referred to New Labour's revival of communitarianism as *the* inventiveness of the New Labour project. Communitarianism enabled them to "govern at a distance" by locating people within "communities of allegiance" and engaging them in an "etho-politics", a new moral vocabulary for public policy emphasising peoples' behaviour and values as the cause of problems and the basis for change (Rose, 1999; Rose and Miller, 2008). Rose (1999) noted the emphasis on ethics and values and the characterisation of the individual as a moral being (rather than social as within social democracy or rational as within neo-liberal economic philosophy) engaged with civic virtues. The following quote is significant for this thesis because it highlights the moral currency at play within this new frame:

(O)ne can see signs of the emergence of a new *moral* vocabulary for politics: the recurrence of terms freighted with values: partnership, civil society, community, civility, responsibility, mutuality, obligations, voluntary endeavour, autonomy, initiative... Human beings are considered to be, at root, ethical creatures. The problems of human associations are increasingly made intelligible as ethical problems. And new ways are emerging of governing the behaviour of individuals through acting upon this ethical force field. These ways of governing behaviour through ethics, and in the name of ethics, inform the politics of the Third Way and cognate political programmes developed under such names as communitarianism, stake-holding and social capital. Each seeks a way of acting upon the ethical formation and the ethical self management of individuals so as to promote their engagement in their collective destiny in the interests of economic advancement, civic stability, even justice and happiness.

[Rose, 1999: 474-475]

New Labour actively sought to produce new types of subjects (Hall, 2003). After moving through a variety of terms - citizen, consumer, patient, service user - New Labour appears to have settled on a new hyphenated term 'citizen-consumer' (Clarke, 2005). The new 'citizen-consumer' is empowered, responsible, self-sufficient and active (Clarke, 2005). It was through the new privileged place allotted to the concept of 'choice' that the subject of government became self-governing (Rose, 1999). However, in some ways (but not all) the focus on 'choice' ran into conflict with civic responsibility and a sense of community or 'New Labour's communitarian strand'

(Jordan 2005).

New Labour's citizen was characterised as liberated and independent of the state but also part of a network of social and community links (Clarke, 2005). This embedding of 'citizen-consumers' within 'communities of allegiance' was an attempt to reconcile the social and the economic such as by 'domesticating the social', where responsibility for issues like security, care and welfare were re-privatised and once again assigned to the family or household, or by 'narrowing the social' into smaller units of governance such as communities or neighbourhoods (Clarke, 2007). Ruth Levitas (2004) articulated an even more critical view of New Labour's fascination with 'community':

The continuities with Thatcherism were evident. The New Right involved a synthesis of free market and strong state whereas New Labour's Third Way could be seen as a 'soft' synthesis of market forces and 'community' where the role of 'community' is to mop up the damage done by market forces and mediate the policing functions of the state and (discursively) to serve as legitimisation of this.

[Levitas, 2004: 62]

The term 'community' has historically been used by civil society organisations to assert a strong collective response to injustices and inequalities (Rose, 1999) and also has historical connotations for the state's relationship with ethnic minorities (evident from the Institute of Race Relations' chronicling of anti-racist struggles in 1981 in 'Southall: Birth of a Black Community' and in 1991 in 'Newham: The Forging of a Black Community'). The phrase community was recast from the solidarity politics that had been associated with collective civil action calling the state to account (Black community, our community, workers united etc.) and instead mobilised towards a neo-liberal agenda which involved seeing civil society as a site for investment, as part of the cultivation of a new entrepreneurial ethos. Moreover, when used by communitarians, the term 'community' is steeped in a conservative discourse about one or more of the following - moral degeneration, social disorder, the rise of individualism and the decline of traditional associations namely church attendance or

trade union membership (see for instance Etzioni, 1993; Putnam, 2000).

After the 'race riots' in the north of England in the summer of 2001 and the terrorist attacks on 9/11, New Labour's own sense of 'communitarianism' took a new twist. The development of social solidarities was no longer seen as something that could be left to chance or organic development but rather, this became an important area for state intervention and direction (Jordan 2005). The turn from 'multiculturalism' to 'community cohesion' is discussed in the next section. However, here I want to note that both civic republicanism and communitarianism gained new momentum in the context of the financial crisis and opened up additional spaces for religious groups. Prominent political philosophers such as Michael Sandel (2009) began hailing the promise of 'a new politics of morality' to replace a failing market philosophy. Importantly for this thesis, religious leaders and faith-based organisations are viewed as useful contributors to moral debates about 'the common good', the objectives of government intervention and of public goods (Sandel, 2009). However, as is noted throughout this chapter, where such an approach is couched within the 'deliberative democracy' frame, it is devoid of any real grasp of existing institutionalised practices and power relations, of the historical influence of religious groups on public policy and requires an impossible clean chit before it can be put into practice.

Moreover, though Rose (1999) appears to be suggesting that 'race', ethnicity, gender and sexuality carried the potential to disrupt attempts to impose 'a single set of moral principles' through communitarian policies (1999: 480), I want to suggest that some elements of these diverse political fields can *coincide* with the State's interests and can be better understood through the deployment of the concept of 'hegemony'. Indeed, Rose's (1999) discussion of community is incomplete because it fails to take account of the consistent feature of "community" as a trope of governance with regards to ethnic minorities in Britain, what some post-colonial theorists have referred to as the experience of 'heterogeneous time' (Bhabha, 1994; Chatterjee, 2004) that repeatedly draws us back to multiple and simultaneous narratives. The post-colonial subject is simultaneously governed as someone that is *actually* out of

step and yet also has to contend with the *negative accusation* of being out of step with the dominant narrative. In the case of multiculturalist practice in Britain, the State has been complicit in the production of 'heterogeneous time'.

Between cohesion and prevent

Part of the contradictory nature of New Labour was evident in its push on communitarianism, on the one hand, and its seeming willingness to listen to the concerns of black feminism and anti racism, on the other. So for instance, New Labour showed a willingness to expand understandings of multiculturalism by establishing a Forced Marriage Working Group and issuing a statement that appeared to echo the sentiments of feminists when the Home Office minister Mike O' Brien stated "multiculturalism cannot be an excuse for moral blindness" and advocated a "mature multiculturalism" that simultaneously acknowledged difference and retained a rights framework for tackling violence and abuse against minority women and children.¹⁰ Also the possibility of change was evident in the seminal work of the McPherson Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, the introduction of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and reform of the police complaints system.

During the early part of the summer 2001, there were disturbances in three northern towns- Burnley, Bradford and Oldham. Alongside a number of independent local

¹⁰ Home Office (June 2000) *A Choice By Right: The Report of the Working Group on Forced Marriage* Published by the Home Office Communications Directorate and available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/choiceby2>

Even then Hannana Siddiqui documented her experience of the Forced Marriage Working Group, which still reflected the shift from a multiculturalist to multifaithist governance frame in the selection of its members according to religious identity and by insisting on consulting religious organisation. Siddiqui argued that this process led to flaws in the final recommendations of the Working Group's report which allowed for mediation in cases of forced marriage represented a significant breach in their wider commitment to challenging violence against women where the involvement of statutory services in mediation had already been recognised as bad practice. See Siddiqui, H (2003) *It was written in her kismet: forced marriage* In Gupta, R (ed) *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers: Southall Black Sisters* (Zed Books: London).

inquiries into these riots, the Home Secretary set up a Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion and a Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRT) lead by Ted Cante. The main findings of the CCRT focused on the extent of segregation and polarisation of communities particularly the physical distance between them and noted that this was exacerbated by "separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary organisations, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks".¹¹ Their use of the phrase 'parallel lives' became common parlance and they expressed concern that distance between communities could grow into a fear of difference and be exploited by extremist groups. They pushed for cross-cultural contact to be valued as an end in itself and to be supported or strengthened by community groups and the state. Though the definition of community cohesion is often vague, the CCRT report indicates a number of components including: greater knowledge and contact between communities; respect for various cultures; reducing social exclusion; addressing wealth disparities; equality for women within communities; and a greater sense of citizenship, based on shared common principles; but the report also talked of moral principles, acceptable codes of behaviour, and effective informal social control.¹²

Interestingly, whilst there is much overlap in the recommendations, the independent inquiries into the individual riots in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, expressly talked about the scale of racist abuse, violence and views towards ethnic minorities in these areas but CCRT barely touched on this and indeed it is this (intentional?) oversight that has been the principal critique of community cohesion.¹³

¹¹ Pg 9 of *Community Cohesion: A report of the independent review team* chaired by Ted Cante and published by the Home Office.

¹² *Community Cohesion: A report of the independent review team* chaired by Ted Cante and published by the Home Office.

¹³ For instance the Oldham Independent Review Panel report dated 11/12/01 points to: the rise of the far right in the area including gaining seats in local elections; a petrol bomb attack on the then Asian Mayor's house; common usage of the word 'Paki' to refer to Asians in the area; self imposed curfews amongst ethnic minorities to avoid racist attacks; and complaints by ethnic minorities of

Later the same year, the horrific attacks on the Twin Towers in New York threw multiculturalism into disarray. Exacerbated by the 7/7 bombings in 2005, decades of multiculturalist policy and practice were held responsible for allegedly turning Britain (and the USA and Europe) into a "soft touch". The events released a new wave of racist allegations, primarily against Muslims and Pakistanis, blanketly accusing them of disloyalty, of bigotry, of an unwillingness to integrate or subscribe to a renewed emphasis on 'British values'. This coincided with an underlying discourse about the incompatibility of Islam and Western democratic values, famously elaborated by Samuel Huntington's (2002) book "The Clash of Civilisations and Remaking the World Order". The context became extremely polarised between a racist discourse about Muslims as forming dangerous 'fifth columns' within Britain and an anti racist defensiveness against any critique of Islam. Even if it had been difficult before, it now became impossible to have a reasonable debate about Muslim fundamentalism, the actual existence of terrorist networks within Britain and the role that ought to be played by both state and civil society in challenging fundamentalism.

Whilst Kymlicka and Banting (2006) question the vast quantities of literature now pointing to the 'retreat' (Joppke, 2004) or 'death' (Kundnani, 2007a) of multiculturalism and insist that multiculturalist policies and practices are institutionalised, the government's response to the events of 2001 and especially its shift from enunciations of 'multiculturalism' to 'community cohesion' have been vociferously challenged. In particular, 'community cohesion' is thought to mark a turn away from cultural diversity and tolerance towards an earlier form of assimilationism (Rattansi, 2002; Burnett, 2004; Sivanandan, 2006; McGhee, 2003; Worley, 2005; Kundnani, 2007b). Sivanandan coined the phrase the merging of 'the war on asylum with the war on terror' to refer to the way that second and third generation ethnic minorities in Britain were no longer viewed as established citizens but rather as immigrants in need of integration (2006:2). Furthermore, New Labour

people dumping rubbish or throwing bottles, both of which are common forms of racist harassment.

was accused of the following: placing a disproportionate emphasis on ethnic minorities despite Ted Cantle and Herman Ouseley's findings on 'white flight' as a factor in segregation (Kundnani, 2007a; McGhee, 2003; Back et al, 2002); avoiding central issues around socio economic and regional disadvantage (Rattansi, 2002; McGhee, 2003; Amin, 2005); ignoring the incidence of racism in sparking the 2001 'race' riots in the north of England (McGhee, 2003; Sivanandan, 2006; Kundnani, 2007a); exacerbating disaffection and compounding the experience of discrimination by supporting tough sentencing and a security agenda that compromises civil liberties (McGhee, 2003; Fekete, 2004; Sivanandan, 2006).

As one stream of New Labour's peculiar attempt at civic republicanism, the 'community cohesion' policy assumed a completely flat playing field, devoid of local and historical relations of power, thereby leaving normative whiteness unchallenged or reinforced (Back et al, 2002) and invoked a patriotism that seeks to erase memory of the violence of British colonialism and reassert a new British pride (Back et al, 2002; Yuval Davis, 2006; Kundnani, 2007a). Derek McGhee (2010) described this combination of securitisation and a renewed interest in civic Britishness as standing at the crossroads between a 'politics of fear' and a 'politics of hope'. Whilst Pathak (2007) emphasised the need to distinguish between a post 9/11 existential crisis about *who we are*, from *what kind of society we desire* (2007: 269), I would like to suggest that the two questions are not so easily disentangled.

Above I have already noted the moral underpinnings of New Labour's redeployment of 'community' and the related shift in focus from rights to values and acceptable behaviour but within the context of 'community cohesion', Back et al (2002), Burnett (2004), Amin (2005), and Kundnani (2007a) argue that it marked the revival of the pathologising nature of 'community' as social policy because this moral discourse lambasts the *values* of disadvantaged sections of the population, holding them responsible for their socio economic position and effectively leaving structural, regional, national and even global factors unquestioned. Importantly for this thesis, Back et al (2002) pointed to the local level implications for representation.

Sandwiched between surveillance and cohesion, the local arena 'becomes a battleground of competing ethics' (Back et al, 2002). Thus they stated:

The result is to set up two poles: the first is a consensus position defined and policed by the government (in sharp contrast to the pluralities of moral debate implicit in the logic of localisation) and the second is the province of extremism. Thus, the claiming of minority rights or affiliations is policed by a 'zone of moderation' that is ultimately defined by New Labour. The injunction to be moderate is ultimately the terms of inclusion within space offered to minority communities.

[Back et al: 2002]

Of course Bhatt (2006) has pointed out that religious political groups claiming to be 'moderate' are not necessarily so.

Whilst some social policies can be seen to be 'emancipatory' in orientation, others are formulated rather on the basis of concerns about 'social order' or are 'regulatory' (Cochrane and Clarke, 1993; Orloff, 1993). Notably, British social policy is underwritten by the connection of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity with social disorder (CCCS, 1982; Hall, 1988; Lewis, 1998) so that even policies geared towards addressing low representation, inequality or the exclusion of ethnic minorities are laced with assimilationist and public order concerns (Lewis, 1998; Amin, 2005; Kundnani, 2007).

Moreover, there is now wide agreement that gender has been a central feature of the new moral discourse on 'cohesion', 'integration', terrorism and immigration (see Joppke, 2004; McGhee, 2008; Lewis, 2005 or Worley, 2005) but it has become a hugely contested and heated zone, lighting a fire in many feminist circles. In particular, Liz Fekete (2004 and 2006) argued that the new 'cultural code' at the heart of the new relationship between a politics of fear and a renewal of Britishness, has been defined by the positioning of gender equality as a new standard of governance that was then used as a baton to beat minority communities during periods of social

unrest. For Fekete (2004) and Kundnani (2007a), the national pronouncements on honour killings, female genital mutilation and the hijab became indicative of the vilification of Muslims as backward, violent, misogynistic and emblematic of the existence of divergent values that require realignment through state intervention. Where ethnic minorities are concerned, the sovereignty-authority function of the liberal state has always been cross cut by an additional imperative - that of 'the civilising mission' (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Li, 2007). The place of gender as a standard of governance within this 'civilising mission' is not new (see Spivak, 1985) but several feminists have pointed to its revival post 9/11 as part of a new wave of 'civilisational discourse' (Brown, 2008).

Whilst government initiated reports on community cohesion did make some reference to equality for women within communities, noting in particular the incidence of violence against women and the lack of ethnic minority women in leadership positions, there is little reference to the issue of women's experience of the implementation of community cohesion policy or the question of fundamentalism within the now widespread research and commentary critiquing the discourse. The single exception to this is the material produced by Southall Black Sisters and Women Against Fundamentalism. In addition to some of the points made above, the WAF/SBS joint submission to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's consultation document 'Our Shared Future' critiqued the Commission's terms of reference on the following bases: for focusing on 'cohesion' and 'integration' rather than on human rights principles, equality and non discrimination; it assumed that there are a set of fixed 'British' values that are superior; there's a disproportionate focus on Muslims at the expense of discussing fundamentalist mobilisations and undemocratic tendencies within other religions and communities, including Christianity; it ignored the role that Muslims have played in democratic processes within Britain; it focused on 'community' without any sense that some people do not want to be assigned to 'communities' or of the internal inequalities within communities; New Labour simultaneously sought to tighten immigration rules and welfare provisions implying that internal stability could only be guaranteed by strengthening borders to prevent the influx of (undesirable) migrants and refugees.

In terms of specific points about fundamentalism and the implications of all this for women, the submission pointed to: the hypocritical nature of New Labour's assertions about assimilation and integration on the one hand and their pursuit of partnerships with fundamentalist networks that were masquerading as 'moderates' and as representatives, such as sections of the Jamaat-e-Islami Party, on the other; contradictory assertions about segregation and yet the promotion of religious leaders, faith schools and 'faith communities'; the particular way in which Christianity is 'given an affirmed legal status as the ideological cement of national culture'; and the substitution of demands for equality with demands for religious recognition, exchange and literacy, particularly as espoused by right wing community leaders rather than by the liberal sections of those communities.

Importantly, the submission also pointed out that one of the members of the Commission for Integration and Cohesion, Ramesh Kallidai, was the then secretary general of The Hindu Forum which in 2006 had forced the closure of a London art exhibition by the renowned Indian painter M.F. Hussain on the grounds that it offended Hindu sensibility because of his depictions of naked Hindu female deities. This pressure followed on from Hindu fundamentalist threats in India towards M. F. Hussain. WAF/SBS drew parallels between M.F.Hussain's experience and the way that minority women in Britain are policed for so called 'transgressions' by fundamentalist and conservative sections of ethnic minority communities such as: in 1994 when Asian women in Nottingham were prevented from watching the film 'Bhaji on the Beach'; in May 1999 when artists at the Southall Dominion Centre were accused of offending the local community by exhibiting photographs of the lives of Asian LGBT peoples; and again in 2004 when Sikhs attacked the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and threatened the life of the play write Gurpreet Bhatti because her play 'Behzti' told the story of rape and power abuse within a Sikh temple.¹⁴

¹⁴ WAF/SBS Submission to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion dated January 2007.

Curiously, as much as the events of 2001 completely transformed the political landscape, they also brought New Labour's festering faith agenda to the fore. The social policy responses - the Preventing Violent Extremism and Community Cohesion agendas - were filtered through a growing multifaithist practice to secure a place for religion in structuring social policy.¹⁵ As well as the addition of "community cohesion" and "radicalisation" to the social policy lexicon, a number of new actors and systems were established. The paradox of new tiers of religious representatives was highlighted by Inayat Bunglawala's critique of PVE funding for the Sufi Council of Muslims and the Quilliam Foundation who, he claimed, have 'little or no support among UK Muslims'.¹⁶ At the time, Bunglawala was a member of the Muslim Council of Britain, a close ally of the Blair administration but much derided in recent years for its Islamist connections. Meanwhile, the Quilliam Foundation comprises ex Islamists.

Importantly the Prevent policy has been matched with a large-scale transfer of public resources. In 2010, Rahila Gupta estimated that £12.5m had been disbursed through local authorities to mainly Muslim groups to tackle radicalisation in communities with a further £45m to follow.¹⁷ In addition to this, Arun Kundnani (2009) estimated

¹⁵ For instance, it is clear from the make up of the Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRT) led by Ted Cattle that they were also viewing the north of England 2001 riots through the prism of religion because they made a point of ensuring 'Muslim' representation on the CCRT including: Humera Khan, who is founder of the Muslim women's group An-nisa and whose starting point is the assertion that secular feminist and anti racist organisations denied religious affiliation and failed Muslims; and Ahtsham Ali and Dave Hey who also claim to specifically work with Muslims. It is noteworthy too that Ahtsham Ali is listed as having been the President of Young Muslims UK which has been listed by Awaaz South Asia Watch as one of the many UK sites of the Islamic Right Jamaat-e-Islami party.

¹⁶ See *Calling Time on Prevent* by Inayat Bunglawala dated 11/08/09 published in The Guardian newspaper and available at:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/aug/11/prevent-islam-religion-extremism>

¹⁷ *This religious give-away is hard to justify* by Rahila Gupta dated 23/03/10 published by The Guardian and available at:

that the total amount distributed by the DCLG to local authorities by New Labour under Prevent would come to around £80 million by 2011. Infact, Kundnani suspected that, when taken together with other pots of money allocated for Prevent work by other government departments, the total expenditure could be closer to £140 million. He also found that in the context of an acute shortage of voluntary sector funding, voluntary sector organisations were uncritically signing up to the terms of this new source of funding in order to meet their core costs, notably by re-orienting their work towards specific Muslim 'engagement' or Muslim projects. Therefore this amounted to a direct and indirect state-led construction of communities.

Faith as social capital

The irony is that in the context of the 'cohesion' and 'prevent' agendas, whose starting point has to have been a conception of *religion as risk* (as segregation on the one hand and as radicalisation/extremism on the other), 'faith' is being projected as cohesive and faith communities have become a central feature of both policies. Moreover, academic arguments for the recognition of faith based welfare provision and religious groups as key players within civil society, have acquired a common sense status across political parties and is rarely systematically questioned except by women's organisations, LGBT pressure groups, a limited number of secular groups - the National Secular Society, the British Humanist Association, the Lawyers Secular Society - the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group and sympathetic MPs.

Faith based organising is now well and truly embedded in British social policy and is particularly tied to the concept of 'social capital'. Social capital became a central feature of the New Labour lexicon after a renewed interest in relationships and networks. This has been carried over by the current Conservative Party. In its broadest sense, the term refers to the location of individuals and organisations within valuable networks and relationships based on mutual benefit, reciprocity and trust. People are thought to benefit not only from the financial or physical dimensions of their lives but also to accrue benefits from less tangible social relationships and

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/mar/23/denham-funding-religious-groups>

networks. The government has been interested in social capital because it is 'seen as contributing to better educational attainment, lower crime levels, improved health, more active citizenship, better functioning labour markets and higher economic growth' (Furbey et al, 2006). Religious organisations are being positioned as forms of social capital that can help proliferate such benefits.

At a general level social capital has been critiqued for its connections with Robert Putnam's moral communitarian philosophy, which criticises individualism and makes claims about the loss of connections, the decline of civil society and the supposed moral degeneration of the USA. He sees formal voluntary groups and community associations as sources of civic *and* moral renewal. Such claims also underpin the Big Society agenda and are critiqued below.

The 'faith as social capital' argument is curious in its understanding of how limited state resources are best utilised. There are multiple references to the need for state support in order for religious organisations to perform bridging functions. Yet it is unclear why, if these organisations are not already exuding social capital, the state should be funding them or engaging in religious literacy in order to have a relationship with them when not only does it come with a high risk (of segregation, imposition and conflict) but there are already multiple secular organisations whose very foundation enables 'bridging' across communities and populations.

Nonetheless a great deal of financial support has followed the faith agenda. New Labour created the first central government fund to help religious groups consolidate their base. It was called the 'Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund' (FCCBF) 2006-2008 and administered by the Community Development Foundation through the newly formed 'Faith and Cohesion Unit' within the Department for Communities and Local Government. It was explicitly intended to strengthen the capacity of religious organisations to engage with public authorities, with each other and wider civil society (Spratt and James, 2008).

The FCCBF allocated £7.6 million to 573 organisations in its first round (2006-07) and £4.5million to 350 organisations in its second round (2007-08) (Spratt and James, 2008: 5). Over half of the awards went to Christian groups (355 out of 923 awards) and Muslim groups (139 out of 923 awards) but 105 non-faith projects were also amongst the recipients (Spratt, and James, 2008: 12). A further £30 million was made available from the Community Assets programme to help faith groups refurbish their buildings (Spratt, and James, 2008:14). In 2009 an additional £4.4 million was made available under the Faiths in Action programme to run until March 2011.¹⁸ Importantly, the Faiths in Action programme standardised the use of the phrase 'social action', now a central component of the Big Society lexicon, and tied the phrase to a significant state supported, and often resourced, role for religious organisations.

In addition to this, £1.9million was made available over three years to fund nine Regional Faith Forums intended to promote interfaith dialogue at regional level and work with regional statutory bodies and quangos to raise concerns about religion and belief in the region (Permain and Hatamian, 2010). By March 2010, the New Labour Communities Secretary John Denham announced a new £1.2million Faith Leadership fund to 'help faith groups get their voices heard by Government and public bodies and help play their part in delivering public services' plus an additional £50,000 'social action prize' for faith groups involved in innovative action.¹⁹ The DCLG estimates that there are now 25,500 faith-based charities across England and

¹⁸ *This Religious Give-away is Hard to Justify* by Rahila Gupta on 23/03/10 published in The Guardian and available at:

[http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/mar/23/denham-funding-religious-groups?](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/mar/23/denham-funding-religious-groups?INTCMP=SRCH)
INTCMP=SRCH

¹⁹ See *Denham - Announces £1million fund to help faith groups have their voices heard* News Release issued by the COI News Distribution Service on 17/03/10 and available at:

<http://www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/lfi/412266>

Wales.²⁰

Moreover, during John Denham's tenure, the DCLG produced 'myth busting guidance' to counter the concerns of religious groups that local authorities were being cautious or unfriendly in their contact.²¹ There was no real commentary on the reasons why local authorities may not want to work with religious organisations on welfare issues. Rather the myth busting guidance treated objections to such a relationship as part of 'fuelling myths', implying discrimination or prejudice on the part of local authorities. The 'myths' that the guidance sought to 'bust' about religious groups included: they will use public money for proselytising or worship; they wouldn't want to help people they don't approve of, like atheists or homosexuals; single group funding has negative implications for community cohesion; funding will imply support for religious views/doctrine of the organisation; and it means that non faith based service providers in the Third Sector will be disadvantaged.

In this 'religious turn' in governance, religious groups are depicted as apolitical, benign, philanthropic 'faith groups' that can make a positive contribution to social cohesion and most of the evaluations of FCCBF funded projects (such as James, 2007; Spratt and James, 2008; Permain and Hatamian, 2010) are absolutely celebratory and completely devoid of critique. For instance, the ahistorical assertion that religious groups have been neglected agents within civil society fails to explain why secular services were preferred as a means of ensuring universal access. There is also a distinct absence of any critical evaluation of the political orientation and objectives of some of the religious groups that benefited from these new spaces.

²⁰

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/newsroom/factsandfigures/communitiesfire1/facts/communitycohesion/?id=1675637#question>

²¹ *Ensuring a Level Playing Field: Funding Faith Based Organisations to Provide Publicly Funded Services* produced by the DCLG and available at:

<http://www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/lfi/412266>

Moreover, where religious organisations are praised for providing welfare services such as soup kitchens and clothing for those subject to immigration rules, this is not placed in the context of a critique of why state services fall short in these areas.

From a Politics of Values to a Politics of Virtues

The continuities between New Labour's 'etho-politics' and the Conservative's Big Society are probably self-evident and only tempered by New Labour's partial commitment to statism and equalities legislation. Nonetheless, this final third of the chapter will show that a short distance now exists between the new compassionate Conservatives and the old New Labour project. Their proximity is marked by the identical assertions of the New Labour guru, Professor Anthony Giddens, and Cameron's guru, Phillip Blond, that welfarism has had 'perverse consequences' by creating cultures of dependency and political apathy. Any distance between the Conservatives and Labour will depend on what lies ahead for Labour's transformation but the separation is currently marked by Labour's commitment to a regulatory function for the state, some semblance of state run core public services and a better understanding of diversity. However, even as the Conservatives reveal themselves and the Labour Party renew themselves there is a distinct continuity on the question of 'faith communities' as well as the neo-liberal uses of communitarianism and devolution.

A new 'faiths' literature and field

The view that religious groups are legitimate managers and providers of public services, the construction of 'faith groups' as a valuable resource and of 'faith communities' as constituting valid representations of ethnic minorities appears to have acquired a common sense logic amongst state and non-state actors. Indeed, religious groups are actively positioning themselves as radical voices instigating a 'revival' of civil society (see Deneulin et al, undated) and advancing themselves as 'experts' on the delivery of public services. Some studies even berate the lack of 'religious literacy' on the part of the State and have recommended that this be rectified in order to engage 'faith communities' (Furbey et al, 2006).

There is an emergent literature, particularly within the discipline of social policy and community development and increasingly within the area of social geography, concerned with faith-based organisations (now widely referred to as 'FBOs') and faith based services. This literature echoes a number of central themes. Firstly, the assertion that most contemporary welfare services have Christian philanthropic roots and also that some church-based or church-led services have existed alongside secular services in Britain for many years (Farnell, 2001; Harris et al, 2003; Furbey and Macey, 2005). Secondly, it welcomes the state's recognition of 'faith based organisations' as part of the Third Sector and their contribution to local areas in terms of providing support and solace to the most disadvantaged sections, in tackling poverty and social exclusion (Farnell, 2001; Furbey et al, 2006). This line of argument is linked to the view that religious groups are a historically neglected agent within civil society and that at some point in the last two decades, there has been a growing recognition of the discrimination they have faced in relation to state funding and consultation (Farnell, 2001; Smith, 2002; Furbey et al, 2006).

Moreover, Furbey et al (2006) have argued that religious and secular organisations share overlapping concerns in local areas and have the propensity to work together on a number of issues. As such, the interests of religious organisations are thought to extend beyond theological concerns and beyond their congregations to encompass the impact of social problems on all residents (Furbey et al, 2006). Greg Smith's (2002) work is an example of the way faith-based organisations claim that they have been marginalised through systematic non-recognition. Amongst his points on emerging issues for statutory bodies, he includes:

The reluctance of local councils to take faith groups seriously. For one London borough, it is only in the last two years that the social services has sought to become aware of faith communities by commissioning some small scale research about the possibilities of tendering for contracts for community care. Other departments remain silent, sometimes even embarrassed to deal with the religious sector... the resulting sense of exclusion that many faith groups feel from the concerns and power structures of local governments and regeneration agencies.

[Smith, 2002: 175]

However, as has been noted in the previous sections, there is a contradiction within the literature because not only have there been state funded Christian and Jewish schools for some time, giving rise to parity claims by other minority religious groups, the same literature acknowledges state contact and consultation with religious groups since at least 1992. Moreover, as has been pointed out above, there is a need to develop a perspective that takes account of the policies of local Labour councils and the Labour-led GLC during Conservative governments between 1979 and 1997. This might problematise the way in which religious groups are positioning themselves as victims of discrimination by a secular State.

Indeed, as has been noted above, such arguments displace other narratives making a case for secular services, such as ethnic minority feminist accounts of the impact on domestic violence work of the local state's preference to work with religious leaders and religious organisations. Indeed Samia Bano's (2007) study of Shariah Councils suggests that these are being approached by social services departments to negotiate on issues of child custody and protection despite her findings that Shariah Councils have placed pressure on women to reconcile with violent partners.

At its most cynical, analysts see an important overlap between the Conservative and Labour Party's interest in religious groups as based on access to sources of free human volunteering capacity (social capital), independent funding and frameworks of self-help (Furbey and Macey, 2005). It has been argued that recent State interest in religious organisations is largely about enabling the State to undo welfare dependency and roll back the parameters of the State without compromising ideology; by involving religious groups as opposed to encouraging other sections of the voluntary sector, the State is able to extend its neo-liberal agenda without extending its direct responsibilities (Furbey and Macey, 2005). From this perspective, the state's engagement with faith-based organisations has the propensity

to be closely aligned with its perpetuation of consensus politics. However, the key distinctions between the Conservative Party's interest in religious groups and the motivations of the New Labour project are not just related to a change in tone (as implied by Harris et al, 2003). It also reflects the Labour Party's validation of religious identities as part of its understanding of equality as parity.²²

Moreover, a view of religious groups as potential vehicles for the renewal of a social democratic agenda (as suggested by Smith, 2002) can be questioned through the faiths literature's own findings. In particular, whilst Smith (2002) notes the disjuncture between secular and theological frames for tackling social problems, he seems to be resigned to the possibility that some theological frameworks are unable to implement equal opportunities when delivering services and employment practices:

A number of equal opportunity type issues remain problematic for certain faith communities, particularly those of an Evangelical Christian variety who find it hard to condone homosexual practice and non Christian religious world views and rituals. Whilst such boundaries of faith and conscience continue to be significant, it is unrealistic to expect faith communities to be at ease with requirements of blanket or mechanistic equal opportunities statements.

[Smith, 2002: 172]

One of the few overtly critical positions on faith-based organisations has been produced by the British Humanist Association (2007) in their evaluation of the impact of this development on equality and human rights. They argue that, despite some variation, religious organisations by their very nature are not able to provide services that can benefit society as a whole. Instead secular services are the only means of ensuring people are not discriminated against on the grounds of religion and belief, gender or sexuality in attempting to access services or apply for jobs.

²² This was articulated by Jack Straw as long ago as 1989 when, as the Labour Shadow Education Secretary, he delivered a lecture entitled 'The Next Ten Years' at a conference about Islamic Education and Muslim Schools on 16/07/89.

However, such a perspective does not distinguish between the autonomy of religious organisations and the autonomous organisation of other sections such as women or as Black groups who also cater for specific sections of society and who are also protected from employment legislation when they seek to restrict their employment to women or ethnic minority applicants. This raises interesting questions for this thesis about the rubric of welfare services within the context of tackling social exclusion and the ethics of empowering members of society through self-organisation and specialist services.

In addition to an emergent literature focusing on the role of religious groups in regeneration, there have been some contributions on religion and public policy in the field of education. There is more critique in this area.

In addition to Greg Smith's points above, Oliver Valins' (2002) analysis of Jewish day schools notes the particular interest of religious leaders in providing services that reinforce their own position as gatekeepers and that actively create and maintain rigid boundaries along religious lines. He states:

This provides a framework for understanding why Jewish religious leaders have been so keen to set the formal education agenda for their communities. To control the entrance criteria for schools and to be able to dictate and police the curriculum is, according to the discourse of community leaders, a key to defining children's identities and thus to separate and clearly identify 'us' from 'them'.

[Valins, 2002; 235]

Importantly, Valins' (2002) analysis of Jewish day schools also highlights the malleable and fluid issues in this area including: differences in the motivations of parents, children and religious leaders and the productive interaction of these actors; the impact of changing demographics upon the coherence and the implementation of community controls. This thesis is located within these complex and transformative spaces and processes of negotiation, which may lead to policy and legislative

assertions, but such nuances may not be reflected in the institutionalisation of public policy as part of the act of governance.

K. Moti Gokulsing (2006) notes that the state's support of faith-based schools is partly argued on the basis of academic achievement but he claims incongruity between the 'non negotiable absolutes' of faith based services and the purpose of education as learning to think critically and to question. However, Furbey and Macey (2005) assert that there is now a real range of faith based services and 'faith communities' with the propensity to strengthen borders between groups *or* alternatively to produce greater heterogeneity:

Thus, religion can provide the most total of all "total environments" as currently expressed on both global and local stages in Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and other religious fundamentalist or separatist movements and communities. On the other hand, when explored from within, many faith groups contradict external impressions of static and consensual communities.

[Furbey and Macey, 2005:101]

Nevertheless, the recent Court of Appeal judgement that the Jewish Free School's admissions policy is in breach of the Race Relations Act 1976, has highlighted the issue of boundaries for faith based schools and particularly the gendered proximity of 'race' and faith. By viewing Jewishness as determined by the mother's origins, the school refused a place to a child whose mother had converted to rather than been born into Judaism even though the mother regarded herself as an orthodox and practicing Jew.²³ The court of appeal ruled that the school's refusal to admit the child were based on ethnicity rather than religious affiliation and therefore contravened the Race Relations Act 1976. Interestingly, discrimination (referred to elsewhere as selection) on the grounds of religion rather than ethnicity would have been permissible.²⁴ Whilst concerns about the equalities and human rights breaches of faith schools' practices and policies are now part of a campaign run by the Accord

²³ See coverage by the National Secular Society <http://www.secularism.org.uk/the-jewish-free-school-a-case-th.html>

Coalition,²⁵ what these institutions mean in real terms for the internal variance within communities are spelt out by the Rabbi Jonathan Romain in his recent article for the education journal FORUM:

What about internal discrimination? And we have already seen that quite a few of the single faith schools operate restrictive policies with Jewish schools leading the way in declaring that this child isn't Jewish enough or needs to be reconverted; while Christian schools are making unrealistic demands and forcing agnostic parents to attend church services every Sunday lest they jeopardise their child's place at school - a form of family coercion in the name of education.

[Romain, 2007: 211]

Moreover, Harris et al (2003)'s concerns about the Jewish voluntary sector include that the sector is dominated by a few large organisations (4 per cent of the total number of organisations account for the bulk of the total income of the sector) and may not be able to respond in any kind of pluralistic way to the State's new found interest. Whilst the dominant organisations have the experience and capacity to manage larger scale projects, they also tend to be the ones with a focus on transnational identities and projects in Israel rather than here.²⁶ Moreover, Harris et al (2003) and Valins (2002) suggest reasons for the convergence of a state led and civil society led 'faith agenda': they point to an increasing number of Jewish groups

²⁴ *The boundaries between race and faith* by Afua Hirsch dated 25/06/09 published in The Guardian and available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/jun/25/jewish-school-race-religion>

²⁵ The Accord Coalition is a collection of religious and secular organisations established in 2008 in order to push for legislative change to the rules governing faith-based schools. Website address: <http://www.accordcoalition.org.uk/index.php/about/>

²⁶ Harris et al (2003) found that 62 per cent of the organisations they evaluated included Israel in their scope of operations. These same organisations account for almost half of the total income of the sector. Although Harris et al do not make this point, other sources point to an important difference between Jewish cultural identities in general and those based upon a strong attachment to the state of Israel as a political project.

seeking state funding because of a decline in the number of individual Jewish donors, itself a result of changing demographics and an increase in mixed marriages.

Despite a growing literature on faith-based schools, there is very little on the particular implications for ethnic minority girls. The most detailed insight into Muslim girls' schools in Britain has been provided by Parker-Jenkins and Haw (1996) who conducted a detailed study of six Muslim girls' schools, at that time privately funded. Their study is highly sympathetic to state funding for faith based schools. They make the following key points: students' ability to gain a more coherent education about Islam than they are able within state schools or from their parents; high levels of solidarity and feelings of acceptance amongst the students on the basis of their shared identity; protection from wider anti-Muslim sentiment. However, their description of the school raises a considerable number of concerns. In particular, the strength of solidarity amongst the pupils is related to the restricted pastoral care provided within the schools, high levels of discipline and a gulf between students and teachers. Moreover, the board of governors for each of the schools is entirely made up of male businessmen from the local area and in order to comply with 'their interpretation of "orthodox" Islam', the female heads of the schools are not allowed to attend the governors' meetings but have decisions delivered to them in an appropriate way (1996: 19). They also point out that many of the students they interviewed had not chosen the school but rather were sent there because parents wanted them to attend a single sex school.

Importantly, for the purposes of this thesis, the 'faith agenda' has already demonstrated its own reproductive capacity, enabling itself to become a structuring and organising feature of society. For instance, recent statistics on religious practice and church attendance in Britain have shown a sharp increase in the number of families with children of secondary school age being baptised and aligning themselves with religious entities in order to secure places at high achieving faith

based schools.²⁷

Big Society, Good Society, Red Tory and Blue Labour

The current political context presents an unusual situation; the leaders of the three main political parties have declared that they are not religious and yet a broad consensus has emerged with all three conceding a commitment to engaging religious organisations in politics, in public policy and as partners in the direct delivery of social welfare services. David Cameron cited religion as the key to a moral framework and "a guide to life".²⁸ Cameron's guru, Phillip Blond, referred to this as 'a politics of virtue', which stands alongside New Labour's politics of values because religion marks out the parameters of conduct. This section argues that, when taken together, Big Society, Good Society, Red Tory and Blue Labour mark the frontiers of a new theologically based and oriented social conservatism making a significant impact on British social policy.

Nat Wei is generally credited as the Big Society architect. Now the youngest peer, Lord Wei is an aspirational social enterprise man that also speaks openly about the influence of Christianity on his life. However, the Big Society as David Cameron's Big Idea appears to have been born of additional influences: an ideological affinity with Philip Blond's (2010) 'Red Tory' and the capacity of Citizens UK and Obama-

²⁷ See *School Choice "boosting baptisms"* dated 12/01/08 on BBC news and available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7184540.stm>

Reports on increases in baptisms particularly amongst 12 year olds as directly related to seeking admission to faith based schools where the admission criteria often requires confirmation of religious identity and also a commendation from a local religious institution qualifying the 'good' character and religious commitment of the applicant.

²⁸ As quoted in *Teachings of Jesus are a "good guide to life" says Cameron* by Jenna Lyle dated 6/11/09 posted on Christian Today and available at:

<http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/teachings.of.jesus.are.a.good.guide.to.life.says.cameron/24555.htm>

style community organising to activate and turn people out to events.

Philip Blond is a theologian and Director of the think tank, ResPublica. Blond's ascendancy since 2009 is connected to a series of essays and newspaper articles culminating in a book entitled 'Red Tory' in which he claims to draw on both Left and Right principles to identify a new middle ground for politics and to call for a new 'civic settlement'. He proclaims a commitment to the Left's interest in redistribution and the Right's interest in moral conservatism. At its heart, 'Red Tory' is a critique of both the state and of the market but I would argue that Blond is indefatigably anti-statist and has an unerring belief in the logic of the market. His idea of redistribution, however, is about ensuring everyone has access to ownership through social enterprise and a renewed localism. Moreover, he argues that poverty is caused by the higher than necessary barriers for entry to the market. Specifically, he is talking about rules and regulations, notably equality and diversity requirements, that he claims only large businesses can fulfil.

Blond's work contains a strong critique of individualism and of the state, notably the Rousseauian 'social contract' basis of the welfare settlement and the emergence of liberalism as a critique of religious absolutism. As a consequence of the latter, liberalism (shared by Left and Right) carries an oppressive view of god and therefore denies the value of religious organisations, instead choosing to look beyond such associations to focus on individual relationships with the state. Blond argues that whilst liberalism focused on individuals, socialism focused on the state. Apparently neither paid any attention to the relationships between people and society. Of course this doesn't fit with any of the historical accounts of multiculturalism policy and waves of state intervention in the social, as described in the first half of this chapter. Nor does it reflect the consistent social pressure on women to be tied to marriages, families and communities.

Blond's work marks a continuation in the revival of associationalism, an emphasis on

relationships and institutions rather than individuals. As with all other forms of communitarian discourse, there is a harking back to a supposedly earlier and better age, usually before the establishment of the welfare state, a time where people supposedly did things for themselves, they looked out for other people, there was a greater sense of 'community', everyone was happier and local populations were more cohesive. Religion has always occupied a special place within such communitarian visions which, as discussed above in the section 'Faith as Social Capital', are closely linked to an anxiety about moral degeneration but also because the limited social welfare provision that existed prior to the establishment of the welfare state depended entirely upon either religious organisations or individual philanthropists.

Moreover, his emphasis on the value of religious organisations combines with his call for a revival of marriage, family and blood based relationships as important sources of stability and for tackling poverty and social problems. He argues that families should be seen as offering a permanency that is very important for all people. Underlying his interventions is the suggestion that feminism has undermined rather than improved women's rights in relationships. Indeed, Blond tends to throw in points about Bohemian lifestyles and birth control as exacerbating the individualisation of all forms of social organisation.

These claims about marriage and the family as answers to poverty (and the 'Broken Britain' scenario) parallel the claims of the members of the Conservative Christian Fellowship now located within the Centre for Social Justice and their attempts to renew the emphasis on keeping the family unit together and on marriage (including the offer of additional financial incentives). Philip Blond's addendum on the issue calls for people to move away from the old public perception of 'social conservatism' as an attack on one parent families and minorities to one that connects it with a renewed emphasis on building stable long term relationships between people and a sense of permanence. He often uses the words 'conservatism' and 'conservation' interchangeably in order to emphasise this point.

Unfortunately, the Labour Party appears to be offering very little by way of different philosophical models on relations between the state, individuals and civil society. With the notable exception of Tessa Jowell, there is a short distance between the Labour Party's discussion of Good Society and the Conservative Party's Big Society. Indeed it was New Labour that kicked off the renewed interest in 'social relationships', a discourse about 'the common good' and social action, and credited religious organisations with a role to play.

The political theorist Maurice Glasman and his vision of 'Blue Labour' have been posited as the Labour Party's answer to Blair's Red Tory. Arguably Glasman (2010) talks of co-operatives, devolution and social relationships from the perspective of the history of workers' struggles, a sense of collective action and a socialist ethics rather than about reifying the benefits of market driven ownership. His primary objective has been to redress the balance within civil society between individual rights or legal cases and the Labour tradition of collective action and solidarity politics. He states:

Labour values are not abstract universal values such as 'freedom' or 'equality'. Distinctive Labour values are rooted in relationships, in practices that strengthen an ethical life. Practices like reciprocity which give substantive form to freedom and equality in an active relationship of give and take; or mutuality, where we share the burden and benefits of association.

[Glasman, 2010: 31]

However, Glasman's piece in the Soundings journal is formulated within a distinctly sexist frame and his work in general attempts to bring a theological language and framework to questions of citizenship.²⁹ The Soundings piece is objectionable on lots of counts but particularly because he depicts the Labour Party as a family unit where the mother and father figures represent competing strands of the Party's philosophical tendencies. The father figure is a working class trade unionist for whom relations with other people are key and he is depicted as the underdog. The mother figure is a

²⁹ Maurice Glasman is the Director of the Faith and Citizenship programme at London Metropolitan University.

middle class modernist with a great deal of social capital to hand (education, resources, networks) whose politics are pinned to individual rights, freedoms and equalities. The mother figure is depicted as having greater power. Glasman states:

In philosophical terms we have a Dad of Aristotelian, Common Good and traditional descent, and a mum from the Platonic, progressive and radical line... .The problem with their marriage was clear from the start. The mum had all the advantages of class, resources, eloquence, confidence and science and none of the experiences of hardship. There was a lack of reciprocity as the years went by and Labour moved towards government. The mum was much better suited to the demands of the modern world, capable of understanding the big picture, developing technical complex policies and managing change. The trade unions only had the power to corrupt as there was no democracy in corporate governance... the Dad had no power at work and no power at home either as the Party became increasingly dominated by middle class policy technocrats. The marriage, you could say, became increasingly abusive, which is why it is necessary now for the grandparents to step in and play a more active role in nurturing the well being of the child by rebuilding love and reciprocity between the parents. This will require a commitment to renewing cross class organisation within the party and common action for the Common Good throughout the movement. The Living wage could be a good place to start.

[Glasman, 2010: 36-37]

With dad representing trade union support but impotence within the New Labour administration and mum representing privileged liberalism, the projection of feminism as individualistic, middle class and as an easy fit with neo liberalism is fortified. Moreover, when taken with his points on the uses of religious dimensions in political action below, the suggestive aspects of this analogy start to parallel a wider argument amongst faith based initiatives that women have become too powerful.

Glasman identifies the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church as the grandparents of the labour movement. He argues that Catholic theology fits well with Aristotelian notions of 'the common good' and reflects instances in the history of the

labour movement where the Catholic and Methodist churches have played an important role in supporting strikes. It is worth emphasising that Glasman draws his influence and particularly his sense of 'radical traditionalism' from his interactions with the London chapters of the Citizens UK (discussed in Chapter 7). Both Glasman and Blond relate histories of associationalism to a history of religious embeddedness. However, their projections of this association are romanticised and the power relations and obligations that are required to enact it are entirely overlooked. Neither of them entertains any kind of critique of religious organisations. Glasman even reifies Cardinal Newman's contribution to the dockworkers' struggles but fails to mention that Cardinal Newman was a controversial figure, even long after his death, mired in rumours that he suffered from depression because of an institutional pressure that forced him to hide his sexuality and love for another man. Moreover, both Glasman and Blond mirror the Citizens UK view of individuals, people that are not in association, in relationships or within institutions, as a liability. I think it would be fair to say that much of the academic tradition championed by Glasman, Blond, and also Justin Beaumont and Luke Bretherton, has been brought to the table by the Citizens UK and the ideological framework that they have been pushing since the late 1980s.

As with Philip Blond, Glasman argues that the Labour Party gave up on the idea of the social and this is the space that, once vacated by Labour, has come to be occupied by the new Conservatives. As one particularly conservative stream of communitarians they are both trying to turn the clocks back not only to an earlier period of mutualism and co-operatives but also to a language that emphasises tradition, permanence and problematises individual rights based politics. Indeed the reason why Glasman is referred to as 'Blue Labour' is because, like Blond, he defines himself as a traditionalist. Glasman's preference for an Aristotelian frame bears similarities with Blond's 'politics of virtue'. Rather than issuing assurances about everyone's non-negotiable human rights, Glasman argues that universal values ought to be contested and defined through debate and exchange, a consensus-building model of 'the common good'. This reflects the tendency of the contemporary faith based mobilisations within the British context to veer towards deliberative

democracy, the theo-political push behind a new politics of 'the common good' and also to steer away from universalism or absolute rights. Without an assurance of universal and absolute rights, 'the common good' is an entirely vacuous term that can easily be mobilised against the most vulnerable people in local areas.

Moreover, speaking at a conference for London churches, the Communities Minister Andrew Stunnell outlined how he believes that churches have a key role to play in the Big Society but also stated:

My Department can help remove unnecessary red tape or legislation that some currently face - and which are likely to be common to all faith based community projects. This, along with measures in the Localism Bill, will mean that groups are empowered to carry out their work even more effectively.³⁰

Ethnic minority religious organisations have been lobbying the government for their slice of the Big Society cake. The Jewish Leadership Council submitted its report, 'Big Society and the UK Jewish Community', at a meeting with Eric Pickles. The report calls on the government to recognise Jewish faith based organisations as active participants in the Big Society agenda on the basis that the language fits their work precisely. However, they were keen to gain assurances that they could avoid the obligations of the Equality Act 2010. The report states:

Voluntary organisations rely on support from the public. They get this support because people give to communities and causes they identify with. Rather than trying to limit community and voluntary organisations from being able to serve their communities, Government should understand that a major part of their success relies on this relationship...The legislative and administrative environment makes it more difficult for charities from religious communities to work effectively. Government

³⁰ *Andrew Stunnell: Church groups can bond communities regardless of faith* posted on 20/01/11 to the Department for Communities and Local Government website and available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/communities/1821863>

should avoid creating more technical hurdles for religious-based charities and should consider whether the current framework, following the Equality Act 2010, may be hindering the delivery of Big Society goals.³¹

This is one of the clearest indications to date that equalities legislation is an obstacle for faith groups waiting to capitalise on the Big Society agenda. It tugs at the arguments being made against New Labour's statism. It characterises equalities and indeed any regulation of faith based services as part of the red tape of bureaucracy that needs to be countered to secure civil society co-operation. The point being made by the JLC is that faith based organisations can not offer their resources to the Big Society plan, acquired through the sort of philanthropy that is so central to Cameron's argument, unless they are able to organise and deliver services on the communal basis that their donors support. The same article suggests that Eric Pickles has offered the JLC assurances and quotes Jeremy Newmark, Chief Executive of JLC as saying:

The secretary of state reaffirmed that Jewish organisations do not need to dilute their faith-based element. He said Big Society is a harmony of different voices.³²

This 'harmony of different voices' has the potential to reproduce the old multicultural adage that 'they look after their own'.

Cole Moreton has predicted that Christian churches may not be able to take centre stage in the Big Society agenda because of their declining numbers outside of London and the *internalisation of a secular neo-liberal outlook*.³³ However, others are arguing that ethnic minority religious organisations are thriving and growing. If

³¹ As quoted in *JLC Advises on Big Society* by Robyn Rosen dated 9/12/10 published The Jewish Chronicle and available at:

<http://www.thejc.com/community/community-life/42326/jlc-advises-big-society>

³² *ibid.*

so, we could be on the road to a differential rolling out of the Big Society agenda where stronger religious organisations will be at the centre of the new localism in ethnic minority areas whilst the majority population, especially outside of the cities, will benefit from a more secular mutualism because of a received wisdom about the declining influence of the Church. This could compound the problem of 'heterogeneous time' already discussed in relation to multifaithism in the first half of this chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that religious groups and identifications occupy a very strong place within the context of British social policy and politics. Religion runs right through communitarian social organisation and governance from the early days of multiculturalism policy into New Labour's 'faith agenda' and is now both inside state policy and as a dominant discourse in civil society. A new wave of religious communitarianism is sustained by several contemporary components: the legacy of multiculturalism in politics that enables restricted view of ethnic minority religious projects; morality as a new source of both governance and critique; deliberative democracy and a new discourse about the consensus politics of a common good; a majoritarianism that stems from the view that religious affiliation, belief and practice has grown and so religion needs to be accommodated no matter what this means for political principles and equalities issues.

The place of religion within multiculturalism stems from colonial governance and has carried with it longstanding problems. The specific problems that have been highlighted in this chapter are twofold: representation and codification. Multiculturalism is premised on state negotiations with a layer of 'community leaders', usually male and usually drawn from religious institutions. This is a

³³ *Can religion rescue Dave's Big Society?* by Cole Moreton dated 4/04/10 published by The Independent and available at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/cole-moreton-can-religion-rescue-daves-big-society-1935226.html>

distinctly undemocratic practice that has long since been used to govern ethnic minorities. The position of community leaders often corresponds with a tendency to try and fix or codify religious, ethnic and cultural practices, a process that both leads to reification of particular norms and the homogenisation of communities. It relies on the interventions of state acknowledged religious or cultural authorities and erases the syncretic dimensions of religious and cultural practice or lived reality. Religious identity and affiliation has occupied a privileged place within a multiculturalism frame that has difficulty taking account of multiplicity, the way that people are defined and situated through the intersection of multiple axes. Nonetheless, some liberal political theorists have sought to extend multiculturalism in order to gain group rights based on religion. In the last decade, and particularly because of the central place that religion occupied within New Labour governance, there has been a slide from multiculturalism to multifaithism. Moreover, the push for the recognition of Muslim group rights arises on the heels of the Rushdie Affair but has been propelled to legitimacy post 9/11.

Black feminism and anti racism has already provided a rigorous critique of multiculturalist policy and practice and its tendency to privilege religious identities and organisations, the way it has contributed to the development of ethnicist enclaves and identity politics as well as the state's preference for policies based on cultural tolerance over tackling structural imbalances of power. Whilst some of the same critics have begun producing interventions on the new practice of multifaithism, the way in which this new dominant model impacts upon local cartographies of power is currently missing from this critique. An earlier era of local studies has been supplanted by a focus on the national or international picture; most notably through the discourse analysis of policy documents and legal judgements and this is especially the case in relation to discussions about religion and secularism.

Whilst Modood's pronouncements about the politics of multiculturalism may be useful, his work does not do what he professes needs to be done. Whilst taking note of Modood's observations about Christian privilege, the growth of religious identity

as empirical reality and inconsistencies in the application of the public-private divide, this thesis writes against the grain of Tariq Modood's contributions in this field by providing a reminder and new insights on the contestatory and power dimensions of the *politics* of multifaithism by looking at the local level implications of the new framework of multifaithism.

Communitarianism and its strong boundaries brings with it normative injunctions for the behaviour of people within those groups and their relationship with the state. Where male religious leaders determine these constructions and norms, it has been pointed out that there is a significant possibility of damage for women and minorities within minorities, with severe repercussions for those that transgress norms and boundaries. Whilst some have argued that the state should only ensure individual rights, this chapter notes that it is not always easy to distinguish between the individual and the community notably because of the collective dimensions of individual claims as some are located within arguments about the normative implications for a larger number of people.

Fraser's model for thinking about group rights as both questions of cultural politics and questions of social politics provides the scope for rights to include recognition demands that have the propensity to shift normative practice. However, her interventions also provide succour for those that would like their identity claims to become a part of normative relations between state and civil society. This thesis has the capacity to demonstrate the continued importance for taking account of intra relations of power, of marginality within communities, namely that religious claims as recognition struggles may challenge the institutional privileging of Christianity by the British state at a national level but they also have the capacity to oppress others within minority communities. The renewed emphasis on 'the common good' derived primarily from the deliberative democracy model but heralded as a significant dimension of a new wave of (Christian-led) theo-political interventions, ignores the question of who gets to participate in this form of consensus politics. This thesis provides significant empirical material to remind the reader that those with the

potential to transgress norms are not represented in discussions about norms setting.

Whilst critical of communitarianism, its conservative roots and its tendency to shut down internal plurality, this thesis argues that a lot hinges on the orientation of the group. Group recognition has been claimed by a diverse range of organisations including anti racist, feminist, trade union, culturalist, ethnicist and religious Right projects but there are clear distinctions in the orientation of the group. This thesis provides a significant amount of information about some local groups in Ealing and Newham. Moreover, by pushing concerns about fundamentalism and de-secularisation to the heart of the thesis, it draws out the problems with rolling out multifaithism and the faith agenda.

This thesis makes a significant contribution to emergent discussions about multifaithism, a term that has not yet acquired common parlance but that I believe describes the current context in many local areas. This chapter has argued that multifaithism arose from a double movement - from above through a state-led construction of communities and social welfare practice, notably through New Labour's faith agenda and now the continued discourse around society and community; and from below, through the success of social movements in encouraging religious political identifications and lobbying for the recognition of religious identities and claims by the state. So far there is little by way of detailed empirical research on the local dimensions of the experience of multifaithism. In spite of the resurgence of localism, local area studies seem to have petered out and do not feature a great deal in discussions about religion and secularism. The following chapter demonstrates that this is particularly the case with regards to feminist interventions in this field, which have been focused on the national picture or international discourse. Rather more critical feminist perspectives about religion, civil society and the state are to be found in the writings of feminists in the Middle East or the South Asian subcontinent.

New Labour's use of 'faith' as opposed to religion was intended to reproduce the sense of religious organisations as benign and philanthropic rather than as political bodies. This thesis views them as political formations, actively engaged in shaping the world around them, in lobbying the state and galvanising support in civil society.

Moreover, given that New Labour introduced such profound changes on the question of faith and public policy, there is surprisingly little discussion of this in mainstream New Labour literature and surprisingly little critique (or discussion of power) within an emergent 'faiths' literature and field. There is a distinct absence of accounts of the way in which religious organisations mobilised as political rather than apathetic cultural formations and brought pressure to bear on the Labour Party and subsequently took advantage of the spaces that opened up through the 'faith agenda'.

The local has particularly taken on greater significance since the advent of new policies intended to impact on 'the social', specifically through a new wave of state supported communitarianism and delivered through devolved units, with neighbourhoods and communities featuring strongly in New Labour governance. The state's new found relationship with religious organisations travelled through these lines.

This thesis explores Ruth Levitas' increasingly relevant assertion that the discourse of 'community' enables the neo liberal state to govern at a distance, acting as a secondary source of policing and a buffer between local people and the market. Moreover, communitarianism, as opposed to collective solidarities, carries a certain social conservatism. Of late there has been more literature produced by way of upholding and praising the new wave of religious communitarian formations than providing a rigorous and productive critique. A great number of writers are upholding the moral and therefore social justice potential of religious organisations, even if they acknowledge their social conservatism. For some writers, such as the hugely influential Philip Blond and Maurice Glasman, for instance, religious groups play a

central role precisely because of their conservatism. This thesis acknowledges both the conditions of possibility, the spaces that enable religious formations to thrive, their positive contributions but also draws out the distinct problems and limited conceptions of the political subject that they bring with them.

Critiques of community cohesion and prevent or the new securities and assimilationist agendas of the state since 2001 provide little information about how these have been implemented in local spaces. Moreover, whilst there is wide acceptance that gender has been revived as a standard of governance and as part of a new 'civilisational discourse' or neo-imperialism, the actual detail of what this means for the balance of religious communitarianism and the safeguarding of women's, LGBT or the rights of minorities within minorities is distinctly missing. One of the exceptions to this has been the work of WAF/SBS.

Importantly, there is a moral agenda within the policy spaces that now include religious organisations, namely the new turn to 'communities of allegiance' and the 'etho-politics' referred to by Nikolas Rose, the moral response to riots and 9/11, and the moral dimensions of the communitarian ideas of Robert Putnam's social capital. Much of this has been carried over by the Conservative Party even if Philip Blond prefers to call it a 'politics of virtue', more overtly bringing the theological dimensions and the assured place for religious institutions to the fore.

There is an emergent literature and field on faith based organising and faith based welfare services but they are not producing a critique. This literature is coherently and unanimously making the case for extending and consolidating a 'faith agenda' that began under New Labour. Indeed their elements of critique focus on the need for state and statutory bodies to recognise the agenda of religious groups rather than to expect them to fit themselves into existing secular systems or pressure them to secularise their work or be used, in a utilitarian way, by the state. If there is any recognition of the problems of 'faith' in public policy, it is limited and muted rather

than explored and interrogated.

Most of the recent interventions, notably political interventions by theology graduates, such as Luke Bretherton, Philip Blond and Adam Dinham, but also articulated by Maurice Glasman, have focused on a combination of tradition, permanence and relationships. Religious institutions are seen as significantly undervalued sources of both permanence and associationalism. Other than Dinham, these contributions also enforce the merits of marriage and families and doing what is necessary to keep people in relationships or focused on relationality over individualism. It is liberalism that is blamed for the loss of association and the prevalence of individualism but in the shadows lies an attack on feminism. Moreover, the view that women have accumulated too much power repeats through faith circles. This thesis also seeks to draw out some of these highly gendered arguments and practices.

Chapter 2: Religion and Electoral Representation: a Fine Balance

Introduction

Religion is deeply entangled in local level electoral politics. This chapter shows how religion maps onto local electoral politics in surprising ways revealing the peculiar but also comparable interactions between political parties and religious identities. Questions about the religious and the secular become markers for revealing a range of contradictory practices. Moreover, the multiple ways that religion already lives within electoral politics speaks to the problems of establishing clear secular-religious distinctions. The two London boroughs in this study are currently under the control of Labour Party councillors. However, there are significant differences between them. In Newham, power is thought to lie essentially with one man, the directly elected Mayor, and his cohort of Cabinet councillors. In Ealing it has been suggested that local authority civil servants not elected representatives are the driving force behind social policy formulation, delivery and funding decisions. Critics described Newham as the testing ground for New Labour's policies and the Newham Labour Group as possessing a strong central command and corporate identity. Conversely, Ealing Labour Group was depicted as far less coherent and split across many interests and fraternal factions. The actions of the local Labour Groups are organised in a way that seeks to wield maximum electoral support but also to circumvent critique.

The Ealing Story

Control over Ealing Council has slipped between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party for some decades, swinging against the colour of central

government and without significant majorities either side.³⁴ There is a decipherable pattern across the borough in terms of Party political support. The pattern of voting in the Ealing North and the recently created Ealing Central and Acton constituencies have tended to reflect the fate of marginal seats at parliamentary elections but in Ealing Southall there is a long and firm history of Labour Party support. Smaller parties - the Green Party, UKIP and the Christian Party - have all fielded candidates in the parliamentary elections and a handful of council seats remain in the hands of the Liberal Democrats but the borough is ensconced in a largely two party race. This chapter shows that some ethnic minority councillors harbour divided loyalties.

The Ealing Southall story is more akin to the Newham story. The Ealing Southall parliamentary seat and the council wards that it encompasses have enjoyed a Labour monopoly for several decades. The constituency was created in 1965 and was held by Labour Party MPs Sidney Bidwell (1966 until 2002), Piara Khabra (1992 until 2007) and Virendra Sharma (2007 to date). However, there are signs that Labour's fortunes may be beginning to turn. Since 2001 the Ealing Southall Labour candidate has been progressively losing votes, particularly to Nigel Bakhai of the Liberal Democrats, and in 2010 to the Conservative Party candidate Gurcharan Singh. So whilst Labour holds on, recent years are indicative of underlying tensions in the area and the fragmentation of Labour Party support. I argue that this is connected to a changing relationship with two elements of its base: the secular socialist Indian Workers Association (IWA) and the right leaning Sikh Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (SGSSS).

³⁴ In 2006 the Conservative Party gained control after eight years of a Labour council with elections returning 37 Conservatives; 29 Labour and 3 Liberal Democrats. However, in May 2010, Labour councillors won back control with a particularly high turnout (at 62.24% of the electorate voting compared to around a third in previous years) returning 40 Labour, 24 Conservative and 5 Liberal Democrat councillors. The 2010 parliamentary elections gave Ealing two Labour MPs (Stephen Pound and Virendra Sharma held onto their seats at Ealing North and Ealing Southall) and one Conservative MP (Angie Bray was elected to the new Ealing Central and Acton seat).

Two poles of power: IWA and SGSSS

One of the most unexpected contrasts came through the seemingly divergent opening assertions of Stephen Timms Labour Party MP for East Ham in Newham and Virendra Sharma Labour Party MP for Ealing Southall. Timms' political engagement emerged from his Christian commitments. He is a well-known Evangelical Christian, he plays an active role in the Christian Socialist Movement and he has been the Labour Party Vice Chair on Faith Groups since 2007. In sharp contrast, Sharma has emerged from the notoriously secular Indian Workers Association (IWA). He was born into a Gandhian political tradition and embraced family support for Nehru's post-independence Congress Party. He described his political trajectory as both socialist and secular and located himself within a secular response to the intersection of class and 'race'. His political activity in Britain has travelled the beaten track of many left leaning black activists of his generation. He started as a trade unionist and a member of the IWA. He then participated in the Labour Party Black Sections movement and went on to become a local councillor. He was rewarded for several decades of investment in the Labour Party by securing the nomination to replace the longstanding MP Piara Khabra. Then in 2007, he was elected MP for Ealing Southall.

In a sense both Stephen Timms and Virendra Sharma are reflections of a particular generation of activism and ideological frameworks now embedded within local Labour politics: social action Christians and diasporic secularists. It would seem that their personal histories interrogate the structuring stereotypes that project ethnic minorities as particularly pious on the one hand and the white majority as increasingly secular if not atheist on the other. Yet in the current climate and at a normative level, they have more in common than expected. Stephen Timms objects to religious identity politics and religious political parties but supports the work of religious organisations on regeneration. Virendra Sharma pre-empted questions about faith based service provision by making an important distinction between his personal opposition to these and his role as an elected representative that is obliged to respond to religious demands. In spite of his principled objections to religious based welfare services or mobilisations, he has not actually opposed any of the local religious developments: he attends all the religious processions, he supports all the

applications for religious sites of worship, and he backs demands for religious accommodation. Indeed he highlighted his links with the Sikh Human Rights Group campaign for Sarika Watkins who was excluded from a school in south Wales when she refused to remove her kara (Sikh bangle).³⁵ Until recently, Sharma even held membership of the largest, but also right-leaning, Sikh organisation in the borough - the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (SGSSS). Indeed I was surprised by his political identification as 'secular' precisely because I had seen him at the Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony (26/04/09) for the first state funded Sikh primary school, which opened in his constituency in 2009. He summarised his links with religious organisations and religious demands as follows:

SD: You use the term 'secular'?

VS: But you also pay the same respect to other faiths. You do not discriminate, you don't say that in 'secular', there's a two ways of defining it, one is that I don't believe in faith, right? The other one is-

SD: You mean like 'atheism'?

VS: That's it, that's near to the 'atheism' but I'm not atheist but I'm a secular. So it means that I pay respect to other faiths, similar like maybe doing to my own faith. So that's where I come from, we do not, when I say we, the family I come from, we do not give importance to religion but we give importance to service to the community.

[Virendra Sharma, MP for Ealing Southall, 18/09/09]

So Sharma's understanding of the term 'secular' relies on two practices: equal respect or acknowledgement of all religions and an emphasis on the philosophy rather than the literal application of religious belief. In other words this is what Ashis Nandy (1990) terms the distinction between 'religion as faith' and 'religion as ideology'. Indeed it is a peculiarly Indian understanding of 'secularism', which is very close to

³⁵ [Watkins-Singh, R \(on the application of\) v Aberdare Girls' High School & Anor \[2008\] EWHC 1865 \(Admin\) \(29 July 2008\)](#)

'multifaithism' and broadly translates as institutionalised religious parity rather than indifference or strong separation between private and public.³⁶ This is fast becoming assimilated in British political cultures and constitutes one element of a slide from multiculturalism to multifaithism. The turn from black radicalism to managerialism as well as diasporic political engagement through the multiculturalist frame have contributed to Sharma's version of secularism. This runs alongside other factors that influence his practice, namely a pre-occupation with votes.

Sharma's perspective also reflects a larger interaction between two to three debates that cut into local Labour Party politics and have given rise to both intended and unintended consequences. At the heart of these are arguments about equality, difference, parity and balancing the contradictory demands incurred in securing ethnic minority and white working class votes. In Southall, Sharma is trapped between two poles of power that have impacted upon the shape of the local Labour Group: the Indian Workers Association (IWA) and the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall

³⁶ The Indian political theorist, Ashis Nandy refers to this as 'the accommodative and pluralist meaning' of secularism adopted by Indian politicians (Nandy, 1990) and Rajeev Bhargava, refers to it as an 'alternative conception of secularism' that is distinguishable from 'conceptions shaped by French *laïcité* and the American wall of separation variant'. See his piece *Beyond Moderate Secularism* posted on 16/09/11 at The Immanent Frame and available at:

<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2011/09/16/beyond-moderate-secularism/>

Over the years Bhargava found an ally in the British multiculturalism theorist, Tariq Modood, who refers to himself as a secularist but is actually one of the strongest advocates of the slide from multiculturalism to multifaithism in Britain. Rather than focus on other factors driving religious claims - such as Christian privilege, the need for disestablishment and fundamentalist mobilisations - Bhargava and Modood argue for a broadly multifaithist response that provides religious parity. Their theses are underscored by connections between the fact of immigration to Britain and a crisis of political secularism where the empirical reality of difference is equated with the need for differential treatment. This aligns with the practice of Virendra Sharma's conciliatory politics that accepts whatever 'the community wants'. Indeed in a context of Christian privilege, a race equality man like Sharma might be hard pushed to argue against minority religious claims.

Yet the view that there is a causal relationship between immigration or increased difference and political crisis might otherwise be deemed racist.

(SGSSS). A great number of the Asian councillors in the borough do now or have in the past declared their membership of the SGSSS and its sister organisation, the Sikh Missionary Society. Sharma also pointed to membership of Hindu temples but what is interesting about the connection with the SGSSS is that only one other gurdwara (out of a total of twelve in the borough) is referred to by Labour councillors either on their declaration of interests or in interviews. There is both conflict and a confluence of interests between the IWA and the SGSSS. These dynamics have been brought to bear on the local Labour Party.

The following extract reflects a widespread view amongst activists that other political differences aside, the IWA Southall represents a much-needed secular politics in the area:

What they were uncompromising about was the so-called 'secular values', or so called 'communal politics'. Punjab as you know from '47 right up to '84 is rife with communal politics because of the deep divisions of partition in that state which were in fact worse than in Bengal, which were the two states that it had direct implications on. And the people that lead the Indian Workers Association were from so-called left wing progressive sections of the Indian Left who came into this country and because they were educated, they became so-called 'community leaders'.

[Suresh Grover, The Monitoring Group, 15/08/07]

Both Suresh Grover and the Conservative councillor Anita Kapoor (interviewed on 18/07/10) were confident that the IWA Southall was essentially a recruiting ground for the Labour Party. Indeed the IWA and Southall Labour Party share the same building and it is no coincidence that the previous long standing MP, Piara Khabra, was both the Ealing Southall Labour MP and the Chair of IWA Southall.

Virendra Sharma's own reference points were pinned to the particular trajectories of the first wave of black MPs to be selected as a consequence of the Labour Party Black Sections movement - Bernie Grant, Diane Abbott, Paul Boateng and Keith Vaz

- reflecting a politics concerned with the intersection of class and 'race' and using the term 'black' to define political mobilisation against racism. Sharma emphasised the continued relevance of anti racism, his commitment to black representation within the Labour Party and within trade unions.

There is a correlation between the politics of the IWA Southall and the internal politics of the Labour Party Black Sections, which enables various sorts of religious identifications to live within these formations and to surface at different moments. According to both Sasha Josephides (1991) and Kalbir Shukra (1998), the IWA Southall can be distinguished from the Coventry based IWA (GB), on the basis of three key features: the leaders of the IWA Southall comprised Congress Party and Communist Party of India (CPI) supporters rather than the more leftist CPI (M) sympathisers at the IWA (GB); Southall's IWA leaders were mainly middle class business and professional men focused on Indians as one *ethnic* interest group whilst the IWA (GB) focused on organising Indian labourers as a *class* interest group; Southall IWA was more moderate, wanting to integrate Indians into British political systems (including into the Labour Party through the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination and Labour Party Black Sections) whilst IWA (GB) retained a critical distance from political parties and a sense of autonomous self organisation.³⁷

Josephides described IWA Southall as akin to 'many ethnic associations which are part state funded, run welfare and social centres, and become involved with CRCs, Race Relations Committees and so on' (1991:265). Moreover, religious identity was never too far away from its mobilisations. Shukra noted strong links between the IWA Southall and one particular gurdwara, partly because Sikh and Hindu temples

³⁷ Though the point about divergent Indian political affiliations is well taken, I am not sure there was such a clear demarcation between the ideology and practice of IWA (GB) and IWA Southall within British politics because I am aware of IWA (GB) members that became central to Labour Party politics in Coventry and of IWA Southall members that were working class, active in trade unions and/or continued to emphasise class interests above all else.

provided 'a platform for putting views and mobilising for demonstrations and meetings' (1998:16). Infact the politics of local gurdwaras impacted directly on the IWA. In the 1960s the IWA Southall split from the IWA London because of factional fighting over the control of the Sikh gurdwara in Shepherds Bush (Shukra, 1998: 17). In the wake of Indira Gandhi's 1984 Operation Bluestar, the IWA Southall's connections with the Indian Congress Party came home to roost when its then general secretary (also the secretary of the Indian Overseas Congress), Tarsem Singh Toor, was assassinated in Southall by Sikh separatists (Josephides 1991: 262).

Running alongside the developments within the IWAs were the changing politics of black radicalism and expressly ethnic or religious mobilisations. When taken together, these are the conditions that enabled religious fundamentalism to live or sit unchallenged within black mobilisations inside the Labour Party and municipal socialism.

As the Labour Party started to take the ethnic minority vote more seriously, a number of changes in ethnic minority and anti racist politics came into play. According to Shukra, black radicalism in Britain shifted from large ideological ambitions to a focus on local politics and local authorities. She refers to this as 'black perspectivism' and summarises its components as follows:

It brought together the key elements of its antecedents: the search for pride and identity to develop high self-esteem; self-definition; recognition for black experience and self-organisation. It also shared with its progenitors their tendency to localise experience. Within the broad term "black", black perspectivists continued to recognise ethnic difference in a way that the 1970s use of "black" did not.

[Kalbir Shukra, 1998:61]

In practice this involved a kind of raced managerialism working through a broadly multiculturalist frame to effect policies, working methods and funding allocation through the new turn to municipal socialism. Black activists also became integrated

into the mainstream local authority or statutory bodies through this new orientation. So, whilst Tariq Modood launched his attack on black political identity, accusing it of suppressing ethnic and cultural difference, Shukra is quite right to stress that the term 'black' encompassed a variety of strategies and identities. She is also right to draw out the proximities between black radicalism as black perspectivism and ethnic particularism.³⁸ The Labour Party Black Sections (LPBS) ushered in a new politics of presence where the confrontational dimensions of black political activity shifted to the 'question of black faces in office' (Shukra, 1998: 73). Importantly, Sydney Jeffers (1991) noted conflicting tendencies within LPBS where one strand sought to oppose racism and the other indulged ethnic particularism, yet also their shared tendency to reify and defend anything and everything 'black'.

Virendra Sharma was acutely aware of Asian activists voicing opposition to the unitary term 'black' and he defended its use, function and continued political relevance. Yet he spoke about having been the national officer for the Black and Asian committee within the Labour Party, which, according to Shukra (1998), was established as a less antagonistic counter weight to the Labour Party Black Sections movement. Also Sharma's predecessor, Piara Khabra, was one of the Asian members of the Black Socialist Society (BSS) that sought to challenge the legitimacy of the term 'black' by seeking its replacement with 'Black and Asian'. As well as representing the Asian push for greater representation on the Labour Party NEC, the Black and Asian committee was emblematic of the tension between ethnicists and black perspectivists. Moreover, at a local level, it chimes with Suresh Grover's account of his own struggle against a particular generation of Indian activists for whom the authenticating aspects of being Punjabi was part of the practice of their politics:

IWA represented a microcosm of Sikh Punjabi community within Southall. For example whenever I went to a couple of IWA meetings and I was never a member of

³⁸ However, what sometimes escapes mention in Shukra's work is the continued use of the term 'black' by some political actors alongside these other developments, not as a meta narrative of radical liberation but as clearly distinguishable from ethnic particularism because of its outward (not identity based) secular project directed at challenging the shared conditions of structural and direct racism.

IWA, but they would tell you that if you didn't speak Punjabi, you weren't Indian. And so, secondly, the notion of a dominant Sikh culture in Southall has always been there not just in terms of its cultural aspirations but in how organisations are formed, specifically the IWA.

[Suresh Grover, TMG, 15/08/07]

The IWA and the Southall Labour Party incorporated people whose mixed political leanings were determined essentially by their perspective on the Indian state but they were also predominantly upper caste Hindus and Sikhs from just one region of India, Punjab. As Virendra Sharma pointed out, the early leaders of the Indian Workers Association in Southall were mostly Sikhs. The first Asian councillor in Ealing was also a Sikh man called Sirdul Singh Gill (elected in 1968). Moreover, there was a significant overlap between early day leaders of the IWA Southall and those at the helm of the SGSSS. One of the founder members of SGSSS, Balwant Singh Gill, was active in workers' struggles and the IWA but also had an interest in the establishment of religious provisions and the realisation of his own business interests. This is important because all of the diverse elements referred to thus far were, until very, very recently, reflected within and represented by just one political party, the Ealing Labour Party.

A large number of ethnic minority activists entered Labour Party politics as 'Kingmakers' engaged in systems of patronage that provided direct access to the Labour leadership and influence over local concerns in exchange for mobilising votes (Solomos and Back, 1995). It was not uncommon for these 'Kingmakers' to be drawn from religious sites of worship and for a 'machine politics' (using local networks to recruit members and voters en masse for the Labour Party) to depend on caste, religious and kinship networks (Solomos and Back, 1995).³⁹ Moreover,

³⁹ In Ealing the contemporary connections between ethnic minority selection and kinship networks is there within both political parties. The longest standing ethnic minority councillors for the Ealing Conservative Party are one couple - Anita and Ashok Kapoor - whose son was also once a Conservative Party councillor. Three out of five of the defectors from Labour to Conservative have long term connections - Gurcharan Singh and Manjit Singh are business partners whilst the only Asian

according to John Solomos and Les Back (1995) ethnic minority activists within the Labour Party could be divided according to 'instrumental' and 'ideological' trajectories. The instrumental types entered through their roles as general community advocates and they carried a very practical agenda about resource allocation and specific issues. The ideological types entered through two avenues: either black radicalism and civil rights politics or generic left activism and trade unions. The latter privileged a 'sovereign Labour identity' where black activists lined up behind a larger Left struggle. The effects of these processes included the establishment of local elites that were gender, caste, religion and kin specific. In return, the Labour Party could project itself as concerned with racial equality, even if these new ethnic minority politicians reflected diverse ideologies and interests (Solomos and Back, 1995: 78).

All of these tendencies and trajectories are evident amongst the ethnic minority politicians interviewed in Ealing and Newham but they cannot be easily separated out into two self-contained 'types'. In particular, the fact of poverty and racism in the experience of migration and settlement meant that the character of ethnic minority engagement even for 'instrumental types' overlapped with trade union affiliation and some kind of anti racist activity. So, for instance, Councillor Swarn Singh Kang bears all the characteristics of an 'instrumental type' and seemingly aligns with Gurcharan Singh's 'Sikh Complaint' (discussed below) but remained inside the Labour Party after the Sikh defections. Councillor Kamaljit Dhindsa came into public life because of his father's religious work (his father was one of the founder members of the SGSSS). However, after the Sikh fallout, Dhindsa remained strongly aligned with what he described as the Labour Party's ideological commitment to a big state and public services. Quite simply, he could not ever see himself as a Conservative. Moreover, in the case of Muslim councillors in Newham, some of the 'instrumental types' left Labour to join Respect on the basis of an ideological opposition to the Iraq invasion whilst other 'instrumental types' remained inside the

woman to defect, Maninder Kaur Keith, is Manjit Singh's daughter. The outgoing Labour Mayor for Ealing was a man called Rajinder Singh Mann. He is still a councillor in the same ward as his wife Gurmit Kaur Mann.

Labour Party, presumably also because it seemed to be the only viable political party in Newham. Indeed the Newham Story below reflects the shifting nature of the Labour Party project and what this has meant for ideological partners who either changed their game to fit with New Labour or left alongside some of the instrumental players to join ostensibly religious political parties with a stronger critique of the state.

Nevertheless, Mr Randhawa, the ex President of the SGSSS, revealed a particularly long history of relations with the local Labour Party followed by a later separation of power bases between those at the helm of the IWA and the leaders of the SGSSS. Most of the fieldwork interviews took place ahead of the political defections discussed in the next subsection. However, it may be not be sheer coincidence that soon after simmering tensions within the local Labour Party evolved into significant ruptures articulated as a specifically 'Sikh Complaint', the SGSSS reconfigured its own membership criteria to effectively exclude all but those ascribing to one specific version of Sikhism. It now excludes Hindus from joining, clearly pushing Virendra Sharma and many of his allies out of long standing SGSSS membership.

However, Sharma attempted to sidestep or deny the suggestion that religious tensions and religious organisations had impacted upon the local Labour Party. For instance, on the question of Khalistani support amongst the local population, Sharma was keen to downplay the impact on Southall and particularly on the Labour Party:

SD: I was wondering about what was happening here and how it might have impacted on what the Labour Party were doing locally?

VS: Yeah but there was no influence of the Khalistan.

SD: Khalistanis here?

VS: That, that, that is a total myth. It was individual based not into the Labour Party or any political party.

SD: OK.

VS: It was only based around gurdwaras and the local communities. It did not make any impact. If I take that point there are maybe a small number of people, it was not huge political movement locally. Feelings were hurt, I accept that. The Sikh community and the people who believe in that politics feels that Operation Blue Star hurt the feelings. As a political activist living in the community, I would say it, it was not that high on the agenda of the British politics. It was on the agenda of a Sikh, small number of the Sikh community in the local area.

[Virendra Sharma, Ealing Southall Labour MP, 18/09/09]

This may not come as a surprise to either Kalbir Shukra or Sydney Jeffers who highlighted the divergent objectives and politics of the activists within the Labour Party Black Sections and the technique of evasion or denial as a strategy for sidestepping difficult issues to maintain unity. Both point to the LPBS' poor response to the Rushdie Affair as an instance that exemplified both the internal tendency towards ethnic particularism and the tactic of avoidance. Jeffers noted Bernie Grant's appeal to the Black Sections conference in 1989 to support the anti Rushdie demonstrators in Bradford and to extend blasphemy laws to cover minority religions but the Black Sections' executive decision to keep the debate off the agenda for the sake of retaining unity. Similarly Kalbir Shukra argued that the twin objectives of unity and securing the maximum number of black votes meant 'remaining silent on difficult and controversial matters' such as on the Rushdie Affair where LPBS 'took a conscious decision to ignore the matter' (1998:79-80). In Ealing, it was the Labour Party Women's Section that issued a statement in defence of Salman Rushdie (Connolly, 1990:5). The Labour Party Women's Sections across the country also supported Women Against Fundamentalism's resolution to oppose public funding for faith based schools, even if by then the Party's clampdown on local autonomy and dissent prevented discussion of this resolution at the main Labour Party Women's Conference (Connolly, 1990:6).

Contrary to the material presented thus far, Virendra Sharma emphasised objectivity and stated that he did not rely on religious institutions to deliver votes especially because those institutions were compelled to maintain distance from political parties

by the pressures of diverse political leanings within their own membership. However, when Sharma discussed particular religious demands, he did not interrogate these or distance himself from them but rather tended to validate them as reflections of local fears about the loss of culture and identity, as part of the ongoing injury of being a minority in Britain. The problem is that Sharma's balance between evasion, denial, distance and uncritical validation seems at odds with local histories where, from the 1980s onwards, one does not need to look far at all for fundamentalist mobilisations and resistance to these. This begins with Khalistani calls for the secession of Punjab from the Indian state. These mobilisations are specifically against the Indian Congress Party and more so in light of Operation Bluestar in 1984. At a local level, this mobilisation was linked to the murder of Tarsem Singh Toor and violent clashes within local gurdwaras. The Khalistani mobilisation was swiftly followed by the Rushdie Affair. The Labour Party Women's Section collaborated with Southall Black Sisters and Women Against Fundamentalism on a public meeting at the Dominion Centre, on the doorstep of the IWA offices. Moreover, by 1992, Southall Black Sisters joined forces with other local groups, this time including the IWA, for the Save Our Schools campaign to prevent Sikh men from using Conservative education legislation to take over local comprehensive schools to create faith based schools. This was also the year that Hindu fundamentalists demolished the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. In Southall this event sparked the creation of the South Asian Alliance Against Communalism, again with a meeting on the doorstep of the local Labour Party headquarters. The 1990s were marred by violence and tension between Sikhs and Muslims even if the electoral alliance between the BJP and the Akali Dal in India somehow subdued the post 1984 Sikh-Hindu tensions once more. At the end of the 1990s, the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat lead to the revival of the South Asian Alliance Against Communalism with a meeting at the Ambedkar Centre on Featherstone Road, around the corner from the local Labour Party office. Recent coverage suggests increasing Islamist activity in the local area including reports that the fundamentalist organisation, Al Shabaab, have managed to recruit local young Somali men to fight overseas.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ BBC Radio 4 programme *File on 4: The Somali Connection* aired on 2/11/10.

It is very difficult to understand Sharma's response on the question of religion in light of all this. If ever there were a time to make clear statements about religious violence and fundamentalism, surely it would be now and quite possibly it would be in Southall. Indeed, Sharma has been engaged in a difficult balancing act between being acutely aware of the sentiments of his constituents and taking a more principled stand. However, the next section of this chapter demonstrates that sidestepping such issues is not always an option.

The Sikh complaint

On 19th June 2007, Piara Khabra, the Ealing Southall Labour Party MP of 15 years and chair of the IWA Southall, died. Some time before his death, he had announced that he would not be contending the 2010 General Election and so by June 2007 internal discussions about his replacement were already underway. He made it clear that he favoured an all-women shortlist. In the years preceding his death, he mentored a local Asian woman, Sonika Nirwal, the then Leader of the Ealing Labour Party. Obituaries made explicit references to Khabra's opposition to fundamentalism and religious divisions in the area⁴¹ and certainly Suresh Grover (TMG) recounted Khabra's suspicion of Gurcharan Singh on the grounds that Singh harboured communal tendencies. Importantly for this thesis, the subsequent By-Election brought latent frictions around both religion and gender to the surface.

For national political parties the 2007 Ealing Southall By-Election opened up a space to test Gordon Brown's leadership. Many senior figures from the main political parties visited the area. The Conservative Party HQ snubbed local Conservative activists and hand picked Tony Lit, the handsome son of a well-known Asian media mogul, Avtar Lit. Within days of the Labour Party's decision to select Virendra Sharma as their candidate, the defection of 5 long standing Labour Party councillors brought simmering tensions around religion to the fore. These tensions converged

⁴¹ See *A servant of the people: First Asian Sikh MP Piara Khabra dies at age 82* by Natasha Brown in *The Ealing Gazette*, 22/06/07.

and found voice in the Conservative Party HQ's interest in the Southall area.⁴² The same By-Election also led to the eventual exit from politics of two key women - Sonika Nirwal and Maninder Kaur Keith.

In his first interview about that defection, Gurcharan Singh was frank about his sense of religious discrimination in the Labour Party selection process:

I suspect that they are not yet ready to have a turban-wearing Sikh amongst their ranks, and this has been given credence by the fact that of the seven people in the long-list, three were turban-wearing Sikhs and all three were rejected.⁴³

Four out of five of the defectors were Sikh. Three of them wear turbans. A series of letters to The Ealing Gazette highlighted the difficulty in gaging the mood of the electorate with some alleging that the Labour Party had betrayed their Sikh vote base and others calling for Singh's immediate resignation.⁴⁴ Moreover, although the Liberal Democrats denied appealing to religious vote banks, the Muslim Public Affairs Committee urged Muslims to vote Liberal Democrat as the only party raising concerns about the invasion of Iraq.⁴⁵ Interestingly, the Respect Party also fielded a candidate but there was little move by any organisation to encourage Muslims to back him. In fact it is noteworthy that Iraq did not feature as a vote decider in Ealing.

In the end there were a phenomenal 12 candidates running for the July 2007 By-

⁴² See *Defectors* by Lucy Proctor, front page of The Southall Gazette, 13/07/07.

⁴³ As quoted in *Will it all be about religion and ethnicity this time?* By Lucy Proctor in The Southall Gazette, 13/07/07.

⁴⁴ Excerpt from Letters and Emails page of The Southall Gazette, 20/07/07.

⁴⁵ As reported in *Will it all be about religion and ethnicity this time?* by Lucy Proctor in The Southall Gazette, 13/07/07.

Election. All but two of them were Asian men. Other than the main political parties, three Sikh men stood as Independent candidates including: the former Labour Party activist Kuldeep Singh Grewal who later ditched his campaign to fall behind Virendra Sharma; Jasdev Rai, a member of the Sikh Human Rights Group;⁴⁶ and Gulbash Singh, an Independent that later joined the Conservative Party. The smaller minority parties also fielded Asian male candidates including: Dr KT Rajan, the UKIP candidate, who stood primarily on an anti immigration ticket; Sati Chaggar who stood for the English Democrats; Yaqub Masih for the Christian Party; and Salvinder Dhillon for Respect. The only non-Asian candidates were from The Green Party and the Monster Raving Loony Party.

In the end, Labour held onto the seat and Virendra Sharma took Piara Khabra's place as Ealing Southall MP, albeit with a significantly reduced majority. The Conservative Party hopeful, Tony Lit, was forced into third place amidst revelations that he donated a large sum of money to the Labour Party just days before his selection.⁴⁷ This defeat created the space for Gurcharan Singh to step in as the Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the Conservative Party at the subsequent General Election. In his 2010 publicity, Gurcharan Singh did not explicitly refer to standing as a Sikh candidate. Rather his campaign material focused on the question of the Labour Party's failure to intervene in pertinent local issues namely, cuts to local hospital services, parking and regeneration needs, and allegations about Sharma's expenses. Indeed much of the literature for all contestants focused on

⁴⁶ Rai's campaign leaflet outlines his communitarian philosophy advocating that the Hobbesian and Lockean contract between individual and state be replaced by a 'triangular contract between state community and individual'. Of note is the information contained within Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Singh Tatla's (2006) account of Sikhism in Britain that Jasdev Rai used to be the President of the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), one of four Khalistani groups based in Britain.

⁴⁷ The July 2007 by-election results were as follows: Virendra Sharma (Labour) gained 15,188 (41.3%) votes; Nigel Bakhai (Lib Dem) gained 10,118 (27.5%) votes; Tony Lit gained 8,230 (22.4%) votes and Sarah Edwards of the Green Party trailed behind at 1,135 votes. The other eight candidates gained a total of 1,947 (just 5.3% of the votes). In the end it was the Liberal Democrats and not the Conservatives that captured the votes of disgruntled Labour Party supporters and overall turnout was lower than usual.

Labour Party complacency. However, Sikhism continued as the elephant in the room and Singh persisted in defending his defection on the grounds that men with turbans faced discrimination in the Labour Party selection process.

Of note is the pitting of gender against religion at one minute and their possible realignment as suppressed alterity at another. Gurcharan Singh claimed the all-women shortlist favoured by Piara Khabra was a personalised attempt to sideline his bid for leadership of the Ealing Southall Labour Party. However, when Singh discovered that all three turbaned candidates were not short listed for selection, he decided this reflected a wider point about Sikh representation within the Party. Given that a couple of Labour Party women - Jasbir Anand and Sonika Nirwal - were also rejected, questions of gender and religious representation potentially flowed from the same source. Yet few people noted that these two women are also Sikh and instead positioned gender and religion as mutually exclusive categories. In a sense this parallels Shukra's (1998) observation that men dominated the Labour Party Black Sections whilst black women worked through the Labour Party Women's Sections. There is a repetitive tendency then for ethnic minority women in Ealing politics to be called on gender and not on 'race', which surfaces here as de-authentication of the Sikh background of two women that chose to remain within the Labour Party during the Sikh fallout.

Regardless of the absence of overt references in Gurcharan Singh's publicity material positioning himself as a *Sikh* candidate, there was a whispering campaign in the local area to vote for Singh on the premise that the election of a turbaned Sikh (man) to parliament is long overdue. Of course such an assertion simultaneously implied that the humanist cut-hair Sikh MP Piara Khabra was somehow inauthentic. Moreover, many of Singh's canvassers and volunteers at the local polling booths were young men wearing blue turbans. Interestingly, the blue turban in this context carries ambiguous meaning potentially reflecting an allegiance to the Conservative Party but also emblematic of the connections between Khalsa ideology and the Khalistani

movement.⁴⁸ Unsurprisingly, subtle symbolic parallels with 1980s Sikh oppression by the Congress Party came within easy reach. However, rather than go for a sectarian religious mobilisation, Singh's publicity seemed to indicate attempts to build a multi-faith alliance against the Labour Party and the 'secular' reputation of its IWA components. One of his leaflets showed messages of support from the Sikh Missionary Society, the Central Jamia Masjid and the Vishwa Hindu Mandir. Even though the SGSSS was not identified in the campaign material, the fraternal networks in the local area run directly from the defectors through to this body. Indeed up until they lost their council seats, most of the defectors were on the governing board of the local Khalsa Sikh Primary School, widely understood to be an SGSSS enterprise.

Virendra Sharma was adamant that these events marked the public unfolding of longstanding *personal* rivalries between Gurcharan Singh and himself based upon their alternating fortunes within the Labour Party. He seemed to prefer this view than to entertain suggestions that the fallout reflected outpourings of religious-secular tensions. However, this didn't prevent Sharma from referring to Singh's empathy for Khalistani politics. One of Sharma's campaign leaflets outlined four key facts that David Cameron ought to be aware of in selecting Gurcharan Singh. Fact number two stated:

Cllr. Gurcharan Singh supports violence and murder as legitimate tools against opponents. At the time of the murder of then Prime Minister of India Mrs Gandhi by her bodyguards, Cllr Gurcharan Singh was reported by the Southall Gazette as saying (under a headline It's a Relief says Labour Councillor), "A Labour councillor who has figured prominently in the fight for an independent Sikh nation said he felt a great "sense of relief" at the news of Mrs Gandhi's death... she has been dealt with in accordance with the Sikh religion" (Southall Gazette 2 November 1984). In 2007, a Southall resident asked Cllr Gurcharan Singh publicly in a letter in the Gazette, if

⁴⁸ The leaders of both were renowned for alternating between orange and navy blue outfits.

This Sikh warrior image is currently being reproduced in a reversion to militant masculinist Sikhism, notably through the growing popularity of the west London based Akali Nihangs. See Heart and Soul series: *The Last Sikh Warrior* broadcast on Monday 31/10/11 by the BBC World Service and available to download at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/heartsoul>

he still stood by his statement. He refused to retract it.⁴⁹

An optimistic view would suggest that Sharma was commenting on Singh's specifically communal leanings and highlighting a history of bullying (fact number one referred to Singh's temper and an incident where he punched someone during a council meeting). A pessimistic view might suggest that this was a politically expedient manoeuvre intended to characterise Singh as an 'extremist'. This contradiction between a denial of the Sikh/religious dimension on the one hand and its utility on the other could be another reflection of the uneasy way in which Sharma tried to balance his electoral ambitions with tangible political views. He attempted to avoid giving the issue a religious dimension because of a fear that it might alienate large numbers of Sikh voters (including thousands of SGSSS members) but also knew that outing Singh's Khalistani past could win other, more liberal, non-Jat Sikh, or secular, supporters or project Singh negatively in the context of a national discourse (and Conservative Party anxiety) about (ethnic minority) religious extremism.

Importantly, Gurcharan Singh was a prominent activist within the Labour Party for almost thirty years before he joined the Conservative Party. In May 2010, Singh and the other Labour to Conservative defectors lost their council seats in the local election and Singh lost out to Virendra Sharma in the parliamentary election. Unsurprisingly, the Labour Party is declaring this a victory for unity in the borough and indeed that may be so. However, Singh managed a significant dent in Labour votes⁵⁰, shaking the long-term Labour status quo. Moreover, the sentiment that led some to pull away from Labour and vote for Singh does not appear to have disappeared.

⁴⁹ Extract from Sharma's campaign leaflet 'Open Letter to David Cameron' dated 28/04/10.

⁵⁰ Singh managed an 8.3% swing to the Conservative Party and the Labour majority fell from 21,423 in 1997 to 9,291 votes in 2010.

Nevertheless, it is particularly interesting to see the 'Sikh Complaint' riding on a Conservative Party ticket. Singh's concerns about process were articulated as follows:

The decision (to defect) was a long time coming and formed on the basis that the Labour Party failed to adhere to principles of fairness, equality and diversity that we had expected it to espouse... In fact the Labour Party, it appears, came to a conclusion way back in September 2006 that it was not yet ready for a turban-wearing MP in its ranks... Let it be known that my colleagues and I have never demanded nor advocated a seat in Parliament or anywhere else on the basis of colour, creed or religion... I wanted the Labour Party to be fair and transparent in its procedures. I asked them to release minutes of the interview panel showing how the marking was made, how the questions were weighted, how the questions about turban were relevant to competency and ability and whether or not the same questions were asked of each candidate.⁵¹

It is quite possible that Singh's later emphasis on questions of due process, transparency and fairness were the only way he could reconcile his situation. Alternatively, this could be another dimension to Solomos and Back's (1995) analysis of ethnic minority Conservative candidates in Birmingham who engaged with Conservative attempts to pluralise their composition by constructing ethnic minority candidates according to a nationalist discourse of Britishness rather than a particularist discourse of ethnicity, as 'One Nation Conservatism'.⁵²

Moreover, even if Singh's defection was more political expediency than ideological shift, it also highlighted the affinity amongst some sections of the Labour Party with Conservative Party values, which Solomos and Back identified as including:

⁵¹ See Gurcharan Singh's letter to The Southall Gazette published on 10th August 2007.

⁵² Solomos and Back also noted that the religious claims of ethnic minority candidates within the Conservative Party (namely the extension of blasphemy laws and faith based schools) met with varying responses but were notably pitched in universalist terms i.e. that existing provisions acknowledging Christianity should be extended to encompass all religions (1995: 164-165).

individualism, freedom, choice, family values, aspirationalism, mobility, professional status, thrift, hard work and a colour-blind meritocratic philosophy (1995: 163-164). For sure, this is even more likely where ethnic minority professionals and members of business networks originally located within locally dominant Labour Parties begin to see Conservatives as a viable local force. Having interviewed Labour Councillor Swarn Singh Kang, I was struck by his particularly conservative values. The fact that he did not jump with the others when Sikhs were actively being recruited to the Conservative Party is both an indication of the security of his position inside Labour and ongoing uncertainty about the perceived viability of Conservative support in Southall.

The potential irony of Singh and his cohort taking their particularist claims to a political party associated with an assimilationist history on questions of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity was not lost on either Virendra Sharma or the Conservative Councillor Anita Kapoor. Sharma could not contain his glee that the defection of these 5 Asian councillors in 2007 may have doubled Asian representation in the local Conservative Party but did not have any impact on the ethnic composition of the Conservative cabinet, which continued to comprise white men with the exception of one white woman. Yet Sharma invoked substantially different terms of analysis when it came to women's representation within the local Labour Party. Black representation was claimed as the logical consequence of addressing the balance between the numbers of black Labour Party members or activists and the numbers of black councillors and elected MPs. However, on the question of Sonika Nirwal's non-selection for the Ealing Southall parliamentary seat and the proposals for an all-women shortlist, Sharma was quick to point out that 'two plus two does not necessarily equal four in politics'. Ultimately he claimed that outcomes were determined by people's investment and participation in the party and the circumstances at the time of selection. From this, men dominate Southall party politics because they are present, they are involved and they are active. For cultural reasons, Sharma stated, women have been discouraged from going into politics. Also the combination of family responsibilities and the unsocial hours specifically acted against Asian women's participation. So poor levels of membership or activism

circumvented Ealing Labour Group's responsibility to ensure women's representation. A similar line of argument was made for the particularly low numbers of Somali, Eritrean and other African men - they are recent arrivals, still settling in and only just beginning to participate in the political sphere.

Nonetheless, the particular patriarchal bent of Labour Party politics in Southall definitely has not gone unnoticed. In some ways the intense public criticism of the local Labour Party after the non-selection of Sonika Nirwal and the rejection of an all women shortlist has led to the revival of their Women's Section. At the 2010 local elections, the Labour Party stood a greater number of women than they had previously.⁵³ There is also a high chance that the waning membership of the IWA in recent years, shifting relations with the SGSSS and the new lines of Conservative Party support had something to do with the diversification of Labour Party candidates.

Although her demands for women's political representation appear to fit better with the Labour Party's ideological framework, Councillor Anita Kapoor had partly joined the Conservative Party because of her opposition to the patriarchal Asian culture that dominated the local Ealing Southall Labour Party. Indeed she was particularly angry with Gurcharan Singh and his cohort being welcomed into the Conservative Party and spoke of their discriminatory practices:

⁵³ There is certainly a significant visible difference in the scale of ethnic diversity amongst local Labour Party representatives and the Conservative representatives but roughly the same proportion (one third) of women councillors. Of 40 Labour councillors elected in the London borough of Ealing in May 2010: 12 are women and 28 are men; 23 are ethnic minorities, reflecting a range of south Asian regional identities and religions and including Middle Eastern but only one African councillor. Of the 23 ethnic minority Labour councillors, 6 are women, all Asian women. Of 24 Conservative Party Councillors: 8 women and only 2 black minorities who are Anita Kapoor and her husband Ashok Kapoor. The other 15 are white men.

Moreover, the current Labour Council Cabinet includes 3 women (1 of whom is Jasbir Anand who ran for selection for the parliamentary seat in 2007) and 3 ethnic minority men. Conversely, the 2006-2010 Conservative Council Cabinet was all white male except for one white woman.

I found them sexist, because we lost all our women. Instead of encouraging, if you think about it at this election there were only two Conservative women in the whole of Ealing Southall who fought as councillors, myself and this other English woman. And myself and this English woman are from my ward where I'm Chairman because I was adamant that I was going to make sure that two women were selected. The simple fact that here I am on the woman's committee and I cannot achieve that was, what shall I say, it was a disgrace because I fought and I told them, and they didn't listen, that we needed to make sure that in every ward we had a woman and that's why the Labour people won, because a lot of women would not, knowing that the sexist decisions had been made didn't work for us... If Gurcharan had not defected at the time of a by-election, if he had come across even when he didn't, even when his own seat in the Labour Party was not threatened or not taken over by Virendra, which he did, then I would accept him. And even then I accepted and helped all of them. But the shoddy way in which he treated some of our women members, as I said we lost them all, was unacceptable to me. Because it's not the type of Party that we are.

[Councillor Anita Kapoor, interviewed 18/07/10]

I am not certain how well evidenced these claims are about the nature of the local Conservative Party given the particularly poor representation of women within its leadership even before the defections. However, what is of relevance to this thesis is the way in which both Singh and Kapoor attached their respective Sikh fundamentalist and feminist world-views to the fortunes of the Conservative Party, an unlikely ideological mate for either of them.

The Newham Story

Newham Council has been a Labour controlled borough for the best part of forty years. Labour councillors have enjoyed an easy dominance occupying upwards of 54 of the council's 60 seats since 1982. Many of the key current councillors have been active within the Labour Group since the 1980s and have held council seats for between 10 to 20 years. They appear to have had a relatively consistent (albeit small) public mandate with between 25-35% of the electorate voting at local elections since

1978. Indeed in 2010 there was an unusually high turnout with 50.37% ushering in a full house of 60 Labour councillors as well as a directly elected Mayor from the Labour Party. Between 1964 and 2010, Opposition candidates have been few in number with the Ratepayers and Residents Party taking 9 seats in the 1970s and the Social Democratic Liberal Party and the Liberal Focus Team Alliance managing a small dent in Labour dominance with 6 council seats in 1982. Moreover, Newham has been a safe Labour seat in parliamentary terms. Whilst boundary changes at the last election means there are now two Labour MPs for the borough rather than the usual three, the current Newham MPs Stephen Timms and Lyn Brown have been in office since 1994 and 2005 respectively. Lyn Brown inherited her seat from the late Labour MP Tony Banks who held it from 1997 until 2005. Since 1983 Newham's parliamentary candidates have enjoyed an electoral turnout of over 50% and large margins over other candidates.

Arguably, all this could suggest a strong mandate for the local Labour group. However, some interviewees painted an undemocratic picture of them, especially noting redundant Labour branches, a lack of grassroots activism, voter apathy and high levels of frustration over the absence of an effective and challenging opposition. Sarah Ruiz, herself a former Labour councillor, discussed the lack of agency in selecting candidates and determining local priorities as one reason for the drop in local Labour Party support:

No, it's not always been like this. It's because they've had any decision making taken away from them because unless they can be trusted to always vote for Robin or to always agree with Robin, then in actual fact he doesn't even now allow wards to select their own candidates to stand for the council. So if you were a member of a ward, if you were in the Labour Party and you regularly attended ward meetings, and tried to participate, and then were told yes, but you aren't going to have any say in who your local ward councillor is, you would think well why not?

[Sarah Ruiz, NVSC, 14/05/09]

These sentiments were echoed by other interviewees. Moreover, this lack of local

Labour Party democracy was thought to extend outwards to a lack of autonomy, indeed decimation, of a potentially plural community and voluntary sector. Newham Council's decamp from the frontline East Ham Town Hall to the remote Dockside 1000 building for their 'back room' operations is thought to be an architectural reflection of these issues; there are very few private areas in the building preventing internal autonomy for council staff, the building is located some distance from local residents and there has been a distinct lack of accountability for this large capital expenditure in what is one of the poorest boroughs in London.⁵⁴

The borough's directly elected Mayor, Robin Wales, has been individually criticised for awarding himself a significant pay rise whilst simultaneously announcing job cuts and reduced salaries for local authority employees. Of note are the multiple references to the lack of political opposition to these proposals from within the Newham Labour Group.⁵⁵ Mocking the authoritarian tendencies of Party structures and particularly the absence of Opposition in Newham, interviewees referred to Wales as 'The Dictator' and 'Our Dear Leader'. In a critique of central government calls to extend the number of directly elected Mayors across the country, Kevin Blowe provided the following commentary about how power works in Newham:

If only many of us who live here in the borough had realised eight years ago what we were letting ourselves in for when only 26% of the population turned out to vote in the referendum for a directly elected mayor, there might have been some actual concerted campaigning in favour of a 'no' vote. Far from helping to improve local

⁵⁴ For a comment on the Dockside building see Kevin Blowe's piece *Trade Award Brings Newham Council Excess to Wider Audience* posted 28/10/10 at: <http://www.blowe.org.uk/search/label/Newham>

⁵⁵ See *Olympic Mayor Gives Himself Inflation-Busting Rise* by Ted Jeory in The Daily Express newspaper dated 27/06/10 where Jeory claims: 'Sir Robin Wales, the mayor of Newham Council in east London, seized the four per cent rise this month, taking his salary to £81,029 a year. His pay is now 34 per cent more than the £58,500 he received when he was directly elected mayor in 2002. Sir Robin's decision to accept the rise came after he ordered cuts of £28million and as his staff face a two-year pay freeze.' Available at <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/183369/Olympic-mayor-gives-himself-inflation-busting-pay-rise>

accountability, the direct election of our local mayor has seen the council turn into something akin to an eighteenth-century monarchy. For all intents and purposes, Mayor Sir Robin Wales *is* Newham council. No substantive decisions can be made without him. But for an organisation the size of a local authority to function at all, many decisions must inevitably be made in his absence. The result is that every stratum of the council seeks to anticipate what the layer above might be thinking, all the way to those closest to the brooding, ill-tempered and unpredictable ruler. Timidity crushes initiative, fear ingrains institutional inertia, culminating in a mixture of incompetence and officiousness.⁵⁶

Indeed both Kevin Blowe and Sarah Ruiz highlighted two particular developments in public policy and governance: the introduction of a directly elected Mayor and the new commissioning process that has replaced the older grant giving process. Both of these are new lines through which religious claims and identities can travel or, in the case of Newham, comprise potential technologies for restricting the influence of religion on public policy. Ruiz and Blowe pointed to the particular importance given to the vision of the directly elected Mayor and a commissioning process that has all but removed funding possibilities other than for a handful of large generic voluntary sector organisations. By extension, they argued, the council's contact with religious groups was viewed from a utilitarian perspective, as sources of low cost services, rather than as organisations tuned into or representing local needs. Moreover, this is characterised as the combined outcome of the Mayor's commitment to secularism and the marginalisation of those civil society organisations that represent potential critics.

Importantly, within the last decade, Newham Labour Group's electoral monopoly has only been interrupted by two parties: the Christian Peoples Alliance and the Respect Party. For all intents and purposes, both of these have relied upon religious identities as vote banks potentially bringing religion to the fore as a feature of electoral

⁵⁶ From *Directly Elected Mayors - An Imaginary Letter to David Cameron* Posted on 2nd December 2009 at <http://www.blowe.org.uk/search/label/Newham?updated-max=2010-05-06T13%3A15%3A00%2B01%3A00&max-results=20>

Opposition and democratic critique.

The onward march of Christianity?

In 2002, Alan Craig of the Christian Peoples Alliance (CPA) broke through eight years of Labour Party monopoly by winning one council seat in Canning Town South. In 2006, the CPA stood 20 candidates at the local council elections and managed to win another two seats for Simeon Ademolake and Denise Stafford, capturing an entire ward in the south of the borough.

The Christian Peoples Alliance emerged in 1999 out of the Movement for Christian Democracy, established in 1991 by three cross-party Christian MPs including David Alton who is best known for his opposition to abortion and euthanasia. The Christian Peoples Alliance website introduces them as 'a party rooted in the historic Christian faith that seeks to demonstrate the love of God through political service'.⁵⁷

Interviewed in 2009, Alan Craig estimated that the party had around 400 members though of course many more people had voted for him and other CPA candidates in Newham. He noted CPA's continuity with Christian Democratic parties that have a longer and wider presence across Europe, which were established before the Second World War as a reaction against the spread of anti clericalism. Similarly, Craig stated that the CPA is 'a response to the corrosive and aggressive secularisation of our society and especially of our public life' which CPA believes 'is very harmful to everybody'.

By 2010, however, all three CPA councillors had lost their seats. The CPA website suggested that the losses were more about the entrenchment of Labour Party support against a Conservative threat than about the unpopularity of CPA's politics amongst

⁵⁷ See http://www.cpaparty.org.uk/?page=about_us

the British electorate.⁵⁸ Interestingly, Alan Craig started out in electoral politics as a Conservative Party candidate and was predictably unsuccessful in a borough where the political landscape has been shaped by a united stand against the Conservative Party (Smith, 2010:162).

Moreover, in the wake of these defeats, the then Federal President David Campanale echoed the sentiment that opposition to 'corrosive and aggressive secularisation' is the defining characteristic of the Christian Peoples Alliance:

Our team did all they could over years of faithful service to advance a Christian vision for Newham. But for many voters, jobs and livelihoods were at stake with the rise of David Cameron. Around the country, Christians have chosen to vote for parties that have backed laws which take Britain away from its history of religious freedom, conscience and morality. Every other European country has seen Christian Democrats emerge in response to the rise of secular intolerance and injustice. In Britain, the CPA is but servants of the community and a voice for church teaching. With PR increasingly likely, it is up to Christian leaders to get smart about our post-Christendom culture and where the CPA will fit into Britain's political landscape.⁵⁹

Importantly, Alan Craig guarded against describing his interventions on local issues as underpinned by a literalist commitment to Christianity where each political position might be referenced against the bible. Rather, he emphasised the Party's commitment to generic principles such as social justice and protecting the poor. Of note was his recognition of the proximity between the CPA political project and Cameron's 'compassionate conservatism', a peculiar mix of libertarian and communitarian conceptions of the state where religion is charged with providing a

⁵⁸ In their own election analysis, Alan Craig commented: '...we could not resist the Labour tsunami of votes, as people voted all the way down the ballot paper for the party they see as the only defence against Conservative cuts.' From *Alan Craig and CPA Councillors Lose Seats in Newham Labour Tsunami* Posted on 7/05/10 at <http://www.cpaparty.org.uk/?page=news&id=348>

⁵⁹ See *Alan Craig and CPA Councillors Lose Seats in Newham Labour Tsunami* Posted on 7/05/10 on CPA website at <http://www.cpaparty.org.uk/?page=news&id=348>

strong moral framework. Yet there is a contradiction here between Craig's proximity to the Conservative ideology and Campanale's claim that in 2010 people voted for Labour as a protection against the Conservative Party rather than against the political project of the Christian Peoples Alliance. Indeed newspaper reports on the influence of the Christian Right on the current Conservative Party (through key figures in the Conservative Christian Fellowship and the Centre for Social Justice) suggest that they have precisely mobilised votes through evangelical networks to usurp local secular candidates.⁶⁰ The same reports noted that evangelical churches have become an important source of black voters for the Conservative Party.⁶¹ Anecdotal accounts from Newham and Ealing suggest that new waves of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches in specific parts of each borough also comprise the vote base for the Christian Peoples Alliance and the Christian Party.

The CPA's strong values or ideological framework is set out in its aims, which are as follows:

From the first the Christian Peoples Alliance puts faith at the centre of politics. Our aim is to follow and fulfil these principles in British political life:

- Recognition of Christ's sovereignty over the nations and in politics.
- Respect of God's law as the basis for constitutional government and a stable

⁶⁰ See *Secret Christian Donors Bankroll the Tories* by Jamie Doward in The Observer on 2/05/10 available at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/may/02/secret-christian-donors-bankroll-tories>

And *Christian Tories Rewrite Party Doctrine* by Chris Cook in the Financial Times posted on 12/02/10 and available at:

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/12400596-16ac-11df-aa09-00144feab49a.html#axzz1AJyjO0UY>

⁶¹ See *Tories and the New Evangelical Right* by Andrew Brown posted on 10/05/10 in The Guardian available at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/andrewbrown/2010/may/10/evangelical-religion-toryconservatives>

society.

- Reconciliation among nations, races, religions, classes, gender and communities.
- Respect for human life given by God.
- Social Justice to address wrongs and provide restitution to the wronged.
- Careful economic stewardship of God's creation.
- Commitment to the fairness of markets and patterns of exchange.
- Peacemaking, by addressing the causes of wars.
- Open, transparent government, which subjects itself to debate and critique.⁶²

There is a distinction to be made between religion as a *motivating force* for political engagement and the *imposition* of beliefs that carries parallels with Clara Connolly's distinction between 'Christian in form' and 'Christian in fact' (1990:3). The interpretation of some of these CPA objectives leaves little to the imagination but their founding document, the Mayflower Declaration⁶³, offers the following detail: CPA views justice as 'ultimately founded in the character of God and its content is

⁶² See the homepage of the Christian Peoples Website at:

http://www.cpaparty.org.uk/?page=about_us

⁶³ It is noteworthy that Mayflower was the name of the ship that transported the Pilgrims from Plymouth in England to Plymouth in USA in the 1600s. This reference invokes a close connection between Christianity, persecution or anti establishment, and colonisation. Coincidentally, the politics of the Christian Peoples Alliance bears affinity with the Plymouth Brethren. Albeit a distinct political formation that emerged in 1800s in Dublin and eventually took off in Plymouth, they were also conservative Evangelists and part of a right wing Christian mobilisation, which in 1980s lobbied to extend Thatcherite education policies by pushing religious arguments about parental choice to withdraw children from sex education classes and also assimilationist arguments about the primacy of Christian worship. Indeed, after he was voted out of office in 2010, Alan Craig went to work for Baroness Caroline Cox who in fact had been part of this particular religio-political alliance fronted by the Plymouth Brethren in the 1980s.

given by divine law'; they 'regard all life as subject to the rule of Christ'; CPA is opposed to the 'destruction of the unborn' and this is given as one example of the ways in which 'our nation has failed to live as God requires'; and science and technology are included in the 'mistaken beliefs to which we have succumbed and idols before which we have bowed'.⁶⁴

Greg Smith, the local chronicler of faith in politics, noted that Alan Craig's electoral success in Newham emerged from his involvement in a local tenants' and residents' association and a critique of estate renewal schemes. In my own interviews I found that Craig's contribution to local politics was referenced against four particular issues: opposition to the redevelopment of the Queen's Market in Upton Park; opposition to proposals to establish a large Casino in East Ham; a campaign against the construction of a Tablighi Jamaat mosque complex at the Temple Mills site in West Ham; and attempts to initiate a council debate on sexual orientation and reproductive rights. In short, the first two issues won the CPA a great deal of recognition amongst local civil society actors, placing them at the forefront of a critical voice opposing the hegemonic implementation of New Labour policies and the weight of corporations in an area where local people suffer multiple forms of deprivation.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ *The Mayflower Declaration: Christian Democratic Values for Society* by The Christian People's Alliance available at http://www.cpaparty.org.uk/?page=about_us

⁶⁵ This emphasis on speaking up for the poor, unwaged and low waged is a consistent thread in the literature of the Christian parties. It is also reflected in David Campanale's (the Federal President of the CPA) participation in an anti cuts meeting in Kingston (as a trade unionist representative of the National Union of Journalists) where he emphasised the role of church leaders in speaking up against government policy that meant 'cuts were falling disproportionately on those least able to bear them' and emphasised the need for 'a just deficit reduction strategy (that would) instead be borne by those with the broadest shoulders'. See *Call for Churches to Combat Government Cuts and Join Striking Workers* posted on 22/09/11 at: <http://www.cpaparty.org.uk/?page=news&id=392>

Also reflected in The Christian Party's demand to 'stop taxing the poor: no tax or N.I. for the low waged' as per the 2010 election campaign leaflet for Mehboob Ali, Ealing Southall prospective parliamentary candidate for The Christian Party.

Class as category is important here because the Christian Peoples Alliance carried the upper hand over the local (New Labour) Labour Group. At a very instinctive level the CPA were positioned on the side of valuing local people over the interests of big business and even over the command structure of the local Labour Group who mobilised support from New Labour at the Centre in order to push through the casino plans. When it came to the vote on the casino, the Christian Socialists within the Newham Labour Group abstained (on the basis of conscience) rather than voice their objections least of all vote against their political party, reinforcing the undemocratic characterisation of the Labour leadership. On the Queens Market, a sustained campaign by the Friends of Queens Market highlighted the intersection of multicultural and working class heritage and were eventually vindicated through the intervention of the Conservative Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. Indeed the CPA applauded their own role in the Queens Market victory and brought this together with a critique of rational bureaucracy and exploitative capital. The following extract shows that Craig positions Labour Mayor Robin Wales' 'values-free' leadership against the strong values of the Christian Peoples Alliance:

The value-free managerialism that Sir Robin offers is selfish, dry-as-dust and takes no account of local and vulnerable people - as we have seen at queens market and the Canning Town housing regeneration project. CPA on the other hand stands with the marginalised and speaks up for community- and family-oriented values. Unlike the Mayor, we would never bulldoze an invaluable diverse community asset like queens market in favour of a bog-standard ruthless grasping WalMart Asda.⁶⁶

However, the CPA's perspective on the construction of a Tablighi Jamaat mosque and on sexual freedoms lost them potential allies. Whilst this would enforce Judith Butler's (2008) argument that struggles against racism carry an affinity with struggles for sexual freedom, interviewees raised concerns about the CPA's views on Islam

⁶⁶ See *Newham mayor's attack on Christian Peoples Alliance success: "He is lashing out blindly at something"* posted on 15/05/06 at:

<http://www.cparty.org.uk/index.php?page=news&id=208&highlight=queens%20market>

(very close to the racist populism of Christian Democrats across Europe) far more frequently than concerns about their stance on sexual orientation and reproductive rights. Moreover, CPA's dual interests in the Tablighi Jamaat mosque and sexuality presented obvious contradictions. Questions of women's rights, segregation, dissent and rule of law were central to the CPA's critique of the Tablighi Jamaat and the council's decision to back their proposals. Yet CPA simultaneously stood against sexual freedoms and invoked a strong gendered morality as part of their own Christian political identity. Interestingly, the CPA's cutting edge critique of the impact of regeneration on poor local people recently collapsed into an assault on women's reproductive rights. In November 2011, Alan Craig joined a multifaith picket outside the Newham offices of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) in Stratford. His statement levelled the following accusations:

BPAS has become a large money spinning business. This centre is commercial opportunism to take advantage of Westfield Stratford City and the Olympics. BPAS have an interest in doing as many abortions as possible.⁶⁷

Similarly, in Ealing, the CPA's allies, The Christian Party, focused their election literature on: opposition to contraceptive advice and sex education in schools as a 'relentless quest to undermine parents and impose a new morality upon school children'⁶⁸; 'a call for the end to the 40 year abortion holocaust and campaign for the recognition of the human rights of the unborn child'⁶⁹; and 'stop sex education for five year olds'⁷⁰. Suzanne Fernandes, an ethnic minority woman from Northfields, had been jointly supported by the Christian Peoples Alliance and the Christian Party

⁶⁷ See *Drawing All Faiths Together - Against Sexual Freedom* posted 8/11/11 to:

http://paulstott.typepad.com/i_intend_to_escape_and_co/2011/11/drawing-all-faiths-together-against-sexual-freedom.html

⁶⁸ Extract from Suzanne Fernandes' pre-election statement to The Ealing Gazette as part of their special election focus *Small Parties, Big Voices* dated 30/04/10.

⁶⁹ Extract from 2007 by-election campaign leaflet for Yaqub Masih, Ealing Southall prospective parliamentary candidate for The Christian Party.

to run for the European Elections in 2009 and then stood as the Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the Christian Party in Ealing Central and Acton in 2010. However, straight after the May 2010 elections she defected from the Christian Party and joined David Miliband's Movement for Change. She spoke candidly about her involvement with the Elim Pentecostal Church and Christian Centre in Northfields. She gave as the reasons for her defection a jarring contradiction between her commitment to both religious / cultural pluralism and a welfare state with the Christian Party's anti-Muslim views and sense of Christian superiority. She did not express a change of heart or reservations on questions of morality, family, sexuality and sex education.⁷¹

In Newham, it was largely the members of the Christian Socialist Movement that spoke out against Craig's views on sexuality but first I want to note the difficulty with Alan Craig's claims about secular imposition and the absence of Christianity from the public square. Actually Christianity and other religious commitments live comfortably within the Newham Labour Group. In 2000, Greg Smith (2010) compiled information about the religious affiliations of local councillors and listed 12 of them as Christian, 5 as Sikh, 9 as Muslim, 1 as Hindu and 1 as Jewish. The religious affiliation of another 29 councillors was unknown, 2 were listed as secular and only 1 as atheist. Amongst these were a Baptist Deacon, a Christian lay reader, a Christian priest, a Sikh gurdwara committee member, a mosque leader and a mosque president. However, Smith did make an important distinction between the Christians in politics that are 'motivated individually by beliefs and values which centre on service to the whole community' and 'politicians from other faith communities (who) are more likely to be cast in a role as communal representative' (2010: 157).⁷² The

⁷⁰ Extract from 2010 election campaign leaflet for Mehboob Ali, Ealing Southall prospective parliamentary candidate for The Christian Party.

⁷¹ Interviewed 16/09/10.

⁷² Greg Smith is a strong advocate of religion in the public sphere and of faith-based community organising. Smith and I come to our work from different starting points: his view is that there has been a secularisation of normative political practice whereas I start from the claim that there

latter has some bearing on the discussion in the next section on Muslims and the Respect Party.

In 2009, my own research found that 17 Newham councillors listed an affiliation to or membership of a religious organisation in their declaration of interests. By October 2011 this number had fallen significantly to 5 partly because the Respect Party, Independent and Christian Peoples Alliance councillors were voted out in May 2010. Still, the interviews and informal discussions suggested that at least another 10 councillors from this list had active links with one religious organisation or more in the borough.⁷³ The point is that these affiliations do not manifest in the manner that Alan Craig would like to see them.

One important element of Newham's history is the presence of the Christian Socialist Movement (CSM). Both the Newham MPs and three local councillors with Cabinet positions are involved in the Newham branch of the CSM. It is quite possible that the Newham branch of the CSM was revived in lieu of Tony Blair's faith agenda or as a response to the local emergence of the Christian Peoples Alliance. Interviewees that were involved with the CSM made clear distinctions between themselves and the Christian People's Alliance noting three particular points of discord: a preference for

has been a de-secularisation of relations between communities and the state. His objective has been to demonstrate that New Labour and its local manifestations are engaged in downplaying the role of religion in public life and to raise concerns about the effacement of theological content in politics. His suggestion is that religious organisations play an active part in democratic processes but their contribution is not acknowledged and should be strengthened.

⁷³ Neither Greg Smith's nor my own counting mechanisms were particularly rigorous, as both involved an interpretation of religious organisations referred to on a civic document (the declaration of interests) supplemented with points made during informal discussions. Indeed, Smith appears to have assumed religious activity or representation where religion could have been narrated as a cultural identity. Moreover, religious affiliation and secularism are not mutually exclusive categories in the way that Smith appears to count them. There is nothing preventing someone with religious identity or links with a place of worship to also ascribe to a secular view of public policy or politics and vice versa.

mainstream rather than religious identity politics; positions on sexuality and abortion; and racism.

On the question of religious identity politics, Stephen Timms MP distinguished between his religious beliefs as procuring an interest in doing politics in general and manifesting one's religious identity as membership of a religious political party:

Well I've always been a supporter of the Labour Party and the starting point for my politics has been my Christian faith, that's kind of how I've always thought about my political convictions, coming out of faith, has always seemed to me to be the Labour Party. And I think it is a complete cul-de-sac for say Christians to go off, as I said, in a little holy huddle of their own. It seems to me that Christians ought to be involved in the mainstream. And if you want to have an impact, if you want to have an influence, that's where you should be. Not kind of refusing to work with people who don't share your faith, but gladly working with them. So I've never seen a strong case for a separatist Christian Party at all.

[Stephen Timms, MP for East Ham, 11/12/09]

Of course there is a significant difference between identifying problems with religious political parties as immersed in a deep-seated identity politics and as separatist by nature on the one hand and taking issue with them for not engaging with the mainstream on the other. The former is a question of ontology and the latter is a question of tactics. It is clear from above that the CPA have not been averse to alliances with others that share the same campaign specific objectives. Two other CSM members focussed on the ontological issues. One stated:

And we continue to do this, our community representational role is for those of all faiths and none, whatever our own religious affiliation, however strongly felt, cultural, that is to our individuals. We stand as Labour Party people; we don't stand as a Muslim Labour Party member or a Sikh. I mentioned those religious affiliations but I am convinced that we have moved a long way and my colleagues, if they were all being interviewed by you, will say about the 'Labour Programme', not 'My Community Programme'. Does that make sense? And I don't think we need to look

too far away to find where there are various different types of Labour Parties which have segregated themselves clearly on different structures. Do you know to which I refer?

No. Tower Hamlets?

(Nodding his head) we want to avoid the danger of over identification of political processes with religious groups, does that make sense?

[Newham Councillor, 2/12/09]

This could be read in a number of different ways: either as form, as a preferred badge of allegiance, or as content, distinguishing between specific values. If this particular interviewee had not been making a point about different *types* of Labour Groups then his point about being Labour rather than CPA or any other religious political party might have provided a stronger contrast. Importantly other interview extracts project a far more significant distinction along the line of values. In particular, whilst the CPA refer to themselves as Christian Democrats, members of the Christian Socialist Movement are very clear that this means a distinctly undemocratic fundamentalism. For instance, Councillor Clive Furness stated the following:

The founding document for the CPA is called the Mayflower Declaration and within it there is a very telling phrase. Now I am not quoting it exactly so you'd need to look at the Mayflower Declaration but it is something like um, "promoting Christian values as we understand them". And at one sense that's an entirely innocuous statement because all any of us can ever do is promote the values as we understand them but for them it's a founding principle that they are promoting Christian values as *they* understand them and they have tended to be on the more conservative side of interpretation. So it's not even though they call themselves Christian their social values are actually the social values of a very conservative section of the Christian church.

[Councillor Clive Furness, 16/09/09]

The Councillor Revd. Quintin Peppiatt, a Cabinet member that holds the portfolio for

Children and Young People but is also a member of the Christian Socialist Movement, Watch (the Campaign for Women Bishops) and the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, raised a different point of distinction. He highlighted shared interests on regeneration and poverty (he and Craig were equally opposed to the construction of a casino in Newham) but significantly divergent views on same sex relationships and abortion.

It was more common for Newham interviewees to distance themselves from the Christian Peoples Alliance on the grounds of racism. For instance, Councillor Furness stated the following about the CPA:

What they are trying to do is a question you will have to ask them but I interpreted that as a move to shore up their white racist vote, that's how I interpreted it. Now they may have another explanation but I think there was a lot of prejudice about east Europeans in the way in which before then there was prejudice against Africans and before then about Bengalis and then Pakistanis, prejudice, the focus of the prejudices changes time. East Europeans are this month's flavour and it was seeking to shore up the prejudice vote by saying we're on your side against these nasty eastern Europeans that are coming in and taking all your houses, they stop your children getting houses. That was never spoken but that was the implication.

[Councillor Clive Furness, 16/09/09]

Indeed Alan Craig was very aware of the impossibility of a united Opposition voice between the Newham councillors from the predominantly Muslim Respect Party and the Christian People's Alliance. He connected this to Respect taking 'quite strong exception' to the CPA's campaign against what he refers to as the 'Olympic Mega Mosque'. The way in which 'race', gender and a critique of regeneration collected together in the CPA discursive terrain could be understood as the enfolding of a contemporary nationalist rhetoric (Britishness, civilisational discourse and human rights) with an emphasis on marriage and family into a peculiarly localised variant of communitarian nostalgia.

There is some level of irony here. Whilst other Christian mobilisations in the borough - the Faith Sector Forum, Faithful Friends, Transform and the Christian Socialist Movement - are white-led, the Christian Peoples Alliance has had a significant number of black faces at its helm. Its previous leader was the South Asian millionaire businessman Ram Gidoomal. One of the elected candidates for Canning Town Ward was the African Simeon Ademolake. Indeed several interviewees noted that the CPA base depended upon the particularly conservative African churches in the borough. The CPA discourse is not about ethnic minorities per se but rather hones in on characterising Islam as an inegalitarian ideology. This is particularly clear in their support for south Asian Christians organising against blasphemy legislation and religious persecution in Pakistan.

The Iraq War and the Respect Party

In spite of this lack of unity amongst the Opposition, the 2006 local election created a fissure in Labour Party dominance in the area. Both the Respect Party and the Christian People's Alliance made gains from a significant anti war mobilisation. Whilst not matching the media frenzy or antics of George Galloway's campaign in the neighbouring borough of Tower Hamlets⁷⁴, a number of interviewees referred to the immense excitement and energy of the period 2004-2006. There was a sense that the anti war mobilisation carried with it the prospect of breaking a local Labour Party monopoly and of giving rise to a viable Left opposition. In 2006, the Respect Party stood a councillor in every single ward of Newham as well as a Mayoral candidate. A number of people rescinded their membership of the Labour Party and a few became

⁷⁴ See Camilla Bassi, 2001; Sarah Glynn, 2002 and 2010; Richard Phillips, 2008 and Michael Whine, 2005 for insights into the Respect Party campaign including: its attempts to consolidate Muslim participation at the anti war demonstrations; the entirely pragmatic relationship between the Socialist Workers Party and the Muslim Association of Britain where political principles were jettisoned to create the veneer of a 'radical' alternative; the process for accommodating MAB's expectations for engagement; the desire to transfer Muslim demography into a Respect vote in areas with large Muslim populations; and the rationale for selecting Tower Hamlets as the site for George Galloway's campaign specifically because of the combination of a pro war Blairite sitting MP, a sizeable Muslim population and the availability of local Islamist partners.

actively involved in the Newham branch of the Respect Party.⁷⁵ Reflections on this political moment are as revealing for the way in which religion and religious identities are engaged in the pursuit of politics as they are about the internal workings of each of the political parties. One interviewee claimed that she was the only Newham Labour councillor to go against Whip action during the council's debate on Iraq. She knew that the consequences of defying the Whip were to be pushed out of her seat and so she resigned.

In hindsight, some members of the Newham Labour Group have been able to downplay the scale and intensity of the anti war mobilisation because of the subsequent demise of the Respect Party. However, several interviewees acknowledged the impact of the Iraq war on the local Muslim view of the Labour Party. Stephen Timms MP for East Ham, for instance, stated the following:

Essentially Respect drew almost all of its support from the Muslim community in Newham, very little support outside the Muslim community. And my reading of it at the time was that probably, two thirds of my Muslim constituents who voted, voted Respect, one third voted for me. So that was clearly quite a telling development I thought and a very big change in what happened in the 2001 election. I hope, well as I understand it, there will not be a Respect candidate standing in this constituency in 2010. I obviously hope that many of those who voted Respect last time, will vote, many Muslims, will choose to vote Labour this time.

What's the connection between Iraq, the Respect mobilisation in Newham and Muslims voting for them?

It's very close, I think it's a very close identification that there was a lot of – there

⁷⁵ In April 2003, Red Pepper magazine reported that the Labour Party membership had 'plummeted from a high of 405,000 following the 1997 election, to just over 272,000. Anecdotal evidence suggests that since then, resignations have been trickling in, while a whole lot more subs haven't been renewed.' See *Weapons for Blair's Destruction* by Natasha Grzincic available at: <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/Weapons-for-Blair-s-destruction/>

were very, very strong feelings in the Muslim community that the UK should not have invaded Iraq. Many people presenting it as an attack on Islam because it's a Muslim country and people did see it very much in religious terms that this was the UK attacking Islam. And you know, I think there were calls in the mosques for people to object to what the British government had been doing and therefore vote against the Labour Party in the General Election... I think the Respect mobilisation was the electoral manifestation of the anti War mobilisation. But it's interesting, I mean one of the recollections from the 2005 Election campaign was that I spoke to a Hindu community organisation and I was commended, in the introduction that was made of my contribution for the fact that I supported the invasion of Iraq.

[Stephen Timms MP for East Ham, 11/12/09]

This extracts reveals the way in which a number of processes coalesced around the question of Iraq including: the reconfiguration of Islam in Britain as a source of political critique; the mainstreaming of Islamist projections of the invasion of Iraq as a Muslim issue⁷⁶; and the local impact on politicians that sided with Tony Blair.

For all intents and purposes the Respect Party in Newham relied on a Muslim vote bank around the Green Street and Forest Gate area. By the time of the local elections

⁷⁶ The situation is rife with contradictions and certainly not as simplistic as that projected within Islamist claims about the occupation of 'Muslim lands'. Firstly, the object of Blair's vilification, Saddam Hussein, was a staunch secularist and part of a generation of post-colonial rulers (including the Egyptian Hosni Mubarak and the Libyan Mu'ammarr Gaddafi) that opposed Islamist movements. Moreover, Hussein perpetuated a violent confrontational relationship with the neighbouring Shia theocracy in Iran. It was the head of the Iranian government, Ayatollah Khomeini that incited international mobilisation against Salman Rushdie in turn fuelling a new wave of Muslim political identities in Britain. Ironically, the British and US invasion of Iraq in 2003 increased the space for Islamist factions to garner power and define the geographical region as a Muslim territory. Moreover, whilst the then head of the Muslim Association of Britain, Anas Altikriti, joined forces with the Stop the War Coalition's campaign against New Labour's war in Iraq, his father, Usama Altikriti (also the head of the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood) was hand picked by the US government to join the post invasion interim government in Iraq. Importantly, the cost of such political machinations is particularly borne by women who were claimed by Blair as his subjects of liberation and yet whose rights were traded away in post invasion negotiations for the introduction of religious laws.

in 2006, three Muslim councillors defected from the Labour Group to run for Respect and managed to capture the Green Street West ward, the heart of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim population in the borough. However, a closer look at the political trajectory of one of the defectors, AK Sheikh, reveals that in the context of contemporary electoral politics, religion can be welded to existing resentments or act as a means of articulating political ambitions.

AK Sheikh was first elected as a Labour Party councillor alongside three other Muslim candidates in 1990. It would be fair to suggest that the timing was no mere coincidence - ethnic minority political activism was applying pressure on the Labour Party through the Labour Party Black Sections but also as Muslim identity politics, with the latter being shaped by Islamist mobilisations against Salman Rushdie in 1989 and the first Gulf War in 1991. AK Sheikh's colleagues - Shama Ahmad, Riaz Ahmad and the ex councillor Zulfikar Ali - were particularly vocal during the 1990s in making demands for the recognition of specific 'Muslim needs' for services and a Muslim centre. Such demands comprised a new feature for a borough historically marked by anti racist mobilisation under the all-encompassing political term 'black' (NMP/CARF, 1991). By the mid 1990s, Councillor Shama Ahmad in particular was opposing moves to establish a secular Asian women's centre and rather lobbying for a Muslim women's centre.⁷⁷ AK Sheikh and Zulfikar Ali founded the Alliance of Newham Muslim Associations, which affiliated to the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). Until very recently the MCB was the main platform for New Labour's consultation with Muslims but derided for its connections with the Islamic Right political party Jamaat-e-Islami.

AK Sheikh's trajectory is interesting. Even after he was voted out as a local councillor, he continued both *inside the state* and also *in opposition* through various

⁷⁷ The demand for some kind of Muslim centre, as an Islamic Cultural or Heritage Centre, continues in the borough and is particularly being pushed by two Muslim women councillors. One of the reasons for this could be a search for new spaces that can be developed away from established sites of male Muslim power.

consultation processes and networks discussed in Chapter 4. At a public meeting organised by Islamic Circles on 4/11/10, I observed the level of pressure that Sheikh must have been under from some local Muslim constituents during the anti war mobilisation. One might argue that being seen as a 'Muslim' representative rather than a political party representative is an inevitable outcome if you are the Lifelong Secretary General of the largest alliance of Muslim groups in the borough and you establish a position as a representative on this basis. However, in an interview with him before he lost his seat in May 2010, he spoke of a confluence of issues as the steer for his personal path. He did not position religion as a main feature but rather his comments pointed to 'Muslim' as a political identity and to the faith agenda as a source for critiquing the local Labour Group. He certainly was interested to represent his anti Iraq war constituents but this was only part of the reason for his defection. The Iraq invasion shined a spotlight on the lack of internal Labour Party democracy. At that moment in particular, the Blairite leadership style and command structure at the heart of the New Labour project became over-determined at the local Labour Party level. Moreover, Sheikh pointed to the Newham Mayor's temporary interest in faith groups and in parity arguments and how this was later dropped. Given Sheikh's role in the Faith Sector Forum during the same period as his defection from Labour to Respect, this obligation on the local Labour Party to engage in faith-based consultation may have created an unmet expectation and the space for additional grievance. Indeed, this is an instance in which the logic of the faith agenda being pushed by central government since the early days of New Labour came back to bite the local Newham Labour Group.

At a parliamentary elections level, however, the impact on Stephen Timms' electoral margin was much smaller than expected given the correlation between the size of Muslim populations and Respect Party support. Part of Timms' ability to surpass this electoral threat was no doubt connected to the dominant view of him as a politician with integrity. It's also possible that his faith background and his gender were contributory factors. Timms noted that the Respect Party's mobilisation in the mosques was not 'universally successful'. Timms' own political career had been encouraged by some local mosques so his established links with religious groups in

the borough could have served him well during this period. Moreover, in neighbouring Tower Hamlets, a whispering campaign about the 'loose' and 'immoral' character of the Labour Party MP Oona King was an integral part of the particularly dirty fight for the Bethnal Green and Bow seat. Timms seems to have been protected from such tactics perhaps also because of the absence of a central fundamentalist body in Newham whilst in Tower Hamlets the prolific activities of the Jamaat-e-Islami groupings were significant players in the Respect Party campaign.

Importantly, those that gained the Green Street ward in 2006 appear to have fallen on their swords. Two out of three of them left the Respect Party soon after being elected and became Independent councillors. They recently attempted to rejoin the local Labour Group but were denied re-admission and there are signs that this has left them without local legitimacy.⁷⁸ In the meantime, the Iraq War has thrown up another political stage in the recruitment of potential Muslim allies. The latest Muslim Labour councillors now appear to be affiliated to two key groups - the Newham Muslim Citizens Association and the Indian Muslim Federation.

Nonetheless, the secular Labour Group continues to negotiate the unfinished business of previous rounds of Muslim recruitment during similar periods of political turmoil. Moreover, several councillors expressed concerns about the neighbouring Tower Hamlets Labour Group where an internal investigation into allegations that councillors and council officers were heavily influenced by the fundamentalist Islamic Forum of Europe led to the dismissal of the Chief Executive Officer, Lutfur Ali, and the Leader of the council, Lutfur Rahman.⁷⁹ However, a groundswell of

⁷⁸ The local newspaper reported that on the run up to the 2010 local elections, one of the ex Respect/Independent councillors, Hanif Abdulmuhit, was pelted with eggs and accused of being a traitor. See *Labour man is hit with eggs* by Eleanore Robinson in The Newham Recorder, 28/04/10.

⁷⁹ See *Islamists are crushed in Tower Hamlets* by Andrew Gilligan posted on 11/05/10 in the Telegraph and available at:

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100039244/islamists-are-crushed-in-tower-hamlets/>

support for Rahman, mobilised largely by the Jamaat-e-Islami and Muslim Brotherhood alliance through the Islamic Forum of Europe, the East London Mosque and the London Muslim Centre, ensured that he retained and indeed increased his control over the borough's resources by becoming its first directly elected Mayor.⁸⁰ In the aftermath of both Respect and the Andrew Gilligan expose of the fundamentalist links to the council⁸¹, the outgoing Respect Party parliamentary candidate for Bethnal Green and Bow, Abjol Miah, highlighted the paradox of Muslim political participation:

"When they say the mosques are infiltrating the political parties I think that's totally outrageous," he says. "It's the politicians who go round to the mosque trying to poach voters. Which councillor hasn't gone round to the mosque to beg for votes? They all do, irrespective of whether they're Muslims or not." The Respect Party, he says, is simply doing what politicians have been asking the Muslim community to do: engage in the political process. "For the last 15 years, politicians have been demanding that the Muslim community engages with the political process," Mr Miah says. "For years we've been called isolationist, backward, separatist and ghettoist. But when we do engage we're labelled fundamentalists. We wanted to engage and get involved in electoral politics. And that's what we did. And now the old parties are terrified because we've broken their chains."⁸²

⁸⁰ Indeed thanks to the IFE/ELM/LMC mobilisation, Lutfur Rahman has managed to increase his personal salary to £75,000 a year and now has direct control over the council's budget, in the region of £1.1 billion per annum.

⁸¹ See *Radicals with hands on the levers of power: the takeover of Tower Hamlets* by Andrew Gilligan posted on 28/02/10 and available at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/labour/7333537/Radicals-with-hands-on-the-levers-of-power-the-takeover-of-Tower-Hamlets.html>

⁸² Extract from Jerome Taylor's piece *Respect, Religion and the battle for Tower Hamlets* in The Independent newspaper on 28/04/10 and available at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/respect-religion-race-and-the-battle-for-tower-hamlets-1956154.html>

I would argue that Newham Labour Group's anxieties about Tower Hamlets dynamic extending into the borough are not entirely misplaced. The East London Mosque recently joined forces with Left activists to extend their reach into Newham through dual mobilisations: against public spending cuts and against the English Defence League. Also, at an Islamic Circles public meeting in November 2010, there was some push (from a handful of Hizb-Ut-Tahrir sympathisers) for the establishment of one definitive mosque as the base of Muslim representation in the borough, to replicate the central and influential position of the East London Mosque in Tower Hamlets.

Moreover, 21-year-old Roshonara Choudhry, a young Bangladeshi woman from East Ham, ensured that, even after a change of government, the spectre of Iraq and international Islamist mobilisations continue to cast a shadow over local politics. In November 2010, Choudhry was convicted of attempting to murder the MP Stephen Timms. She admitted carrying out the attack as her way of avenging the murder of Iraqis. She would have been just 14 years old when Timms cast his vote in support of Tony Blair's decision to invade Iraq.

Excerpts from police transcripts of an interview with Choudhry reveal that in her teens she had met Timms on a college trip to Westminster but had remained silent whilst he was challenged on Iraq by one of the other female students.⁸³ Choudhry went on to become a prize-winning student at King's College and worked weekends at a local Muslim school to support her poor family and others from deprived backgrounds.⁸⁴ In November 2009 she started downloading lectures by the American

⁸³ See *Roshonara Choudhry: Police Interview Extracts* by Vikram Dodd published in The Guardian newspaper on 3/11/10 and available at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/nov/03/roshonara-choudhry-police-interview?INTCMP=SRCH>

⁸⁴ See *Profile: Roshonara Choudhry* by Vikram Dodd published in The Guardian newspaper on 2nd November 2010 and available at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/nov/02/profile-roshonara-choudhry-stephen-timms?>

Yemeni preacher Anwar Al Awlaki.⁸⁵ Then, in April 2010, in the final year of the course, she dropped out stating later that:

King's College is involved in things where they work against Muslims...Last year, or the year before, they gave an award to Shimon Peres [Israeli politician] and they also have a department for tackling radicalisation ... So I just didn't wanna go there anymore ... 'cos it would be against my religion.⁸⁶

INTCMP=SRCH

⁸⁵ Awlaki was widely referred to as 'the spiritual leader of Al Qaida' and thought to be part of the leadership of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). He had been linked to those that carried out the 11th September 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, the Texas Fort Hood shooting in 2009 and the attempted bombing of a Detroit-bound jet in December 2009. He was the author of 'Constants in the Path to Jihad' and '44 Ways to Jihad' in which he draws strong distinctions between believers and non-believers and describes jihad as an obligation on every Muslim. His internet sermons were said to have been hugely influential in the recruitment of jihadists. The Quilliam Foundation described Awlaki as encouraging 'a "lone-wolf" strategy, calling on followers to seize opportunities to attack where opportunities arose rather than work in cells, in order to increase chances of effectiveness.' Awlaki was an American national hiding out in Yemen. On 30th September 2011 he became the first US subject of an extra-judicial assassination after President Obama ordered a drone strike on the area where he was hiding.

See *Profile: An American Jihadist* by The Quilliam Foundation available at:

<http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/component/content/article/63-in-the-media/877-profile-an-american-jihadist-.html>

And *Profile: al-Qaida leader Anwar al-Awlaki* by Vikram Dodd published by The Guardian on 3rd November 2010 and available at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/nov/02/profile-anwar-al-awlaki-cleric?INTCMP=SRCH>

Roshonara Choudhry also claimed that she had developed an understanding of her own personal role in 'fighting' for Iraqis by watching a youtube video in which Abdullah Azzam articulated the view, as she explained it, that 'when a Muslim land is attacked it becomes obligatory on every man, woman and child and even slave to go out and fight and defend the land' (quoted from the police transcripts, *ibid*). Abdullah Azzam was the co-founder of Al Qaida and the Laskhar-e-Taiba (the group that claimed responsibility for the Mumbai blasts in 2008) and the author of the key salafi-jihadist text 'Defence of Muslim Lands'. The phrase 'Muslim Lands' only has meaning if one adheres to a political ideology of religiously sanctioned lands. Azzam and Awlaki argued that certain (Muslim) land is being

On Friday 14th May 2010 she headed to the local bank to settle all her financial affairs, ensuring that her family would not inherit her debts and that the British state would not be able to claim her savings.⁸⁷ She then proceeded to Stephen Timms' regular surgery at the Beckton Globe where CCTV footage showed her waiting patiently to meet with him. It was there that she stabbed him twice in the stomach with a kitchen knife. Timms survived the attack and Choudhry was remanded in custody. After her arrest she stated:

I thought that it's not right that he voted for the declaration of war in Iraq...

I feel like I did what I'd planned to do. I feel like I've ruined the rest of my life. I feel like it's worth it because millions of Iraqis are suffering and I should do what I can to help them and not just be inactive and do nothing while they suffer...

(Timms) very strongly agreed with the invasion of Iraq...

That made me feel angry because the whole Iraq war is just based on lies and he just voted strongly for everything as though he had no mercy. As though he felt no doubts that what he was doing was right, even though it was such an arrogant thing to do and I just felt like if he could treat the Iraqi people so mercilessly, then why should I show him any mercy?

...I think I've fulfilled my obligation, my Islamic duty to stand up for the people of Iraq and to punish someone who wanted to make war with them.⁸⁸

occupied by, and therefore needs to be liberated from, non-believers.

⁸⁶ From *Roshonara Choudhry: Police Interview Extracts* by Vikram Dodd published in The Guardian newspaper on 3rd November 2010 and available at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/nov/03/roshonara-choudhry-police-interview?INTCMP=SRCH>

⁸⁷ Profile of Roshonara Choudhry, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Police transcripts, *ibid.*

Choudhry instructed her counsel not to challenge the prosecution's case.⁸⁹ On 3rd November 2010 she was convicted of attempted murder and required to serve a minimum of fifteen years in prison.

Even though Choudhry is being projected by some as a troubled and vulnerable young woman acting alone, the disquiet that her actions have caused local politicians was summarised in the following report:

Yes, Timms voted for the war, but that was seven years ago. He had been the subject of protests then, but all of it tempered by the fact that he was a well-liked MP. He faced protests but he never faced hatred. If anything, his East Ham constituency has more Muslims in it now than it did then. They make up a third of the electorate. And here's the thing. In May (2010) the MP who voted for the war in Iraq secured the biggest majority in the country. Choudhry didn't just plunge the knife; she shattered the consensus that existed between the MP and his Muslim constituents. For all the rancour evoked by the war, they had reached an equilibrium.⁹⁰

Conclusion

Religion runs through local electoral politics in boroughs, manifesting as vote banks but also revealing itself at specific junctures to cut through the hearth of a united Labour Party front. Sometimes it bursts out in flashes of violence. However, I want to avoid drawing large generalisations especially because of the dissimilar characteristics of each of the Labour Groups. Instead I draw upon Michael Keith's (2005) assertion that it is useful, if not necessary, to make a distinction between the conditions of possibility on the one hand and the modalities of identity on the other. In sharing this sentiment I want to conclude by outlining the reasons why religion

⁸⁹ See *MP Stephen Timms stabbed in revenge for Iraq War* posted on 1/11/10 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-11667620>

⁹⁰ From *Hideously diverse Britain? How many other Roshonara Chaudhrys are there out there?* by Hugh Muir in *The Guardian* on 9/11/10 available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/nov/09/how-many-more-roshonara-choudhrys>

becomes the voice of critique and then separate those points from the substantive dimensions of those critical religious voices.

At a comparative level, a key feature shared by both boroughs was a critique of party structures, transparency and accountability. Religion was welded to that critique. The issues that were raised became inextricable from questions of democratic process and participation. At some level this was a reflection of ongoing schisms between equality as representation, as visible presence, and equality as recognition, as reflecting identity politics. Without belittling the actual content of the complaints or the religious belief dimension of that content, it is clear that, in the current climate at least, some strands of political opposition find it easiest to reach for religion as a source of discontent and as an alternative voice.

Beyond this, each borough had its peculiarities. In Ealing, questions of Sikh representation and women's representation came to the fore, almost simultaneously. At times one was played off against the other and at other times, the two sang in unison. In Newham the thrust of the critique was about the centralised command structure and lack of dissent within a Labour Group modelled on Blair's New Labour. This chapter has shown how religion becomes the vehicle for that discontent. In Newham, there is a metonymic association between a lack of democracy, the overt secular commitments of the Labour leadership (including many of its Christian Socialist Movement activists) and their decisions on Queens Market and the Newham Casino. In Ealing, the proximity of Indian politics provides easier parallels between Sikh complaints about the Labour Party and the repression of Khalistani forces by a 1980s Congress Party associated with a Hindu rather than secular political culture. Moreover, the Sikhs in Southall may not be positioning themselves against secularism for the simple fact that multifaithism rather than secularism is the political culture of the Ealing Labour Party.

The second factor that comes into play is the unfinished business of ethnic minority

recruitment to the Labour Party. It is clear from this chapter that ethnic minorities in the Party represent many different political interests ranging from a Left politics, to a secular black Left politics, to black perspectivism, to raced managerialism, to ethnic particularism, to ethnic communalism, to religious identity politics. These are revealed when the question of religion in the public sphere is raised. Notably, later chapters will show that very conservative ethnic minority politicians have been sitting comfortably within local Labour Party branches for a long time. In the current moment, religion gives vent to grievances and also provides the form through which divergent political leanings and views, once sitting comfortably within a 'sovereign Labour Party', are released and find expression.

The third factor is the viability of alternative political parties. The local dimension is really significant here because whilst Ealing has been a two party race between Labour and the Conservatives, the political landscape in Newham has been shaped by a united front against the Conservative Party. In Ealing it is the Conservative Party rather than Liberal Democrats, Greens or Respect that makes gains from religious ruptures. In Newham, the united front against the Tories has made other avenues more viable, namely Christian Right/Democratic politics (especially for African evangelists) and the Respect Party, thought to offer a real Left alternative but ultimately gaining its viability from the scale of Muslims living in the borough.

It is fair to say that across the two boroughs, these religious critics are united in their social conservatism. In Ealing they spent decades inside the Labour Party before defecting and also harboured an agenda that matched the Conservative Party values identified by Solomos and Back (1995). Members of the Christian Peoples Alliance in Newham may share some concerns with the Christians within the Labour Party, namely poverty and the impact of regeneration on local people, but are simply not interested to align with Labour's equality agenda and so have never been inside the Labour camp. Indeed, Alan Craig initially ran as a Conservative Party candidate and is now working for the Christian Right elements of the Conservative Party. The Respect Party councillors ended up being recruited from amongst Muslims within

Labour. Beyond a pre election concern with Iraq and a request to support a motion against the Nikab ban in France, Respect councillors were muted and did little to challenge the shifting ideological ground of the Labour Party, which should have given many Labour Party supporters cause to change their affiliation.

Importantly across both boroughs, electoral politics seems to be a boys game, with women's voices muted and certainly not at the forefront of defections though it is rumoured that critique within the Newham Labour Group comes from Muslim women. However, since Ealing Labour Group is no longer subject to the pressure of one of its ethnic minority vote banks (the SGSSS) and has seen the demise of its other (the IWA), it may yet be reborn and diversify beyond Sikh Jat male dominance. As far as the Ealing Conservative Party is concerned, the continued associations with Thatcherism means they have not as yet been reinvented as an option for ethnic minorities in the borough but they are certainly beginning to get an audience, largely thanks to Right wing Sikh mobilisations.

Chapter 3: Religion Can *Move You*: Exploring the Possibilities

Introduction

This chapter considers the sorts of arguments that are made for engaging religious identities and commitments to create either social action or political change. I have attempted to avoid the now clichéd references to the power of religion and separated this chapter into ontological, affective and aesthetic reflections on the *added value* that is claimed for drawing upon religious beliefs, feelings and forms as a means of making the social and political field intelligible. The first half of the chapter maps out the claims that religious commitment confers obligations to engage with and care for others. The second half hones in on the numerous affective and aesthetic dimensions of religious belief and practice with a view to addressing the claim that these inject energy into interactions and therefore carry the capacity to convert feelings and interests into significant forces for change.

Heaven on Earth: Living out a Faithful Life

A number of interviewees cited religious tenets with the potential to direct believers towards active participation in civil society, political activity and charitable welfare provision. Some noted the possibility for these injunctions to align across religions and also across religious and secular formations in order to fulfil the same objectives. In particular, these included respect, dignity, a common humanity, (economic and social) justice and love. Some of the 'religious' interviewees and advocates of faith based mobilisations claimed that religious belief encourages a qualitatively better interaction between people and also has the potential to improve interventions on social or political issues. This first section considers some of these ontological arguments.

Being Jesus, being human

Faith providers talked a lot about cohesion by asserting that religion is as much about

forging relations with others as it is about one's relationship to a higher being. Revd Canon Ann Easter, the Chief Executive Officer of The Renewal Programme in Newham, stated:

Jesus said 'when I am lifted up, I will lift all people to myself'.

[Revd Canon Ann Easter, The Renewal Programme, 4/11/10]

This quote epitomises the sociality of religious discourse; it can place an obligation on people not only to look inwards at themselves but can also implicate their personal development (or 'personal walk' as Ealing based Suzanne Fernandes referred to it) with the problems facing their fellow human beings. As such, Revd Canon Ann Easter suggested that working in the voluntary or community sector appeals to people of faith for the simple fact that 'all the major faiths are founded on principles of justice and mercy and love and respect for your neighbours'.

Two heads of Catholic schools, one in Newham and one in Ealing, also lay claim to religious belief enabling a more caring, nurturing and loving environment for their students as well as a strong sense of community, identity and respect (both as self-respect and as respectful engagement with others). The Ealing head teacher argued that his school was motivated by a desire to 'create heaven on earth' and was striving towards this by invoking the principles of charity, a sense of self sacrifice, forgiveness, justice and compassion in everyday life.

In addition to the quality of academic support at their schools, they also argued that the parents and teachers valued the ethos and the distinctive environment defined by religious belief. For instance, both Heads explained that students would commune at mass and pray at assembly every morning but also at the beginning of each class. Both asserted that prayer time as well as religious paraphernalia around the school, including Bible points and images of Catholic saints, provided important sources of reflection, calm, meditation and focus. The lives of saints could be an inspiration for the students and inhere a sense of social responsibility towards their fellow human

beings. Of note, however, praying not only required the students to focus on what they would like to achieve (producing aspirational subjects), it also called upon a higher being to affect the outcome. As such it continued to defy other references to choice and agency by invoking some sense of fatalism and displacement.

Nevertheless, for both head teachers it was their Christian beliefs that inspired them and enabled affirmative support for the more vulnerable students at their schools. For instance, the Ealing head teacher argued that a wider conception of justice, motivated by understanding and forgiveness rather than punishment, involved finding solutions that benefit and improve the individual student's circumstances rather than perpetuate their negative conditions and experiences. It also involved seeing students as individuals rather than as objectified categories (of support needs or as an ethnic group) or as a statistic. He proposed different arrangements rather than uniformly same arrangements to ensure equality of access and opportunity and referred to this as a *moral* approach to justice because it is not defined by what is *fair* but rather by what is *right*. Universality was punctured by exception, not exception as imperialist arrogance but rather as defence of the underdog and protection for the vulnerable. The Ealing teacher provided the following example:

By that I mean that all these nice ideas of equality and treating people so they can be as good as they can be is being instilled in us forever. It's not, it's absolutely fair, it's absolutely just that the girl in Reception should get extra support, it's absolutely just and right that the child who is going through a horrible time at home gets treated differently when he thumps Fred than when matey who's just a spoilt little person who wants his own way gets treated when he hits Fred. Justice isn't about treating everybody the same. You've got to understand where they're coming from. Are we here to help or are we here to serve? To serve again is to understand why you're doing it; it's all about motivation. Service is freely given because it's your duty to do it, not just helping to get a house point or helping because it will look good on your Ofsted form.

[Catholic school head teacher, 2/10/09]

This assertion was framed by his reflections on the balance between 'solidarity' and 'subsidiarity'; Catholic schools espouse homogeneous principles based on the gospel values but this is simultaneously tempered to individual need and context. It's a balance between 'the message' and 'the delivery' where the message is irrevocably uniform and universal but its implementation is particular. Moreover, as he pointed out in his reference to Vatican II, the delivery takes account of the local, the circumstantial and the vernacular. Indeed it is in the space between solidarity and subsidiarity that a potential continuity between secular humanist interventions in the Third Sector and religious humanist ones become possible. However, it is notable that when it comes to personal, social and health education at the school, that same discourse of subsidiarity does not enable the accommodation of divergent life choices. Whilst there is a general recognition of the complex choices that people make, strong heterosexual marriage and family values are emphasised as the ideal model towards which pupils should strive.

Revd Canon Ann Easter also talked of how religious belief shaped her approach to the world. Indeed she inferred that it provides added value not only to the individual's worldview but also to the quality of human interactions. She stated:

I'm quite a practical person and I like to know what difference it makes. When I walk my dog first thing in the morning at our local park, does my being a Christian make any difference to the people I talk to and what I'd do if I found someone in floods of tears or fallen over or, you know? ... (And) Oh yes, very much yes. My faith is central to my life, absolutely. So I try to do everything that I do in a way that would be proper to my faith and would make god smile rather than frown.

[Revd Canon Ann Easter, The Renewal Programme, 4/11/10]

This sense of living one's life in a way that 'makes god smile rather than frown' by helping others was reinforced by Mizan Raja of Islamic Circles who saw his purpose as 'to seek the pleasure of god' by 'living a god conscious lifestyle' which in real terms involved foregoing financial accumulation to invest in charitable community work. However, whilst Mizan Raja emphasised the need to get Muslims to be active

in mainstream institutions and civil society, he also made clear that 'a god conscious lifestyle' involves living 'in an Islamic paradigm'. At risk of stating the obvious, his sense of what makes god smile is inseparable from his sense of what it means to be a Muslim. However, of particular interest is the regularity of contradiction in emphasising both his godliness and the significance of the temporal. He is critical of Muslims, like the Tablighi Jamaat, for their withdrawal from political life and also those that focus their energies on establishing an Islamic state. He even argued that around ninety per cent of Shariah is contested and open to interpretation. Yet he actively lobbies mainstream educational institutions through his work as a parent governor and member of the Muslim Governors Association for something that he believes can be circumscribed as 'Muslim needs' and 'Muslim values'. Central to these are strong views on marriage, sexual orientation and sexuality. This is one way in which 'solidarity' or rather 'uniformity' (a desire to fix and stipulate what it is to be Muslim, or a god conscious Christian or one of the many subdivisions of either) articulates with 'subsidiarity', the localised, contested or pragmatic interpretations of that religion. At its heart is a prescriptive notion of the *right way* to live; the conditions that are set on the articulation of religious commitments against the multiple possibilities of religion as lived socio-political reality.

Often for the Christian interviewees, demonstrating their faith involved communal activities inspired by the belief that they are connected to others and to god through the spirit of Christ. For instance the Ealing Catholic school head teacher emphasised the importance of Mass and the belief that the body of Christ is passed to the individual through the consumption of bread and wine at mass. Similarly, the Newham based Catholic head teacher talked about how letting the spirit enter you enables a humanist connection with others. Everyone could be sacred because everyone has the potential to embody the spirit of Jesus. Christ's spirit could exist within the students at the school, within the Catholic teachers and other Catholic believers. As such this is a powerful metaphysical path through which to inhere a simultaneous sense of individual responsibility and of common humanity. Conversely, the belief that Jesus' spirit lives within you or within someone else could be an unassailable source of power as well as a frightening concept for a child,

especially when attached to proscriptions.

I want to note that religious interviewees talked about the metaphysical interventions in their everyday lives as motivating forces for action and interaction rather than withdrawal or exclusion. The Catholic school head teachers emphasised the existential dimension of religious belief put aptly by Paul Halliwell's assertion that 'faith is something that when you have it, you are not afraid to show its value to the rest of the world for you'. He emphasised the potential positive effects of religion on the individual:

I firmly believe that faith when it impacts on somebody's life can assist them to become the person that they need to be, the best possible person that they can be. It causes them to be more outward looking rather than inward looking.

[Paul Halliwell, Headteacher of St Bonaventure's Catholic Secondary School, 28/09/10]

Similarly, Balwant Singh Gill, one of the founders of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Southall, explained that he hadn't always believed, he was raised in Singapore and even used the term 'playboy' to describe his lifestyle there. However, he 'got' religion in England and described this be-getting as at first entirely circumstantial then a gradual but forceful draw that eventually transformed the structure and character of his life. In a sense he was putting religious affiliation beyond the scope of rational explanation, as a hidden hand that has material repercussions. This stands juxtaposed against Dilbagh Chana's description of his faith as inherited knowledge, as a source of philosophical reflection and his public religious identification as a political decision in the face of anti Sikh racism.

The more pertinent concern for this thesis is not the strength of Balwant Singh Gill's belief *per se* but rather what, if anything, it did for a man that was already politically and socially active in his local area. As someone that had a strong oral and written command of the English language, he had assumed the position of advisor and

'leader' at an early stage in his arrival in Britain and described helping those around him to access information and write letters. When he arrived he instinctively got involved in trade union and anti racist struggles. After be-getting religion, he centred his energies on building a gurdwara and consolidating Jat Sikh identity in the area. Not only did he describe getting religion as some kind of necessary corrective measure to his former life, his new focus appeared to have had the effect of narrowing his sense of the social world.

Anti capital and anti state

Whichever way 'religious' interviewees talked about converting their faithful lives into social action or political commitment, these were often positioned against the stifling or unaccountable bureaucracy of the state (or the political party) on the one hand and the commodification of individuals and social relationships by market philosophy on the other. In a sense both market and bureaucracy were depicted as causes of *de-humanisation*. An alternative relationality was usually proffered. It was claimed that a life shaped by religious belief could empower people to construct a world that either exists outside of these ways of ordering or provide a counter balance to these forces. For instance by reigning in the harsher tendencies of capitalism and safeguarding a Living Wage.

There were continuities between the focus on the individual discussed by the Ealing head teacher in the previous subsection and the person centred approach outlined by Revd Canon Ann Easter. Easter's person-centred approach was thought to fit well with her Christian commitments because of its ambition to enhance 'human flourishing' and potential. In this instance, Easter argued that it posed a contrast to both the state model and the business model:

What I would hope, I think whatever group it was, a faith group would offer a very person centred service. I did the MBA with people from the public sector and the private sector and we were doing critical path analysis and so on and so forth and in a particular group where we were grouped one private one public one voluntary sector and of course the public person 'well the rules, the rules, the rules say this and

we must have that, we can't do this and we can't do that' because they are governed by statute. The private sector person said 'wait a minute we can do this more cheaply, we ought to go blah, blah, blah'. What I said was 'when does this person want this service?' So apart from anything else, I think they will be very person centred. As opposed to profit or statute... I mean statute doesn't glorify itself by being person centred does it, quite the opposite. What people feel like when they go to the NHS, or the police or the local authority is 'I'm just a number' whereas what they'll feel if they come to almost any, well certainly all the voluntary sector places I know, they would be a person.

[Revd Canon Ann Easter, The Renewal Programme, 4/11/10]

Of note though, Easter spoke of individuals within the context of the common language and purpose of the Third Sector (including faith, community and voluntary organisations) with needs assessment, inclusivity and a person-centred approach as pivotal building blocks. Conversely, the Ealing head teacher projected this focus on the individual as a distinguishing marker of faith-based services and an important way in which religion counteracts the shortcomings of other public/social welfare services.

This search for a new way between bureaucracy and capitalism, between statism and neo liberalism, between an equally undemocratic command philosophy and unaccountable market philosophy, has formed the thrust and ironically become the most 'marketable' dimension of commentaries advocating a strong role for faith based mobilisations within civil society (see for instance Glasman, 2008 and 2011; and Bretherton, 2010). However, a critique of material wealth or accumulation and profit is not part of the ethos of every religious institution in the two boroughs. At both the growing African evangelical church, Glory House, in Plaistow and the Sri Guru Singh Sabha gurdwaras in Southall, there is a great deal of focus on displays of material wealth including donations and individual accumulation. Wealth is seen as a reflection of god's positive intervention and donations are considered a form of gratitude for that intervention. At both sites, announcements about individual donations are made from the podium during services, often in front of hundreds of

people. As such, these donations become social statements carrying normative implications by providing the donors with social currency and prestige but also place a moral pressure on others to demonstrate their faith in financial terms. Moreover, both organisations would make reluctant critics of the state or businesses. They are heavily invested in relations with local authority departments and politicians and also gain a lot of financial support from ethnic minority businessmen.

Indeed, the potent combination of religious organisations as financial plus symbolic capital (particularly in the form of sacred dress) is often overlooked because of a tendency to characterise religious groups as having different, notably otherworldly, interests. However, it is *also* their financial worth that recently enabled the Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia in USA to mobilise their assets (estimated at £13bn) as a means of gaining leverage for a campaign demanding a Living Wage for every worker of the FTSE 100.⁹¹ Indeed, in making the point that religious groups potentially have great power, the Revd Dr Colin Marchant estimated the cumulative value of church assets along the Barking Road in Newham to be in the region of £40 million.⁹²

Man vs. God: competing or complimentary authorities?

The Renewal Programme is working firmly within 'man made' systems, it has charitable status and inputs into the development of local social policy and meeting local needs. It has also been involved in local 'justice' and accountability campaigns including the otherwise unpopular campaign to defend two Muslim brothers in Forest Gate subjected to an anti terror raid in June 2006.⁹³ It is still a faith-based organisation, its CEO represents the 'faith sector' on the Local Strategic Partnership,

⁹¹ *FTSE firms must pay living wage, says 'shareholder nun'* by Mark Leftly dated Sunday 1/05/11 published by The Independent and available at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/ftse-firms-must-pay-living-wage-says-shareholder-nun-2277277.html>

⁹² Field notes on the public meeting 'Eastern European worship in Newham' dated 10/05/11.

but its practice is increasingly secular. Moreover, Easter defines herself and the organisation as liberal and explains this as follows:

Christianity is a continuum; we are very much at the liberal end of Christianity, the liberal Catholic with a small 'c'. So we would want to say that we are here for everybody, we do not proselytise, we do not, I mean I have had people occasionally who have wanted to make donations but only if it will be given, well not if it's given to homosexuals or Muslims. And I've said 'sorry, we don't do it like that. If a person is homeless, they are homeless regardless of whether they are gay, Muslim, woman, male, disabled, whatever.' I think that is our stance, we are open to everybody, we are inclusive. So the other end of the Christian spectrum would be the fundamentalist sort of way that would regard the Bible as literal truths and we are not like that.

[Revd Canon Ann Easter, The Renewal Programme, 4/11/10]

Conversely, whilst both Catholic head teachers emphasised the ability of believers of different religious backgrounds to establish relationships on the basis of common values, they also emphasised the tension between secular and religious values. Indeed it was not uncommon for the word 'secular' to be associated with consumerism, commodification and hyper-sexualisation. Even the socially liberal ex President of the Ramgharia Gurdwara in Southall, Dilbagh Chana, who is opposed to faith based services, refused to use the term 'secular' because of its association with an intolerance of religious identities, and rigid, unreasonable, even aggressive, political movements. He depicted his own orientation to the political as open, empathetic and part of a deliberative, consensus building form of democratic participation. For him this did not need to be religious or faith based but he would not utilise the word 'secular'.

Mizan Raja of the group Islamic Circles also portrayed his religious political identity

⁹³ The Forest Gate Raids are discussed in Chapter 5. Here I want to note that both Asad Rehman and Kevin Blowe pointed to the difficulties in engaging non-Muslim groups in Newham for this campaign.

as 'alternative' and 'counter hegemonic', as providing the framework for a better kind of relationality. He defined himself as a primordial, conservative, traditional, Sufi Muslim. He fleshed this out through a critique of modernity and its offspring, feminism and secularism. His alternative vision seemed to be distinguished by the Arabic word 'fitra' which he claimed could loosely be equated with living according to a 'natural disposition'. However, the notion of 'natural disposition' marks the frontier of religious fundamentalism; it is buoyed up by authenticating claims about nature and the corruptions of culture and resurfaces especially when there are questions about sexuality, reproduction and gender roles. It also resonates with the most conservative versions of Catholicism such as expressed by Joseph Ratzinger, the current Pope Benedict XVI. Ironically, Mizan Raja's multiple organisations of primordial political persuasion also rely heavily on (modern) technology to perpetuate their message.

In spite of its football club, its youth activities, its links with local politicians and the promulgation of a general aspirational and law abiding cultural code for its members, Glory House has a strong critique of 'man made systems' including of medical practice and recourse to the law. They encourage self-improvement through the act of prayer, evangelism and church donations which, in and of themselves, are expected to attract positive divine intervention. They actively posit flawed man-made systems against the purity and desirability of god's word.

It is really important to be clear that this is not a discourse of inaction or of the futility of existence. It places a responsibility on people to ensure that they are worthy of god's praise. Indeed the pressure on action is immense and a critique of complacency is endemic. Pastor Albert Odulele's sermons emphasise the need for the congregation to move themselves from mediocrity to significance, from a position of ignorance or delusion to one of realising their position 'of greatness' as the 'sons of the saviours'. During services, the congregation are even encouraged to turn to the person sitting next to them and shout the word *move*, urging their neighbour to fulfil their spiritual duty to evolve towards election. Their lives are purposeful and directed

but specifically towards fulfilling a spiritual mission. The role of the church is to assist people to release their greatness. The spirit of Jesus is also emphasised here and the congregation are told that as messengers of god they are endowed with great powers. Agency in this context is the strength to fight off the devil and the bravery to retain religious belief in the face of adversity.

This is a very different way of living out religious belief that poses a strong contrast to the above examples. The social dimension of this religious practice still means that large numbers of people commune; Glory House sees thousands upon thousands of people at four different services every Sunday and people are welcomed in by gracious volunteers. They also host a number of events during the week including a women's group (Help a Sister), study groups and a football club, all intended to build networks and relations between parishioners. However, communing at any of these places can be an act in and of itself and does not necessarily mean that they engage with issues outside of assertions about the strength of their belief. Other Christian evangelists have asserted their beliefs in the face of adversity by launching legal challenges against employers to gain exemption from equalities duties⁹⁴ but Glory House expressly encourages people not to rely on 'man made systems' such as legal redress if they face problems including harassment or victimisation at work. Instead the Pastor Albert Odulele encourages prayer to strengthen one's relationship with god. This is expected to bring salvation in the form of god's positive intervention in your life. Such positive intervention is not just about the afterlife, it is expected in the here and now but one's agency in affecting that outcome, one's orientation is directed towards prayer, service and financial donation to the Church.

Importantly, Pastor Albert Odulele was recently convicted of two counts of sexual assault, one on a man and another on a boy. Despite the vilification of lawyers and

⁹⁴ The case of Gary Macfarlane is one example of a growing trend. Macfarlane was a relationships counsellor working for the voluntary sector organisation Relate. He failed in his legal bid to gain exemption from counselling same sex couples on the basis of his religious beliefs. See *Christian Sex Therapist Gary Macfarlane Loses Appeal Bid* posted on 29/04/10 on BBC news online and available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bristol/8651417.stm>

legal systems in his sermons, he did attend a court of law. He also showed some recognition of the jurisdiction of that law by pleading guilty to both charges; he argued that these acts were committed during his personal struggle with his sexuality. He is still listed as the Glory House Pastor even though he is currently serving an eight-month prison sentence. Whilst feminists working on violence and abuse would view sexual assault as an act of power, Pastor Odulele's sermons have depicted such incidents as struggles with temptation and the devil. The metaphysical context, both god and the devil, are ever present. Life's events, even mundane everyday events, are presented as forms of either devil temptation or divine intervention. The Glory House website's homepage refers directly to this episode but calls upon parishioners to pray for *both* the Pastor and his victims. This response is in line with a notion of Glory House as 'one family', of such incidents as sin, of penance and self-reflection. Like other newly established African evangelical churches around London, Glory House is a family run business but the warmth of its volunteers (referred to as Leaders) does not extend to open discussion about the organisation and its practices. I was not able to get an interview with the Pastor or those involved with the Glory House women's group, Help a Sister. This tendency to close ranks is even starker amongst other African evangelical groups in Newham and neighbouring boroughs. Whilst visiting one service in south Newham, of Christ's Embassy, I was welcomed into the space by friendly parishioners excited to spread the word but then escorted off the premises when I attempted to ask questions of church leaders.

Open up the Airwaves and Let Love In

A lot of the ontological precepts for religion in social and political action discussed above are also affective dispositions. As orientations towards the world, they are also constituted by emotions, particularly by love and hope. Indeed affect and aesthetics are no foreigners to social and political action. There has been a long exploration of what can be termed 'negative' feelings, their validation and their formative or constitutive role in anti racist and feminist political subjectivities. Cornel West's (in Taylor 2009) critical disposition for instance starts from what he refers to as 'the raw, funky, stanky stuff of life'. He locates his philosophical inquiry through a mesmerising analogy between critical dissonance, his musical preference and a life

that starts with catastrophe, eloquently summarised in his description of himself as 'a blues man' interested in 'the blue note':

The blues is personal catastrophe lyrically expressed and for black people in the modern world, given these vicious legacies of white supremacy, it is how do you generate an elegance of earned self-togetherness so that you have a stick-to-it-ness in the face of the catastrophic and the calamitous and the horrendous and the monstrous?

(West, in Taylor 2009)

For West, as for other critical 'race' theorists, solidarity, compassion and political engagement are borne of pain and problems. Similarly, Sara Ahmed (2010) seeks the validation of 'negative' feelings including pain, hate, fear, shame and disgust as foundational bases for thinking and speaking out about racism and sexism. These 'negative' dispositions have been driving forces for anti racist and feminist activism. In a sense that is also my overarching framework, to bring 'the funk' back into a consideration of religion in local politics, placing the critiques and problems at the centre of the analysis. However, I want to acknowledge that my interviewees were making other kinds of claims and consider these through an empathetic but also critical lens.

From sorrow to joy

Contrary to West's 'catastrophe' (2009), Gilroy's 'melancholia' (2004) and Ahmed's angry 'killjoy' (2010), a significant number of the 'religious' interviewees for this thesis started with the emotion 'love' as the driving force for their engagement with the world. In spite of the multiple theological parables about torture, ostracisation and injustice, such as the sorrow and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the transformative qualities of their 'love' was not tied to painful reconfiguration but rather depicted as a love bathing in optimism, permeating hope, endurance and affirmation. On occasion I was entirely mesmerised by these serene expressions of how faith informs their interactions with others and the many ways in which they had gained from spirituality in their lives.

As already noted above, love and individual attention are positioned against the bureaucratic numbers game with the latter depicted as effacing individual need and potential. When talking of the distinctive ethos of his school, Paul Halliwell put this down to 'a feeling' whilst the Ealing head teacher emphasised depth of feeling. Halliwell formulated this as an ethics of care:

The simple tenet of Christianity and I believe goes right the way through the nature of all the other religions as well is caring for each other in the way that we would like people to care for us in times of our need. So what we are trying to do at St Bons is to create an atmosphere of love, nurture and protection. Everybody in the school is responsible for looking after everybody else from the very smallest boy in year 7 right to the more experienced member in the school. Everybody needs to look out for and care for each other. So we don't want to see boys who are bullying each other, we don't want to see boys who are upsetting each other, we don't want to see anybody walk past a child who is injured without intervening and making sure that they are the people that can help them instead of just expecting somebody else to do it.

[Paul Halliwell, St Bonaventure's Catholic School, 28/09/10]

Similarly, over in Ealing, Balwant Singh Gill appeared to describe his experience of finding god as akin to falling in love. He stated: 'it's the grace of god, he pulls you towards him. It's like when you meet a person, you start to like him, you start seeing things in him'. He claimed that this draw to a greater engagement with Sikhism was powerful enough to entirely recast his life.

Moreover, the Head of a Catholic school in west London made a point of knowing each of the students' names in turn breeding a kind of familiarity within the school. During a two-part interview with him, I noted students turning up at his door without appointment or any kind of formal arrangement and talking to him as they would a friend, breaking with rigid hierarchy and nurturing a sense of camaraderie. He put this down to following the gospel values, which in his view also provide a great deal

more than happiness; they chart a path to joy as well as a sense of sacrifice and compassion. All these feelings were characterised as having greater depth. Compassion for instance was described as *more than* the act of being nice. This is put best in his own words:

(S)o all schools seek to be *nice*, we seek to be *compassionate*. All schools seek to be *kind*, we look to make *sacrifice* in order to go beyond that... It means it's not enough just to be kind; you should put yourself out to go that further mile, to walk another mile in the person's shoes, that it's right to go further than would be expected, not just nice. All schools seek to be *fair* but we're looking for *justice*, a deeper sense of justice.

[Catholic school head teacher, 2/10/09]

Alongside depth, he talked of longevity; he claimed Catholicism provides longer lasting feelings. In particular he compared happiness with joy where the former involves succumbing to immediate gratification, such as giving in to a child's tantrum, whilst the latter provides greater meaning and lasting pleasure that goes beyond the accumulation of material possessions. This binary positioning of shallow and deeper feelings, of immediate and deferred gratification, between that which is temporary and fleeting and that which is durable and lasting, offers an easy analogy with the contrast between fickle consumerism and the potential for a more meaningful life based on other values. Moreover, depth of feeling is necessarily antithetical to apathy and presumably leads to action of some variety or other. The point is precisely that it *moves* you. Leaving aside the empirical and ideological problems with claims about the extent of political apathy and social breakdown for a moment, it is unsurprising in this context that supporters of faith based mobilisations position them as strong antidotes to political apathy and disaffection.

Interestingly, both Paul Halliwell and Mizan Raja pointed to the restricted use of key concepts in the current moment. For Halliwell it was the free use of the word 'love'. He saw this as indicative of its loss of value, particularly in terms of people's ability to cherish particular relationships:

The word that's obviously used and people in a secular society don't feel comfortable using it all the time, is 'love'. I believe that religion gives you a framework for loving everybody. Now within English we only have the one term love and it has many, many different understandings, many, many different uses. Lots of other languages have lots of different loves. If I say I love Macdonalds that means something completely different to I love my wife, which means something completely different from I love my job. We all understand what we mean by that. So everybody has this misunderstanding of the concept of love. Being a Christian I can be quite open about the fact that I love the boys I work with, I love the community I work within. I love the job that I do because I love the contact that I have with the people and hopefully when people have been with me I am not just doing a job for the job's sake I'm doing it because there is a demand, there is a need for people to be spiritual role models within society.

[Paul Halliwell, St Bonaventure's Catholic School, 28/09/10]

Whilst Halliwell critiqued the inability of a secular reading of the English language to provide a fixed understanding of 'love', Mizan Raja berated the limitations of the English language *because* of its fixedness and therefore inability to convey what he claimed are the nuances and multiple possibilities of the Arabic word 'fitra'.

A life without music

In some way, both Halliwell and Raja implied an absence of poetry, colour and texture and aligned this with an absence of religion, making the two things synonymous. Although Revd Canon Ann Easter's descriptions of her faith and her organisation were no way making the same strong distinctions between the religious and the secular, when asked whether the term 'secular' meant anything to her, she appeared to suggest something similar to the above:

It's a word, you know. I think it's a, it's a very grey word and it represents about the same as a life without music, would be a life without faith or belief, of some sort, not necessarily Christianity, but just some sort. And the trouble is that people think they can do fine and then life hits them between the eyes and they lose a baby or a parent dies or they become disabled and suddenly they need a tapestry on which to put their

experience and very often particularly to do with birth and death, because you are in touch with eternal life, you know what happens when I die, it will be to do with a faith of some sort... I mean that's what happens to us. We are people and I think we have a sort of tripod of our foundation which is our physical, our mental and our emotional/spiritual and if one of those legs is missing, well we'll fall over... if you know about love then you know about, that's spiritual, you can't touch it, you can't find it, you know.

[Revd Canon Ann Easter, The Renewal Programme, 4/11/10]

Secularism was depicted as bland rather than as making vibrant multiculturalism and plural religious expression possible. It was characterised as a life without music and meaning. Moreover, spirituality was presented as synonymous with emotion, as the same branch of our being.

When asked about the ways in which religion can or has been a problem, particularly the possibility that it might bear closer analogy with enraged din than soothing melody, Easter argued that the positive effects of the emotional connection with the spiritual world have been usurped by the impact of patriarchy. For her, patriarchy was the primary cause of bad manifestations of religion:

(A)ll the wars that are being caused by religion, I would give you one word, men. It's as easy as that. And I believe that men, have you read a book called, by Rosalind Miles... it's called 'A Women's History of the World' and it will make you sick when you find out what people have done to women over the years, it is horrible. It's bad enough now that they have to have their faces covered up, which I think is appalling... I believe that men use the tenets of faith to subdue and oppress women and other men too. I mean slavery. Who, um I heard on the radio this morning, I can't remember who it was, who said 'as a child I read about slavery in the Bible' because of course it's not condemned in the Bible. Oh Mark Twain, it was Mark Twain. 'I read about slavery in the Bible and I considered that perfectly in order'. So it's not just women that men have oppressed and told this is god's will, it's other men aswell, Black people, homosexuals, gypsies. Anybody who is different from them... Anyhow, Rosalind Miles' thing was that men saw this person who bled every month

and didn't die, who filled up, a person came out, made other people, and thought that is so fucking powerful, I've got to contain it and I think that still rings bells now.

[Revd Canon Ann Easter, The Renewal Programme, 28/09/10]

Whilst much of what she said drew out the possibilities of spirituality and faith versus the way this can be changed, there are surprising continuities with the patriarchal and conservative contributions of interviewees for the simple fact that they all maintain a pure and infallible state for god and religion. This purity is corrupted by the fallibilities of man, and indeed for Easter, this is man in its most literal sense. As such she potentially relies on the same epistemological distinction between virtuous belief and problematic cultural practice that has been used in different contexts to justify a literal return to religious texts. Taken together with her claim to the proximate relation of emotion and spirituality, women presumably carry the potential to be more religious, more devout and closer to god than men. This is affirmed by Easter's statement that women are 'more emotional creatures aren't we so I think because spirituality is linked with emotion I think often all women are the keepers of the faith'.

Nevertheless, her depiction of religion as music and tapestry bears some truth in the dynamism of the events organised by the faith based political alliance, Citizens UK, where music and liturgy are used to enhance engagement. One of the most notable experiences is the effect on the auditory and visual senses and the implications this has for emotional investment and attachment. There is an interchangeable use of visual and aural 'props' including mood enhancing music and song, film footage and oral testimony. I would like to argue that each of these 'props' is intended to tap and open up emotional pathways and breed concern, communal feelings of human connectedness and uplifting feelings of positivity and possibility.

Echoes of celebratory, carnival style uplifting beats can be heard as one enters the events. This is welcoming but also happy music that opens the mind and body to

possibility and solidarity with others. Coupled with the use of testimony, the use of music during the main part of the meetings can move you through other feelings. As with songs such as, 'Under Pressure', performed by a faith based school choir to introduce agenda items that highlight the concerns of young people struggling with inner city life, performed at the TELCO 12th Anniversary Assembly (12/11/08), music can also induce more intense, reflective, philosophical moods concerned with human suffering. However, the Citizens UK meetings always end on an uplifting note and music is as much a part of this as the concluding statement by the Chair. The song 'People Get Ready', for instance, used at the end of the West London Citizens First Anniversary Assembly (4/10/06), is anticipatory, but also triumphant, giving a sense of determination and focus.

Also central to the Citizens UK events is the use of testimony. It is positioned as a way for the audience to 'bear witness' and to connect with real examples of human suffering. Importantly these testimonies are oriented towards rectitude; they are always linked to possible demands, to a collective responsibility and to the view that things will improve. The power of the testimonies to evoke a range of emotions - empathy, concern, shock, deep admiration for the individual and the human condition in general - and embed concerns within the minds of power brokers was clearly demonstrated at the 2008 Mayoral Assembly where Ken Livingstone was reported to have wept whilst listening to the testimonies of knife crime victims and their families.⁹⁵

The use of testimony is not new - the process of making the personal individual experience part of a political analysis or event has long since been common practice for anti- racists and feminists within both Newham and Ealing. However, in this instance, the atmosphere is markedly different. Rather than joining a seated panel of speakers, the testifier usually stands up on stage in something that resembles a pulpit and narrates his/her particular experience. The stories might be about hardship but

⁹⁵ A collection of press clippings for the 2008 Mayoral Assembly are available on the London Citizens website <http://www.londoncitizens.org.uk/pages/press.html>

are *never about despair*. They are examples of *overcoming* rather than just examples of injustice. They exude a different kind of mood, triumphant and almost euphoric. These heart-rending narratives are bolstered by oral and visual reminders of actual change and previous successes. This introduces a sense of 'salvation' (in the immediate, on earth, as opposed to in the afterlife) as the testifier talks of the change to his or her life as a result of either getting directly involved with a Citizens UK Chapter or as a result of their interventions.

Several writers have commented on the *ascendant* nature of certain affective dispositions such as 'hope' delivered in various ways including through music and song. Moreover, these features, even if utilised within secular political contexts, are thought to derive their significance and 'ascendant' qualities from theological or mystical frameworks. On the question of 'hope', Desroche (1979) has pointed out that it is a 'theological virtue' that stems from Christian Millenarianism and was transported for use by utopian socialist movements. Similarly, the feminist theologian Catherine Pickstock (2008) noted the diagonal characteristics of Deleuze's discussion of music where ascendant note formation enables movement beyond the present, into the mystical realm, creating space for a kind of *going beyond*. For Lisa Blackman (2009) affective dispositions such as 'hope' enable moments where the body can move beyond itself. These are, she argues 'can do moments' that potentially espouse a 'politics of invention' whilst for Les Back (2009) the application of 'hope' paves the way for indeterminacy and what he refers to as 'counter-intuitive moments' that have the potential to effect change. All of them speak of a certain energy, an outward facing energy that carries with it a transformative potential.

Conversely, Miller and Strongman (2002) warned of the possibility that music can lead to dissociation because it places the individual on a gradient from the temporal to the metaphysical. Whether the rhythm takes you up to the metaphysical or brings you down and holds you in the temporal is dependent upon the notes and pace deployed. However, whilst dissociation may be an objective for some religious services (Pentecostalism and Sufism for instance), this is not an objective for

Citizens UK where music is used well to orient people towards action. They aim to make religious conviction relevant in the here and now rather than induce trance-like, out of body or meditative states. Nor is music used to induce extreme or even significant body movement as at some religious gatherings. This is in line with the fact that 'respectability', and all of its bodily connotations, are a structuring feature of the Citizens UK politics.

Liturgy as form

Although not the main focus of any of the numerous accounts of the organisation, the aesthetic dimensions of the Citizens UK public events are interesting as physical manifestations of its political imaginary. All the structuring principles of the organisation are clearly in view: membership participation; the focus on numbers and turn out; tempo; respectability; and an anti individualist pro communitarian sense of belonging that reifies groups, relationships, affiliations and association.

The events are highly stylised performances. They have a certain aesthetic quality that not only makes them alluring but also highly productive modes of organising. Firstly, the pressure on numbers compels member groups to mobilise, to see through their pledges and no doubt contributes to the scale of the events. Secondly, the presence of a time keeper alongside direct public questioning by seemingly 'everyday' people compels politicians and other dignitaries to avoid rhetorical speeches and provide concise responses within short periods of time as well as to commit themselves to clear outcomes. The events are almost always filmed and any verbal undertakings are played back to "power brokers" at subsequent public meetings as a way of holding them to account. Thirdly, the use of music and testimony arouses empathy but also instils hope thereby enabling a stronger affective engagement and indeed individual commitment to the alliance and its work. Indeed, the atmosphere at these events is often nothing short of euphoric. Two forms of tempo - music and timekeeping - are used to good effect to create a celebratory and uplifting mood on the one hand and to impose the immediacy of time limited answers upon politicians, enforcing its pragmatic politics, on the other.

There are a number of additional tools that, in the words of Catherine Howarth, enable the organisation to 'be taken seriously' and as such constitute parts of a performance during which large numbers of people are seen to be holding the powerful to account. There is a high level of discipline to these events in terms of the provision of agendas, organised seating, corporate logos and surprising levels of punctuality for public meetings. Moreover, the layout is often striking. On entering the room at Acton Town Hall for the West London Citizens first anniversary assembly, for instance, it was the vast number of people, the assortment of colours and then these end-of-row flags that stood out. The combination of this visual stimuli and the background music gave the meeting a cosmopolitan fiesta feel. On closer inspection, I realised that the end-of-row flags were placards bearing the names of various membership organisations. This seemed akin to the parish banners that might make up a Catholic saints parade. A kind of physical manifestation of the solidarity/subsidiarity principle, member groups as parts of the whole, but surely also a means of placing a physical burden on them to turn out their members by having to stipulate in advance the number of seats they require. Importantly, this way of arranging the meeting space very much reflects the Citizens UK organising principle that recognises people in relation to their associations, as members of groups and congregations, and not as individuals. Other than the organisers and the occasional research student, there is no arrangement for individuals to either join the organisation or be seated at its events.

The Citizens UK gatherings tend to be immense and vibrant. Though not always the case (as in the comparatively nominal attendance and rather sterile atmosphere of the pre-elections hustings organised by West London Citizens in 2010), Citizens UK gatherings have continued to grow rather than show any sign of losing momentum or subsiding. Part of this must be to do with what Teresa Brennan referred to as 'the catchiness of emotion' (as summarised by Gorton, 2007, p.338), that they can be such social, uplifting and enjoyable events. Their academic supporters have expressly referenced them as powerful *images* of democracy in action (Bretherton, 2010; Glasman, 2008; Holgate & Wills, 2007; Jamoul, 2006). The events are usually

chaired and stage-managed by lay people drawn from the membership groups. Both the language and the presence of members on the stage provide a real participatory feel. There are many opportunities for audience interaction between people on the stage and those in the rows below. Each anniversary assembly, for instance, begins with a roll call where one or two representatives of each member organisation step onto the stage, introduce themselves and their organisation, state how much they will be paying as 'dues' and also *how* they will be paying. Often these statements are supplemented with a note about why joining Citizens UK is valuable. Usually, the mention of the specific member group is met with applause from the audience below. The repetition of such acts cements a sense of group affiliation to the alliance and breeds a sense of belonging (Bell 1999).

Audience participation at Citizens UK events is high. Membership organisations are also represented on stage in other ways including: undertaking specific roles, such as 'co-chairs' and 'timekeeper'; introducing each agenda item; recounting testimonies; and as musicians. This breeds a sense of shared responsibility for the events and an affinity between the organisation and its members. Clearly this is part of the process of building solidarity and communality; it is part of a performance that does appear to have the effect of breeding identification or a sense of belonging to the alliance.

Moreover, a regular exchange between those on the stage and those in the audience contributes to a heightened energy and optimism. Again a sense of contagion or 'catchiness' is evident. This is best exemplified by the TELCO 12th Anniversary Assembly which took place just days after Barack Obama's election as USA President. The repetitive use of "Yes We Can" at this meeting engaged the audience and pushed a degree of certainty about their ability to directly effect change. However, it was also intended to re-iterate the potential success of this method as uniquely highlighted by the election of Barack Obama. His highly publicised use of the Industrial Areas Foundation mobilising strategy and Saul Alinsky's organising doctrine now links the work of Citizens UK with the President of the USA. It is difficult to imagine a more potent symbol of possibility and the rewards of

persistence.

Form as social control

Importantly, Maurice Bloch's (1989) work provides a note of caution. For Bloch, repetition in speech or in action is a technique of control precisely because it steers people away from the indeterminacy of every day speech and draws them into a context that is predictive, pre-scripted and devoid of argument let alone explanation. For Bloch, repetition is a clear indication of form over content. Whilst it affects content, it does so in a negative sense by closing down the scope for discussion and imposing a prescribed formula. Repetition may be emphasis but it is also the abandonment of argument:

A frozen statement cannot be expanded; it can only be made again and again and again. Repetition reminds us that we are not dealing with an argument, since an argument is a basis for another argument, not the basis for the same argument again.

[Bloch, 1989: 42]

Citizens UK events appear to involve a diverse group of people. However, rather than examples of deliberative democracy in action, these are rigidly structured performances and diversity in such a context means visible difference rather than plurality of views. No one at the Citizens UK events speaks out of turn and their public events are unlike any other public meeting you might attend because even though there are vast numbers of members seated in the audience below, not a single one of them raises their hand to ask a question. Everything appears to be choreographed and pre-determined. Indeed a number of issues, referred to as "wedge issues", are definitely off the table as far as campaigning is concerned. These are issues that are seen as falling within the private realm and also where it is assumed that there cannot be any agreement amongst the membership. In particular, this includes sexuality, gender, violence against women or children, abortion and reproductive rights. Interestingly, the word "moral" is used by community organisers in two different ways - as the need to re-ignite a moral compass that has been lost in the context of capitalism on the one hand and to refer to 'problem areas' such as

discussions about god, sexuality and reproductive rights, as spaces of personal opinion and private preference on the other. I think that it is precisely because they see religious groups as the antidote to capitalism that such an antidote appears to bring with it strong gendered demarcations between the public and private.

Maurice Bloch's (1989) work on religious ritual provides further guidance for thinking about 'the enhancement or effacement of propositional content' in both religious ritual and political speech. He argued that a focus on syntax rather than on individual symbols affords a stronger understanding of the meanings and effects of language and other forms of communication. In particular, whilst some ways of ordering individual units of communication enable an opening up of possibilities, others lead to the shutting down of what he refers to as 'propositional content'. Moreover, it is when propositional content is reduced that traditional authority and social control are strengthened. In Bloch's view, religious ritual as conveyed through formalised speech, intonation and song is particularly partial to closure, social control and the reproduction of traditional authority. Drawing on Bloch's work, I would like to argue that the proximity of 'political meeting' and 'religious ritual', as it manifests through the particular language and format of the Citizens UK events, does two things. It enables a semblance of creativity, vitality and dynamism. Yet these are tempered by other tendencies that shut down possibilities through the use of religious references, the repetitive use of visual imagery and particular phrases, some of the uses of song and the heightened formalisation of the events at both the level of language and the organisation of physical space.

Alongside the highly corporatised appearance of all Citizens UK events - the Assemblies are awash with purple, the London Citizens corporate colour and the May Day rallies have been saturated with standardised orange placards bearing the Strangers into Citizens logo - the use of repetition in language, concepts and visual images also marks techniques of closure, of homogenisation and of imposition rather than undecidability. Whilst these events are vibrant and highly entertaining, they are also highly orchestrated, there is little discussion and even less possibility of a

chance occurrence. The effects of such tendencies were clearly evident during the 4th May 2009 Strangers into Citizens rally at which a number of musicians performed. The order of the musicians, their timing and the focus of their performances provided ample space to contradict the Citizens UK argument that they are holding the British State to account. A band called Asian Dub Foundation provided the most confrontational music and lyrics at the event. They are renowned for their support of some of the more difficult campaigns challenging the criminal justice system such as those around deaths in custody. They are overt supporters of a socialist anti racist politics. However, they performed at the very beginning of the rally, before the bulk of the march reached Trafalgar Square, reducing both the significance of their presence and the impact of their lyrics. Moreover, the tone of their music was a jarring contrast to what followed - a number of inane displays of multicultural conviviality ('Chinese dragons, Mongolian singers, Bengali drummers, Igbo dancers'⁹⁶) and then a Ukrainian folksinger who led a sing-a-long to both 'God Save the Queen' and 'Rule Britannia', clandestinely sealing the audience's commitment to everything that the British State and regency represents. These could be deemed 'counter intuitive moments' (Back 2009) that could not have been predicted at such a rally and where signs and signified are jumbled and reconstituted in new and exciting ways. However, I think it rather enabled the substantive dimensions of its immigration campaign and the alliance's social control function to surface. As the ethnically diverse crowds below, many from embattled countries around the world (where the British state's historical and current involvement has done much to trigger their displacement) craned their heads to make sense of the lyrics on the large plasma screen above, they were co-opted into a conservative politics by their sheer presence. Maurice Bloch's words 'you can not argue with a song' (1989: 42) are particularly pertinent here.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned to acknowledge and understand how religious belief

⁹⁶ As described by the Strangers into Citizens campaign on their website
<http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk/pages/get-involved/rally-4-may.htm>

Last accessed Thursday 11th June 2009.

can enhance the propensity for people to engage in the world around them, particularly how this orients them towards specific concerns. Some of the 'religious' interviewees were effectively describing humanist and social justice concerns and seemed to believe that their religious commitments made them care more, particularly more than the objectifying systems of bureaucracy or neo liberalism. Particular religious tenets were referred to as defining the social and political character of religion. Religious symbols had been mobilised to challenge discrimination and injustice. Notably there were signs of the rolling out of the Citizens UK discourse as one through which the public and political possibilities of religious belief has gained momentum and been carried by local actors.

In this chapter I sought to hone in on the potential positive effects of religion. I have highlighted the sociality of religious discourse, particularly the many ways in which it is claimed as a framework for creating positive change. Interviewees argued that belief in god or in a specific religion could encourage people to be more outward facing and also provide a kind of added value to human relations. Albeit an explanation of the metaphysical, it was alleged to offer humanisation through feeling, a sense of empathy and an ethics of care. This sits comfortably with a humanist emphasis on solidarity and relationality. Several examples were provided where religiosity and humanism flow in the same direction - towards charity and emancipation and the collective improvement of people's lives.

Importantly, these possibilities were contrasted with statism, capitalism and secularism. At the most basic level these frames were critiqued as narratives of rationalisation and objectification. Both the critique of an over bearing command state and of a ruthless neo capitalist market hinged on challenging the objectification of individuals, their subsumption either as numbers or as commodities. Conversely religion was seen to favour difference and the accommodation of individual need. Secularism was depicted as dour, consumerism as fickle and bureaucracy as sterile. Additionally, secularism was associated with a loss of meaning, of colour and of music. These claims are akin to Max Weber's (1919/1946) rationalisation thesis of

which the disenchantment of the modern world is a central element.

Many interviewees appeared to be relying upon or pointing to flawed 'man made' laws on the one hand and pure divinity as actually existing oppositional categories. Yet it seemed difficult to understand how the desires or injunctions of the divine could be rendered other than through fallible humans and human systems especially when very few claimed to adhere to a literal interpretation of any text. Indeed, a number of critical themes emerged that continue throughout this thesis. Not all of the religious organisations referred to in each of the boroughs had any interest in changing the situation for others. Rather for some, religious belief was expressly directed towards gaining a secure place in the afterlife. Also, some people's religious views had narrowed their sense of the social and turned them inwards towards an identity politics pre-occupied with consolidating their belief systems or specific sites of worship.

Many of the ontological assertions about living out religious commitments through social action were also referred to as feelings or rather as depth or longevity of feeling. The positive emotions of 'religious' interviewees potentially provide a stark contrast with the attempts of longstanding anti racist and feminist discourses to validate 'negative' expressions of pain and suffering. A significant number of the 'religious' interviewees started with the emotion 'love' as the driving force for their engagement with the world. Others referred to 'joy' and 'hope'. The Citizens UK events demonstrated that the 'catchiness' of religious emotion combined with music and time management could combine as a highly productive and transformative framework carrying the ability to energise people and push forward political demands. Citizens UK events seemed to make use of a liturgical framework without the 'overt' imposition of belief (though other ways in which religion is imposed through their political work is discussed in Chapter 7). In this context, religion seemed to make available other facets as a mode of organising such as the aesthetic value of religious dress and the way it can be mobilised to sanctify or strengthen political demands.

However, here I want to make a final point that whilst audience participation at Citizens UK events gives the onlooker a sense of participatory democracy in action, on closer examination the use of repetition and corporate identity are instances where form over content effaces real critique and democratic debate. Indeed the form at these events is overwhelming. A number of participants in this study talked about being put off by it. Citizens UK events are highly stylised performances and whilst they may have the desired effect of 'being taken seriously', one will find little if any real debate at the public events, seating is pre-arranged along lines of group affiliation and there isn't any space for questions from the floor. This in itself provides insight into the ways in which religious form can also be a source of control. Indeed, the 'catchiness' of religious emotion or liturgical framework could come with an immense social pressure to demonstrate belonging and trust such as at Glory House where people were pushed to share confidential financial details on slips of paper and those not yet born again were compelled, indeed guilt-tripped, into making themselves known.

Chapter 4: 'Vestigial States': Reviving and Contesting Religious Leaderships

Introduction

Naomi Goldenberg (2010) proposed that a more critical perspective within religious studies and feminist theory might think of religions as 'vestigial states', displaced regimes that continue to operate as 'attenuated forms of governmental authority' (2010: 13-15). In correspondence, Goldenberg suggested that my description of New Labour's 'faith agenda' might be an indication that religions are becoming 'less and less vestigial' and more obviously ongoing 'fictional constructions of nation-states'.⁹⁷ In this chapter, I combine Goldenberg's observation with Foucault's (1981) analysis of the paradoxical pastoral-policing function of the state. Driven by an impulse to bind the individual to society, the state is engaged in a 'death and life game' in which it provides for strong productive individuals, on the one hand, and yet obliges them to sacrifice themselves for their country, on the other (Foucault, 1978: 147). This chapter argues that the interaction between the state and religious organisations is enabled by their shared location within this pastoral-policing frame. There is both concord and conflict on the question of meeting social welfare needs and the desire to police behaviour, boundaries and territories. However, these shared interests diverge or run into conflict when distinct regimes of authority and sovereignty collide.

I begin by identifying a number of 'pathways' linking religious organisations and the state, specifically embodied in the reinvigorated role of religious leaders. The second part of this chapter considers the effects of New Labour's faith agenda on the resurgence of interfaith initiatives and the consolidation of religious leaderships. Focusing on Newham is particularly useful in this regard because 'leaders' are not a feature of Newham Labour Group's framework yet religious leaderships are actively being revived through civil society mobilisations, posing unexpected dilemmas for the local state. These initiatives rely on some of the same problematic tenets of the

⁹⁷ Email correspondence dated 10/04/10.

multiculturalist model of representation including the tendency of Parekh's (2000) 'community of communities' to reproduce intra relations of power. I argue that, when structured through religion rather than 'race', culture or ethnicity, these relations of power induce new systems of 'election'. In particular, shining a spotlight on the re-iterative exclusion of Ahmadiyya Muslims reveals how power can be consolidated as the proliferation and normative acceptance of religious claims *through* interfaith dialogue.

Over the last decade, one of the biggest questions for representation and leadership has undoubtedly been the state's search for Muslim partners. Goldenberg (2010) has argued that Islam poses a particular problem for western nation states because it 'refuses the castration' required for 'vestigial' status and this has led to a struggle to 'domesticate Islam'. The third section of this chapter reflects on that struggle and moves the debate from thinking about religious groups as partners in the state's policing functions to their position as subjects of its surveillance policies.

Pathways Between Religious Groups and the Local State

This first part points to multiple ways in which religious organisations are recognised by the state, especially when they share pastoral and policing functions. As such, this chapter questions the suggestion that secularism is being imposed.

A number of interviewees argued that religion or the voice of religious organisations was being marginalised in their borough. The most vociferous representative of this perspective was Alan Craig, whose Christian People's Alliance party is premised on the claim that there has been a 'corrosive and aggressive secularisation' of the public sphere in Britain. Connected, but different, was the view of Sarah Ruiz, of Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium (NVSC). She argued that in spite of the New Labour zeal of the local Labour Group, it was averse to engaging with religious organisations beyond seeing them as sites of worship. She highlighted the paradox of a growth in the number of religious groups in her borough, their role in supporting local people

and yet their exclusion from spaces of representation and state funding. Of 1400 Third Sector organisations on the 2009 NVSC mailing list, some 570 were religious groups, many of which were engaged in 'social welfare' activities like lunch clubs and support groups.

However, AK Sheikh could name several ways in which the Alliance of Newham Muslim Associations had been liaising with the state, the local police and the local further education college. Revd Canon Ann Easter also stated that she was the faith representative on the board of the Local Strategic Partnership and had been a Faith Advisor to the Mayor. Indeed the following quote from Newham Councillor Neil Wilson highlighted the potential confluence of interests between the communitarian tendencies of governance and religious organisations:

Politics is about what we do as groups and religion is also about groups and group dynamics so we should be able to connect the two.⁹⁸

Meanwhile in Ealing, several politicians, Janpal Basran of the Southall Community Alliance and the Revd Michael Bolley outlined a strong relationship between religious groups, the council and the police. In Ealing, it was the voluntary sector consortium rather than the council that was accused of attempting to secularise faith networks as a way of accessing central government funding streams attached to a 'faith communities' agenda.

The situation is by no means straightforward but there is much to suggest that there are multiple pathways running between religious organisations and the state. These pathways are carved around the following issues: the capacity of religious organisations to accumulate autonomous capital in the context of shrinking public expenditure; the fact that some religious groups are already providing welfare services funded by their own congregations; the incorporation of religion in welfare

⁹⁸ Councillor Neil Wilson, Executive Member for Equalities and Social Inclusion, addressing a public meeting entitled 'Eastern European Worship in Newham' (10/05/11).

provision or as religious education, notably through the SACRE; the uses made of local religious sites of worship, primarily Christian churches, for the provision of meeting space and generic welfare services; the state funding of faith based services; negotiations about the use of public spaces for religious processions, festivals and sites of worship; and the overlap between religious and secular spatial constituencies (for instance, parishes and electoral wards). There also appears to be a clear policing role where religious organisations or 'religious leaders' sit on partnership or consultative bodies to assist in managing relations between the state, the police and communities on anything from knife crime through to traffic and parking issues.

Meeting social welfare needs

Religious groups are readily exposed to the racialised limits of the welfare state. There were many references to their long history in providing food, clothing, shelter and sanctuary. The Revd Canon Ann Easter noted that Newham's gurdwaras had been providing twenty meals per week as well as bedding for The Renewal Programme's homelessness night shelter. The 'langar' (free food) and 'sewa' (service) dimension of gurdwaras provided a constant resource for people with limited access to the welfare state. Moreover, given both boroughs are marked by waves of immigration, settlement and deprivation, the role of religious groups in tackling disadvantage has invariably implicated them in witnessing and challenging racism and xenophobia. In Ealing, Dilbagh Chana noted that immigration advice services were being provided by secular rights organisations, such as JCWI, at religious sites of worship in order to reach a greater number of people. This is particularly meaningful for those living in the shadow of immigration controls.

The question of how welfare services should be organised was central to any discussion about the engagement of the local state with religious groups. An approximate typology of secular to religious service provision could be etched from the interviews as follows: secular services for all but attuned to take account of religious difference including by accommodating religious holidays, dress codes and diets; secular specialist services organised along equality strands (gender, ethnicity

and age were mentioned); religious organisations providing generic services open to all. The latter included reference to a legacy of faith based provision that had become 'secularised'. In Newham, Revd Quintin Peppiatt and Alan Partridge noted that Christian buildings were already being used in multiple ways beyond worship including as premises for community organisations and as sites for support group meetings and advice services. Newham Council was funding some of the secular welfare activities taking place at these Church buildings.

Importantly, across the interviews, there wasn't any reference to the *imposition* of secular services. In lieu of multicultural policies, many services had been customised to take account of cultural, linguistic or religious difference. Indeed activists like Mizan Raja of Islamic Circles were organising to get mainstream services to accommodate 'Muslim needs', for instance, by encouraging Muslim parents to become school governors at regular state comprehensives.

However, the propensity of 'cohesion' talk to turn assimilationist was highlighted by the actions of two key Blairite politicians - Darra Singh and Robin Wales. Darra Singh used to be the Chief Executive Officer of Ealing Council and gained particular notoriety by chairing the New Labour Commission on Cohesion and Integration. At a local level he interpreted 'cohesion' to insist on generic rather than specialist domestic violence services. In practice this policy was carried by a Conservative-led council and involved using new commissioning regimes to withdraw the annual grant from the local black women's organisation, Southall Black Sisters, on the grounds that they should be providing services for all (including for men).⁹⁹ Interestingly, the judgement on the case recognised that 'there is no dichotomy between the promotion of equality and cohesion and the provision of specialist services' because part of the process of realising cohesion entails tackling barriers to engagement, such as racist

⁹⁹ During the judicial review hearing at the Royal Courts of Justice in July 2008, Karon Monaghan, the barrister intervening on behalf of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, stated that Ealing council was seeking to transform 'Southall Black Sisters' into 'Southall Black and White Sisters and Brothers', an active assault on the nature and purpose of the organisation.

and sexist discrimination.¹⁰⁰

More recently, Newham's Mayor Robin Wales sought to implement public spending cuts by taking a unilateral decision to stop supplying ethnic minority language newspapers at local libraries on the grounds that this should encourage local people to learn and speak English and take pride in a sense of Britishness.¹⁰¹ Local anti racist activists sought to challenge this on the basis that it is 'not supported by mainstream thought or research that recognized the beneficial and complex role mother-tongue/second-language skills play in learning English as a foreign language (and also doesn't) address the broader value of preserving and respecting other cultures within a diverse and evolving borough.'¹⁰²

However, it is difficult to translate these 'cohesion' moves into attempts to eradicate difference. In particular, the question of religion reveals additional dimensions to the way that cohesion policy is rolled out at the local level. Each borough speaks in dissimilar ways to the question of religion and secularism in public policy. In Newham there is a strong connection between a secular public culture and cohesion policy whilst in Ealing there has been a stronger connection between 'cohesion', PVE programmes and the rolling out of a faith agenda. Whilst Ealing Council mobilised arguments about cohesion and the need for generic domestic violence services, it was simultaneously creating 'Muslim' groups as part of its PVE and cohesion policies.¹⁰³ Conversely, Newham council are committed to some specialist services, such as

¹⁰⁰ See Lord Justice Moses' judgement in the case of R (Kaur & Shah) v London Borough of Ealing, July 2008.

¹⁰¹ See *Newham's Libraries Remove Foreign Language Newspapers* dated 10th May 2011 at BBC News online available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-13352845>

¹⁰² Excerpt from petition *Save Our Language Papers* available at:

<http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/save-our-language-papers.html>

domestic violence services for South Asian women, but specifically invoke cohesion as caution on the question of funding religious organisations or indulging religious accommodation. Sarah Ruiz of NVSC described this rather as suspicion of the intentions of religious organisations, particularly Muslim groups:

Yes, I think that there was always the underlying concern that any money that, and I have to say that I think it was the Muslim communities who suffered the most, I think that there was always this 'well whatever we give them money for, they'll only use it for their Quran classes'. Or if they're having a summer play scheme, they won't be playing at all, they'll be teaching the Quran.

[Sarah Ruiz, NVSC, 14/05/09]

Ealing may not have a faith liaison officer as such but the local authority and local politicians continued to fund Christian denomination faith schools and had supported the establishment of Sikh only and Muslim only education, youth and support group services. The proclaimed 'secular' picture in Newham, however, was complicated by a number of anomalies namely: the longstanding public funding of two Catholic secondary schools; the perceived 'Muslim identity' of two girls-only state secondary schools; the sole use of one community centre, the Upton Centre, by a Hindu group; and the delivery of expressly faith based sexual health services. Also a number of independent faith based schools and youth groups continued to exist alongside statutory provision and some statutory sector employees, such as one Development Worker, believed these could not be discounted in borough-wide discussions about policy and provision. Whilst he opposed faith based services on the grounds that the state should not be funding 'preferences' (an interesting counterpoint to the pro faith services arguments about 'choice'), the council's youth services division could not avoid partnerships with religious groups in the borough that were providing youth activities. He was concerned that sidestepping these would mean ignoring the work

¹⁰³ See Patel, P and Sen, U (2011) *Cohesion, Faith and Gender: A report on the impact of the cohesion and faith based approach on black and minority women in Ealing* published by Southall Black Sisters and Oxfam. Available at: See <http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/report-requests.html>

that they were already undertaking.¹⁰⁴ Yet to acknowledge them and bring them into an alliance could have its own reproductive effects, as discussed in Chapter 7.

A religious man himself, one Labour councillor offered some clarity on Newham's approach, specifically emphasising the tensions between accommodating religions and safeguarding other equalities duties, notably gender and sexual orientation. He refused to close his eyes to the assertion of relativistic claims that 'allow women to be subjugated to all sorts of pressures in the name of religion that you wouldn't tolerate because of other issues', difficulties with gay rights and an emphasis on separateness, namely purity arguments for segregated eating. Indeed he was one of the very few interviewees that recalled the historical reasons for secularism in Britain. He maintained that one has to 'have an honest discussion and dialogue' about religion in the public sphere and he did not want to simply go along with a 'faith communities' agenda.¹⁰⁵

The same councillor explained that Newham Council is not prepared to structure its relationship with the local population on the basis of religious categories. So, for instance, they would not claim to 'have separate meetings with the Muslim community' or attempt to organise the council's response to needs in this way. This did not preclude people from engaging with interfaith initiatives and he had addressed meetings organised by religious groups, for instance, to raise awareness of the importance of HIV treatment and support for HIV sufferers.¹⁰⁶ It seemed to me that rather than erase difference, his main point was to exercise caution and ensure there was enough emphasis on cohesive activities to counter the most divisive and inegalitarian aspects of religion in the public sphere.

¹⁰⁴ Interviewed 16/09/09.

¹⁰⁵ Interviewed 2/12/09.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

In a sense this perspective was strengthened by the concerns of a worker at an ethnic minority women's organisation in Newham. She pointed to divergent frameworks and social policy objectives for religious and secular providers. She similarly emphasised the need for social policy to be about challenging discrimination, strengthening equality and encouraging tolerance. In her view religious groups were far less likely to engage from this perspective and she questioned their input into consultations intended to shape the local social and political landscape. Moreover, at a very practical level, there were questions about the local economy to be addressed:

A need is identified and that need is usually linked to a disadvantage or barrier that exists for people. Ultimately it addresses a wrong that needs to be made right. So there is a social justice element to it. So in the very ethos, in the very sort of perspective that an organisation needs to have which needs to permeate through its working culture, its frameworks, its policies. All of that I think has to be taken together as an organic whole. It can't be, you can't just say oh well, OK, they don't have that understanding so let's give them this grant to train them. Well actually, you know, there has been a divestment from the voluntary sector for a very long time. And if you look at the level of investment that New Labour put into the voluntary sector, it didn't meet what was promised at all. And there are many organisations that would benefit from that capacity building and additional resources.

[Worker, ethnic minority women's group in Newham, 20/10/09]

In thinking about the problems with increasing the numbers of faith based services in their areas, interviewees in each of the boroughs applied conditions including: distinguishing between needs and demands (Councillor Dhindsa); prioritising unmet needs without undermining the role that religious groups play in the borough (Sarah Ruiz); being mindful of the ratio of faith based to secular services (Stephen Timms MP for instance said he would support an increase from 1% to 2% but not 1% to 50% or 100%); and delimiting funding to services available to everyone irrespective of religious affiliation (Revd Michael Bolley).

Shared policing functions

Local states and religious organisations share some concerns and ambitions and this enables some strong relationships between them. This was particularly highlighted in the interviews with Revd Michael Bolley in Ealing and AK Sheikh in Newham, both of whom described longstanding arrangements between the police and local 'community', namely through 'religious leaders'. Revd Bolley explained that the police saw religious groups as a kind of 'conduit', as a 'lead into the community'. He viewed this liaison as a natural extension of the policing of religious festivals and processions. The key concern was to deal with a wider 'community consensus' that complained about traffic congestion and the 'nuisance' caused by 'young men coming in cars', particularly during Eid and Vaisakhi, but to do so without causing offence and without making 'particular faiths feel that they have been trodden down'. However this faith based support for the police extended out to cover cricket match celebrations and the search for leads on murders and ethnic tensions.¹⁰⁷

I put the feminist critique of multiculturalist (now multifaithist) governance and its colonial antecedents to Revd Bolley but he insisted that there are policing issues at religious festivities so it made logical sense for the police to work with religious groups. However, the liaison group did not comprise representatives of all religious organisations. For instance, just 3 gurdwaras out of a total 12 were involved. Indeed, Bolley did not question the value of the committee as much as he critiqued the police's interpretation of the term 'community leaders' to mean 'religious leaders' and more so, male religious leaders since only 2 out of 20 members of the group were women. He ended the interview on this point:

One of the questions that would exercise me is about who is doing the speaking. And just going back to the case of that police meeting, the reality is that most of the time it is the men that are doing the speaking. That may not be in the interests of the women concerned. My question is not whether there should be a role but a) what is that role and b) who is doing the speaking. The representational role would be a bigger issue for me.

[Revd Michael Bolley, Holy Trinity Church, 14/07/11]

¹⁰⁷ Interviewed 14/07/11.

Sometimes relations between statutory bodies and religious groups are mediated by just one or two individuals who move continuously between the state and civil society, articulating or validating specific religious perspectives and religious needs along the way. AK Sheikh was one such person. By his own admission he wore many hats. At the time of the interview, Sheikh had moved from being a Labour Party councillor to a Respect Party councillor, he had been the Chair and Vice Chair of the local Race Relations Council, he was on the board of trustees for the Green Street mosque, and he was the Lifelong Secretary of the Alliance of Newham Muslim Associations. Moreover, he represented Muslim groups in relation to the police and the local further education college. He was also part of several civil society faith initiatives discussed in the next section. Interestingly, he noted that his Muslim organisation was regularly consulted by the Mayor and had been able to raise various concerns including: the need for a Muslim burial ground; the recruitment of Muslim governors and school teachers; the under-achievement of Pakistani and Bengali children at school; and proposals to fast track Pakistani and Bangladeshi staff within the local authority in order to tackle their under representation. However, Sheikh also noted the fickle nature of these consultation sessions, which he claims came to an end when the Mayor shifted his attention to Eastern Europeans. Nevertheless, despite defecting from the Labour Party, Sheikh continued a working relationship with the Labour Party Deputy Mayor who engaged religious groups on strategic planning issues like access to sites of worship in case of unexpected disasters.

Sheikh's discussion of the Police Liaison Group and Newham College's Faith Advisory Group were even more revealing. He noted that religious organisations in the borough had been concerned with crime reduction. Through the police liaison group, the sergeant was reporting to local 'religious leaders' on their policing operations. Sheikh's account lacked any critique of these operations. He referred to three particular areas of overlapping interest: young people 'going astray' in terms of drugs and crime; 'prostitution'; and the sale of alcohol. On the question of 'prostitution', Sheikh stated that 'prostitutes' were relocating from one area to another, so members of local religious groups had been helping to catch curb crawlers

especially by using CCTV.¹⁰⁸ He was primarily concerned to emphasise the 'offence' caused by the public presence of 'prostitutes' to the sensibilities of ethnic minority elders and religious people. Clearly, these are instances where multiculturalist discourses of tolerance and sensitivity roll into multifaithist practice to enable the policing function of religious organisations. Secondly, religious groups in the area gained police support to prevent the licensing of any more alcohol vendors. Whilst there may be valid concerns about the relationship between poverty and alcoholism, Sheikh focused on the potential for crime and negative influences on young people. Indeed this particular mixture iterates 'clean up' operations engaging religious groups in other areas¹⁰⁹ and reveals their attempts to create physical enclosures protected from whatever is regarded as a 'bad influence'. Other interviewees noted the disappearance of bars and pubs in predominantly Asian parts of the borough and a normative shift in the presence of out gay bodies. Sarah Ruiz (NVSC) argued that the borough had become particularly intolerant and LGBT groups had disappeared. She stated:

I think it is fairly conservative. I mean (name) who works with me is a gay man, gay black man who lives in (name) Road. I'm not sure whether he feels safe, I don't know. But I don't think that, well actually I don't think that Newham is necessarily that tolerant of people's sexuality. I think that's far more of an issue in Newham... I mean ELOP do a bit of work, East London Out Project, but that's about it. And when you look back at how vibrant this borough was for decades. Gone. And we're wondering, I mean it's not something that we spend all of our time talking about, but just like we see that actually there are very few pubs now in Newham.

[Sarah Ruiz, NVSC, 14/05/09]

This was a slow process that had developed over time but had the effect of recasting

¹⁰⁸ I have used the term 'prostitution' in line with Sheikh's own terminology but placed it in quotation marks to be mindful of the raging debate about the sex industry and its implications for terms of reference.

¹⁰⁹ Such as the campaign to clear Bradford's predominantly Asian Manningham area of 'prostitutes' during the 1990s and the current campaign against strip clubs in Tower Hamlets, both led by conservative religious men.

the physical and cultural landscape of certain areas.

Conversely, by his own admission, Sheikh's ward was listed at the bottom end of the local police's crime statistics confirming the gap between moral panic and reality. This gives rise to two further questions. Is there any relationship between this lower level crime statistic and the existence of these secondary tiers of religious policing?¹¹⁰ Secondly, if Sheikh's area has a low crime rate, why did it form such a significant part of the interview discussion? Moreover, this police-religious liaison on crime did not extend to gender related crime such as effective policing and prosecution of domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment or stalking. It may be a huge relief for some readers to know that a clear confidentiality policy meant the police were not using these liaison meetings to discuss domestic abuse cases with local religious leaders. However, it was notable that Sheikh viewed the statistics on domestic violence and sexual assault as the terrain of Victim Support and Newham Asian Women's Project, not really his concern. Indeed Sheikh was not at all interested in talking about gender-related violence.

Nevertheless, yet more instances of the role of religious organisations in micro security issues emerged as we discussed his chairing of the Faith Advisory Group at

¹¹⁰ Rahul Rao recently used the phrase 'security had become a function of ethnic solidarity' to describe some of the complex dimensions of mobilisations against rioters in the London borough of Hackney in August 2011. See *Dalston: A Worms Eye View* posted by Rahul Rao on 22/08/11 at The Disorder of Things and available at:

<http://thedisorderofthings.com/2011/08/22/dalston-a-worms-eye-view/#more-4023>

I believe this phrase has some bearing on the policing function of religious mobilisations. During the August 2011 riots, Southall was 'defended' by predominantly male groups from two prominent Sikh and Muslim sites of worship - the SGSSS and the Abu Bak'r mosque. Whilst these were credited for 'protecting' local people, homes and businesses from looters, they also created a no go zone for women. Moreover, the same 'defenders' stood by whilst black youth were harassed by the police.

the Newham College of Further Education. He stated that the group's remit was to 'help advise what is best for the interests of the community at large'. In particular this had involved resolution of conflicting faith perspectives and included dealing with demands from Muslim students for a prayer room. On this, the group had mobilised consent for the college's commitment to secularism and for rooms to be provided on an ad hoc basis during Ramadan rather than to create a permanent prayer room as an institutionalised feature of the college building. It was interesting to hear someone so implicated in Muslim identity politics defending 'secular' spaces in this instrumental way.

Moreover, this Faith Advisory Group had been called in to calm students during discussions about the Iraq War and other international events. Sheikh stated:

Yes sure, when there are crises internationally, whether it's the Iraq war and other, there is a heated up debate with young people and there could be a time when they are taking sides, putting up their viewpoint and then we always try to see how the inside environment of the college is. We wanted to have everybody in safer situation and not to have a clash and not the incidents. So we get the report from the campus manager and others who are in senior positions, the Vice Principal and the rest of it, so they can come and tell us is it any extraordinary activities going on and if there are any issues or problems to talk and the members of the other faith community they have their own input to tell us and to share how they seek to solve that problem.

[AK Sheikh, former councillor, 8/10/09]

Given Sheikh's defence of Hizb ut-Tahrir and his own defection from Labour to the Respect Party in lieu of the Iraq invasion, he occupied a curious position as mediator of such discussions. It felt probable that his interventions amounted more to managerialism than to any substantive challenge *either* to Right wing religious political mobilisations at the college *or* to New Labour's claims to be liberating Iraq. Moreover, to think on Iraq as an issue for a Faith Advisory Group potentially reinforces rather than breaks through the claims of Islamic Right mobilisations and the closed circle of Muslim identity politics.

Inter Faith Alliances

This section highlights the way in which religious leaderships have been revived in Newham through a number of civil society faith initiatives. I point to the reasons given for establishing these but also the problematic assumptions at play. Focusing on Newham has been particularly interesting in this regard because it draws out a series of unintended consequences of the New Labour approach. In particular, Newham is a borough where 'leadership' is singularly interpreted as centralised Party leadership (especially evident in the introduction of a directly elected Mayor). This archetypal New Labour borough did not swallow the communitarian tendencies of the New Labour project. Moreover, the local council is not known for power sharing with the Third Sector. This is particularly highlighted by their decision to deliver most, if not all, the PVE programmes in-house. A series of civil society faith initiatives potentially stand as a strong contrast to the council's approach.

Religious and community leaderships are embodiments of the complex and changing lines of power described above and they gained renewed significance within the social policy frames listed in Chapter 1. Despite decades of feminist critique (such as Sahgal, 1990 and 2004; Ali, 1992; Narayan, 1997), New Labour's conjoined projects of managerialism and devolution reinvigorated the role of 'leaders' in governance. They identified 'transformational leadership', especially through localised regeneration / inclusion agendas, as one technique for drawing popular, and particularly Third Sector, support for their policies (Newman, 2001: 99). Presumably this is one more reason why religious leadership, associated as it is with hearts and not just minds, became an affective source of complicity. One can add to this, Kevin Blowe's observation that New Labour's 'big tent' approach to social policy meant it was particularly concerned to demonstrate diverse support. This impacted on funding streams and consequently on the socio-political landscape of local areas. According to Blowe, it had the effect of 're-classifying communities' as ever-smaller interest groups, each with designated 'leaders' that could then be brought into the New

Labour 'big tent' to 'say whatever you want them to say'.¹¹¹

It was clear from interviews with councillors that they were not comfortable with nor wanted to promote a model of representation that relied upon engagement through community leaders, particularly religious leaderships. Councillor Unmesh Desai (then the Mayor's Advisor for Community Affairs) cited individual surveys, councillor surgeries and the Mayor's Question Time slots as preferred techniques for consultation. Another councillor, a religious man himself, explained that the borough prides itself on being 'the most surveyed population in the UK' and had 'moved a long way' from consulting faith leaders. He gave his reasons as follows:

My big problem with inviting faith leaders, they happen to be men, not always representative. Might be well versed in scriptures but not necessarily in any issues of shall we say poverty, single parenthood, teenage pregnancy, HIV, Aids, all of which are high. And I would say that whether we're talking about a Bishop here, or an Imam there. I think it's a very patronising approach. We've moved a long way I think since then. We've moved away from tick boxes but we do need to have an honest discussion where faith groups are segmenting populations.

[Newham Councillor, 2/12/09]

Desai reinforced this view of 'leaders', whether religious or community, as unrepresentative. Nevertheless, there were interviewees in both boroughs that believed interaction between religious leaders could bring cohesion and harmony at the local level. Whilst Janpal Basran (of Southall Community Alliance), recognised their tendency towards conservative agendas on immigration and crime, he described religious leadership as an 'invisible glue that binds the community'.¹¹² Sarah Ruiz also emphasised the positive dimensions of interaction between religious leaders:

I think that we have much more cohesive communities here and we work together

¹¹¹ Interviewed 9/08/07.

¹¹² Interviewed 20/09/10.

and people talk. There may well be underlying tensions but we don't have the level of tensions here that they do in other boroughs, really we don't. I think that actually there are sufficient community leaders of all faiths who work very hard at creating comfortable and working together relationships.

[Sarah Ruiz, NVSC, 12/11/09]

In Newham, religion became an organising principle within civil society at two levels. Firstly, the Stop the War Coalition, including the Newham branch, relied on religious, particularly Muslim, organisations as spaces of mobilisation. This has already been discussed in Chapter 2. Secondly, civil society organisations accessed central government funding premised on 'faith engagement'. Whilst interviewees reported that other boroughs utilised this money in as secular a way as possible, faith engagement in Newham was earnest and lively. Several actors referred to initiatives encouraging faith exchange, dialogue or alliances including: the Faith Sector Forum run by Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium; Faithful Friends; the Three Faiths Forum; Transform; the Neighbourhood and Faiths Walk; the Faiths in Action trainings run by the voluntary sector organisation Conflict and Change; and The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO), discussed separately in Chapter 7. Not all of these were funded by central government. However, Sarah Ruiz of the Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium (NVSC) explained that their decision to initiate a Faith Sector Forum arose from the conditions set by the central government's Community Empowerment Network funding. This grant had also been accessed by the Aston Mansfield Charity to produce a comprehensive list of religious organisations in the borough, called the Newham Faiths Directory. The faiths work conducted by the voluntary sector organisation, Conflict and Change, had also been funded by central government.

NVSC Faith Sector Forum

NVSC secured Community Empowerment Network funding in 2003 and employed a dedicated Faith Sector Worker in order to set up a formal Faith Sector Forum. Aside from the conditions of public funding, and in spite of her critique of the New Labour

ideological project, Sarah Ruiz embraced the opportunity to create a Faith Sector Forum because of an overriding desire to open up democratic debate in the borough by galvanising civil society players of all hues. She provided a stream of additional reasons including: ethical questions about denying the value of religious organisations in a borough where religious affiliation appeared to be 'so obviously important to people'; the need to create 'greater understanding and working across communities' or cohesion; to understand the conditions for religious engagement in the public sphere (such as not setting meetings during Ramadan) without also encouraging fragmentation, competing demands or separate faith based services; working together to prevent exclusion; and exchange of religious or cultural beliefs, with an emphasis on what these mean in practice. This was an experiment of great proportions that carried a number of unintended effects.

The NVSC 'deliberately' recruited a Faith Sector Worker of 'no faith'. It turned out that the 'somebody of no faith' that Ruiz referred to was not an agnostic or atheist but a white Irish woman that had converted from Catholicism to Buddhism. The rationale for her recruitment was premised on the mobility of her unassigned body. The lack of visible piety (and possibly also of 'race?') was understood as neutral and the basis for greater engagement whilst ethnic minority religious bodies carried the potential for exclusion or conflict. Paradoxically, this practice reinforces one of the foundational tenets of secular public culture, namely that the ostensibly *private* nature of some people's beliefs can *enable* rather than avert multi-faith engagement. Sarah Ruiz stated:

Well, I think people found it very strange that we deliberately appointed somebody who had no outward faith. So we made a decision that we couldn't employ a Muslim or a Sikh or a Hindu because they would not have access to all the faiths that we needed to contact. Although she was a Buddhist, there was no outward, she didn't ever talk about her own faith. And therefore, was acceptable to all the faiths in Newham because she posed no threat. She wasn't going into a gurdwara as a Muslim; she just went in as Jacqui... She was a strange mix herself because she was a Catholic turned Buddhist. And then I also did part of that work as, I wouldn't say I was as atheist as Kevin, but I have no faith. And because I had no faith, I was very interested to learn about other faiths. So I didn't go in with any preconceived ideas,

I went in and worked with the groups as if they were a community group.

[Sarah Ruiz, NVSC, 14/05/09]

It became obvious that the religious organisations they contacted did not already have reciprocal relationships with each other. Up until this point it was the Christian groups (particularly the 50 or so members of the Methodist Circuit) and a small number of Muslim groups that were interacting. Ruiz described religious organisations in the borough as 'insular', as not seeing 'themselves as part of anything' and 'just a place of worship' for a specific congregation. She suggested that it was the incentive of funding and the possibility of influencing local agendas that actually drew participants for this new Faith Sector Forum. The engagement was engineered through hard labour as the Faith Sector Worker undertook significant legwork to establish contact with religious groups and actively instigated relationships between them.

At their peak, NVSC had a total of 9 staff supporting three different sector forums - voluntary, community and faith - as well as two annual gatherings of all three forums. However, Ruiz was very clear that the Faith Sector Forum was the most exciting of the three, the most dynamic. In November 2004, they held a conference. There were 370 delegates representing about 300 religious organisations, out of 350 religious groups in the borough at that time. The conference cost £30,000. Given that I started this research after the conference had taken place and the Faith Sector Forum had disbanded, I had to rely on Sarah Ruiz's account and the Conference Report for insights into the process and discussion.¹¹³ The report emphasises the 'super diversity' characterisation of the borough and yet the lack of interaction across religions. It also depicts 'faith leaders' as the subject of historical non-recognition and exclusion. The report states:

¹¹³ *Faith Conference Action Plan: Having Faith to Face Social Challenges within Newham* by Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium, undated report of the Newham Multifaith Conference on 30th November 2004.

They felt they had been let down so many times in the past and for them to participate they needed to feel they would be taken seriously and their contribution would be valued. They wanted an acknowledgement of the role they played in the community, proper representation that catered for their needs, concrete benefits that were visible and overall demonstration that it would be different this time.¹¹⁴

The Conference Report also reminds the reader that Newham Council were allocated £70 million (to be spent over 5 years between 2001-6), a significant chunk of the £1.8 billion of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding shared across 88 neighbourhoods in the country. The use of this £70 million was to be determined by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).¹¹⁵ The Community Empowerment Network grant to NVSC was specifically intended to support the voluntary, community and faith sectors to engage with and make representations to their local LSP. Moreover, there was an expectation attached to the Community Empowerment Network funding that local authorities would pick up projects generated through these grants. NVSC's Faith Sector Forum sent their Conference Report to the LSP with the intention of having the action points taken up through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. They also wanted Newham's religious groups to influence the Newham Compact, the new agreement between the local council and the Third Sector. However, according to Sarah Ruiz, the LSP 'absolutely refused point blank to have it on the agenda'.¹¹⁶ Not only were Newham Council reluctant to participate in the Faith Sector Forum conference, they were unwilling to debate the report.

The spatialisation of the faith agenda

This subsection considers the implications of two other civil society faith based initiatives in Newham: the Faithful Friends and the Faiths and Neighbours Walks.

¹¹⁴ Page 7, *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Pages 5-6, *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Interviewed 12/11/09.

Some of the objectives of inter faith exchange and alliances were re-iterated by those involved in two further initiatives: Faithful Friends and Neighbourhood Walks. In 2007, Pat Mossop, a prominent local Christian Minister, established Faithful Friends. Their website describes the group as: 'helping people from different local faith communities get to know one another, through evenings of food, chat and sharing of each other's experiences of life and faith'. Amongst its activities it lists a 'First Steps' visit to each other's places of worship and a specific pilot project for young people to gain confidence about their religious beliefs and encourage them to embrace the religious dimension of their moral values. An events diary reveals attendance at annual religious festivals, Mawlid-ul-Nabi (the Birth of the Prophet), the Easter Vigil Service, the Vaisakhi procession, a Hindu Chariot procession, and a Christmas Carol Service. Also listed were themed discussions, namely "Where Does Everything Come From? A chance to discuss what answers different faiths"; "Drug Problems In Our Community - How Can Faith Help?" and "Giving And Serving - What part does it play in our faith?" Moreover, Faithful Friends claims the following positive effects:

- Faithful Friends has led to friendships between people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds.
- Faithful Friends has given people greater confidence to share what their faith means to them, helping counter ignorance between groups through meaningful conversations between local people of faith. ¹¹⁷

About three years into the project, I interviewed the then convenor, Revd Barnabas Matloob. Both he and AK Sheikh believed that this initiative was breeding tolerance and understanding across religious groups. Matloob described its purpose as:

We want to make this area an example and show how we sit down in mosque, or temple or gurdwara and talk to each other respectfully, or listen to each other carefully. It's not a competition. Whatever you have, you have to share with us. Whatever I have, I have to share with you. That's friendship. No cheating, no politics, no discrimination. Just you have to share whatever you have, that's the

¹¹⁷ Faithful Friends homepage available at: <http://www.faithfulfriends.org.uk/>

beauty of this project.

[Revd Barnabas Matloob, Faithful Friends, 19/11/10]

Whilst the website lists 10 partners, Matloob stated the events regularly involved representatives of around 20-25 local religious organisations. He was not keen to answer the question of which groups the alliance might not be willing to work with but rather spoke in positive terms about engaging with anyone interested in 'bringing peace'. There was no obligation to accept each other's theology or doctrine. Affirmation was the central tenet - mutual recognition of beliefs and practices, mutual support and moving beyond tension or conflict. Engagement was oriented and described through the operative phrases 'exchange', 'respect' and 'we stand together'. Matloob noted that these budding friendships had extended to provide members with support during bereavement, as indeed might be expected of friends.

Faithful Friends certainly represented a noble attempt at resolving some longstanding enmities. In particular, the initiative had brokered a relationship between two large Shia and Sunni mosques in the borough, which previously refused to have any contact with each other. Matloob also referred to empathetic discussions about the assault on Christians in Gojra, Pakistan.¹¹⁸ However, he re-iterated a reluctance to engage with political agendas, stating 'we are not political people, we are religious people'. In this interview, politics was associated with tension and division and he was quick to emphasise the distinction between interfaith dialogue and 'political' initiatives.

¹¹⁸ Gojra is a small town in the Punjab province of Pakistan with a minority Christian population. On 31st July and 1st August 2009, allegations that Christians had desecrated the Quran (transmitted via loud speakers by local mosques) incited violence in which Christian houses and a church were set alight and seven people were burnt alive. See *Violence against Christian community in Gojra after allegations of defiling of Holy Quran* posted on 1/08/09 at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan website and available at:

<http://www.hrcp-web.org/showfact.asp?id=12>

In May 2010, Faithful Friends organised a 'Walk of Solidarity' around the Forest Gate area of the borough starting at the Ramgharia gurdwara, pausing at the Green Street Mosque and ending at the Emmanuel Church on the main Romford Road. A year later this idea was replicated by a 'Faith and Neighbours Walk' through Plaistow in which 70 people participated. It was organised by the E13 People Action United in response to 'parent and community requests for more opportunities to learn about the diverse cultures of the area'.¹¹⁹ One of the participants, Alan Partridge, explained that the walk was designed as a 'whistle stop tour' of five key places of worship in the Plaistow area that could reflect the five main world religions. Each would be given 15 minutes to provide an introduction to their beliefs and practices. The walk between sites would provide a relaxed and informal space for discussion and knowledge exchange. From Alan's perspective, such spaces offer immense opportunities to develop mutually supportive structures. In particular, he seemed concerned to learn about appropriate behaviour. For instance, he didn't know what to do in times of non-Christian death and bereavement, especially noting the different grieving processes of his West African and South Asian neighbours.¹²⁰

These are indeed intimate spaces where the idioms of respect and sensitivity take on new meaning and need to be guided by an ethics of care that encompasses difference. Alan Partridge is a noticeably gentle, careful and considerate man that is highly regarded in the local area. However, playing devil's advocate, I could not resist to ask why he couldn't just ask his neighbours what they would like and how they were accustomed to passing through such situations. The fact of difference appeared to confound him. He was concerned to identify 'norms' and 'expectations' and not to 'insult', 'offend' or 'overstep boundaries'. It did start to feel that this was a peculiarly (white) English predicament, something that ethnic minority interviewees hardly

¹¹⁹ See E13 Community Learning write up on the project at: <http://www.e13lc.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Web-report.jpg>

¹²⁰ Of course these groups could also be Christian and still have different cultural practices. However, it is noteworthy that, alongside AK Sheikh's 'Muslim' intervention on Pakistani and Bangladeshi underachievement, noted above, many issues pertaining to 'race' culture and ethnicity now folded into issues for inter faith dialogue and religious literacy.

talked about as a concern for how they related to others. Rather, for them, 'respect' and 'offence' were terms oriented towards describing the preferred treatment or injury of their own 'community'.

Nevertheless, the Faith and Neighbours Walk started at St Mary's Church of England. They could not identify a Buddhist place of worship and so the Sokka Gakkai International (SGI) agreed to provide an introduction to their practice by setting up an ad hoc chanting space at the local Christian Harold Road Centre. The third stop was at the Upton Park Islamic Centre on Selwyn Road. The walk ended at the Ramgharia Sikh Gurdwara in Neville Road but before the end, it stopped for an introduction to Hinduism by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) at the Upton Centre. Indeed the VHP representative, Bharat Dadlani, was quoted in the press coverage for the Walk. He stated:

People were free and felt comfortable in asking questions of the hosts and I'm sure that any prejudices and misconceptions were cleared. A better understanding of the faiths was achieved and, I'm sure, will result in better bonding amongst the neighbours taking part.¹²¹

Three key problematics were revealed in this one moment of local multifaithism. Firstly, buildings are central to the local religious cartography and to the particular religious knowledge that is dispensed. The SGI gained a floating space within the Walk only because the established Buddhist building was being relocated and a Buddhist group needed to be identified. Secondly, the proximity of the local authority owned Upton Centre and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad was revealed. Alan Partridge was aware of some controversy around the Upton Centre but didn't know the details. Indeed the controversy is two fold. The Upton Centre represents one of the clearest anomalies in Newham Council's espoused commitment to secularism. Even though the centre manager pointed out that he is a local authority employee and

¹²¹ See *Marchers take steps to bring faiths together* by Lee Pearl in the Newham Recorder dated 8th June 2011.

the building is a council premises open to all¹²², Alan Partridge confirmed the local perception of it is as a place for Hindu events run by an entirely Hindu management group. Moreover, the Upton Centre was about to gain an even higher profile as one of nine designated 'community hubs' for the provision of library services in the borough. Partridge noted that some people were unhappy about this precisely because they believed that the Upton Centre would 'only cater for half the local population'.¹²³

The third dimension in this moment of multifaithism tears a hole in the attempt at a normative projection of innocence and camaraderie. The Hindu organisation associated with the Upton Centre and quoted above, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), is in fact one of fourteen UK branches of the Hindu Right organisation by the same name. The VHP is the cultural face of the Sangh Parivar, the family of Hindu organisations that propagate Hindutva ideology as founded by Savarkar in the 1920s and developed by Golwalkar in post colonial India. Hindutva is an exclusionary identity premised on a historicised claim to Aryan lineage and the construction of a Hindu essence that 'comprised a common nation, a common civilization and a common 'race'' (Bhatt and Mukta, 2000: 413). Savarkar claimed the geographical space of India to be the Hindu holyland and condemned Muslims and Christians as illegitimate residents. His specific breed of Hindu nationalism has been described by Bhatt and Mukta as 'a racism that is not biological but reflecting a dominant ethnic nationalism of the late nineteenth century' (2000:414). Savarkar's ideas led to the founding of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which then spawned several other organizations, including the VHP, that now make up the family of Hindu nationalist organizations known as the Sangh Parivar. Bhatt and Mukta have described these as 'militant semi-paramilitary organization(s)' whose many activities engage young men and boys in 'highly disciplined physical and pedagogic "character building", "manmaking" or "man-moulding"' to 'prepare members mentally and physically (to) fight for Hindutva and safeguard what was seen as the Hindu nation

¹²² In conversation with the Centre Manager on 3/06/11.

¹²³ Interviewed 3/06/11.

against foreign influences' (2000: 414). This highly masculinist and militarized ideology stood in stark contrast to Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha ("truth force") and Ahimsa ("non-violence"), which the RSS attacked for projecting 'Hindus as weak, effeminate and emasculated' (Bhatt and Mukta, 2000: 416). A member of Savarkar's group murdered Gandhi.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) was formed in 1964 and has been described by Bhatt and Mukta as one of 'two outstanding successes of the RSS family of organizations', the other one being the electoral party the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP (2000: 419). The VHP has been directly involved in transnational campaigns for the alleged 'liberation' of specific areas within India, notably from Muslims, on the basis that these comprise historic sites for Hindu deities (Bhatt and Mukta 2000:421). These campaigns have incited large-scale violence against Muslims and Christians and led to the destruction of Muslim places of worship including the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in 1992, which the VHP claim as the birthplace of their god Rama. The VHP have also been actively involved in 'reconversions' of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism, which again has not only incited physical violence against Christian minorities but led to sexual violence against minority women including the rape of Indian nuns (Bhatt and Mukta, 2000: 421).

The VHP then is by no means a benign organization involved in friendly faith exchange. For all intents and purposes they are a supremacist organization actively propagating a raciology and the reinvention of Hinduism as both militaristic and masculinist. As Parita Mukta (2000) has pointed out, the VHP has particularly thrived through diasporic Gujarati populations in urban locations, such as Newham. On the role of these diasporic branches she states:

While the VHP and its affiliates have been implicated in orchestrating political violence against religious minorities in India, the diasporic branches of the VHP have been crucial in mapping out a framework of global political discourse which is strongly braided with the political agenda of the foundational VHP, and which foregrounds a constructed global Hindu community both as historically victimized

and as (necessarily) resurgent in the contemporary period... In Britain, the VHP (UK) is prominent in hosting Hindutva ideologues who do regular lecture tours in the capital and in the Midlands; under the name of different front organizations, it receives government funding to conduct welfare activities; and having laid claim to be the authentic representative of all 'Hindus' it is involved in interfaith dialogue.

[Mukta, 2000: 443-444]

A few respondents also noted that local children were attending 'shakhas' at the Upton Centre. Chetan Bhatt's research on the Hindu Right argues that whilst shakhas in the UK are projected as educational and cultural activities where children can improve Gujarati language skills, they also 'reflect a very conscious 'catch-them-young' policy of the Sangh (Parivar)... (Whereby)... a sense of pride and discipline are imprinted' and infact the children's games and songs include RSS and Sangh Parivar corporate hymns (Bhatt, 2000: 581-582). Indeed the shakhas were invented as a specific mechanism for disciplining the youth and embedding a commitment to fight for a Hindu nation.

Interestingly, Alan Partridge was not aware of the VHP's political purpose and yet I was able to recall this information from the time that I had worked in the borough in the 1990s. To me this was suggestive of the gradual erasure of local knowledge in favour of multifaith initiatives that project the world as both innocent and flat. This occurs through the re-birthing of social issues and interpersonal relations within faith frames.

Reproducing intra relations of power - the case of Ahmadiyya Muslims

Faith forums and inter faith dialogue initiatives can be diverse and can act as a means of breaking down barriers, of undermining myths and tackling racist and xenophobic fears. However, many initiatives also carry normative implications for representation and the ordering of local populations.

In 2004, on the run up to its conference, the NVSC Faith Sector Forum encountered tensions when the local Ahmadiyya organisation applied to join the conference Steering Group. The larger and more established Muslim groups in the borough (and specifically AK Sheikh) threatened to withdraw from the conference altogether if Ahmadiyyas were allowed to participate. Sarah Ruiz's colleague refused to sit in the same room as representatives of the Ahmadiyya organisation. He drew parallels between them and the British National Party.¹²⁴ Out of fear that the alliance might fall apart, Sarah Ruiz (NVSC) denied the Ahmadiyya organisation a place on the Steering Group. The Ahmadiyyas lodged a formal complaint with the Mayor, Robin Wales and with the local MP, Stephen Timms. Ruiz explained that she did not know much about Ahmadiyya Muslims and in the end sought to deal with the tension by allowing them to attend the conference but also conceded to pressure from the other groups by not putting Ahmadiyya leaflets in the conference packs. According to Ruiz the Ahmadiyya group distributed leaflets themselves on the day.¹²⁵

As noted above, when the Faith Sector Forum came to an end some of its relationships-building work was replaced by Faithful Friends. Again the larger organisations gathered for informal discussions about shared religious tenets. One might have assumed that given his own personal experience and knowledge of religious hate and intolerance, Revd Barnabas Matloob, the co-ordinator of Faithful Friends, would be more mindful of the marginalisation of communities within communities. However, he also refused to include local Ahmadiyyas on the basis that this might upset the larger mosques. Indeed he accepted that these larger mosques were justified in being offended by Ahmadiyya participation and, as with Mizan Raja of Islamic Circles, placed the onus firmly on Ahmadiyyas to renounce their religious claims in order to improve their treatment by others.

It was difficult to fully understand what had taken place without delving into the

¹²⁴ According to Sarah Ruiz, 12/11/09.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

particular place of the Ahmadiyyas in Islam, their persecution, the theo-political leanings of other Muslim groups in Newham and also the Ahmadiyya relationship with Christianity.

The Ahmadiyya sect of Islam emerged as one stream of an Islamic revival under colonial rule and reflected 'the extent of religious competition in north-western India' during that period where an ailing Islam was positioned between Christian missionary zeal on the one hand and the emergence of the Arya Samaj, Hindu nationalism, on the other (Robinson, 1988: 9). The sect was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in 1889 in the town of Qadian in East Punjab, now in Pakistan. Ghulam Ahmad projected himself as 'a symbolic representative of Krishna and Jesus as well as an Islamic Mahdi' or messiah and as 'having the same relationship to Muhammad as Jesus did to Moses; as Jesus brought the period of Mosaic order to an end so (Ghulam Ahmad) brought that of Muhammad to a close' (Robinson, 1988: 10). Mirza Ghulam Ahmad denied both the position of Muhammad as the final prophet of Islam and also the finality of Christ's ascendancy. Indeed he claimed that Christ had been reborn and travelled throughout South West Asia to eventually be buried in Kashmir and moreover, characterized Christ as a 'drunken, a coward (who) consorted with prostitutes' (Robinson, 1988:10). The Ahmadiyyas experience animosity from Muslims and Christians alike.

Despite similarities with the Bahais, the Ahmadiyyas continued to locate themselves within Islam and have not sought secession (even if they broke away from Sunni Islam and have separate places of worship). Importantly, the Ahmadiyyas are pacifists and opposed to jihad. Their focus is rather on missionary work and Robinson (1988) has described them as highly educated, energetic and well-organized proselytizers. As such they occupy a contentious place within the history of the south Asian subcontinent.

Whilst Shiraz Maher would be quick to point out that animosity towards Ahmadiyyas

is commonplace and not necessarily an indication of fundamentalist politics,¹²⁶ Ahmadiyyas have increasingly become a focal point for fundamentalist mobilisations across the south Asian subcontinent and amongst the diaspora. The Ahmadiyyas were a particular focal point for the authoritarian invocations of the Islamist ideologue Maududi who was imprisoned in 1953 for publishing a vitriolic attack against them (Hussain, 2010: 5). By 1974, the Ahmadiyyas were declared non-Muslim by the Pakistani government. Their subsequent persecution has taken many forms. Firstly they have been harassed and criminalised through the use of blasphemy legislation, campaigns to have them banned and injunctions preventing them from referring to their places of worship as 'mosques' or to themselves as 'Muslims'.¹²⁷ Secondly, they have experienced decades of direct physical violence including most recently a simultaneous massacre at two Ahmadiyya mosques in Lahore killing nearly 100 worshippers.¹²⁸ Thirdly, they are prevented from retelling their history such as by the recent forced closure of one Ahmadiyya group's exhibition of non-Urdu translations

¹²⁶ As discussed with Ghaffar Hussain and Shiraz Maher on 26/09/11.

¹²⁷ See Hossain, S., (2004) '*Apostates*', *Ahmadis and advocates: Use and abuse of offences against religion in Bangladesh* in the WLUML Dossier: Warning Signs of Fundamentalisms co-edited by Ayesha Imam, Jenny Morgan & Nira Yuval-Davis

Available at: <http://www.wluml.org/node/563>

¹²⁸ According to Ansar Ahmed Ullah (3/10/07) the Jamaat-e-Islami incited a riot that killed thousands of Ahmadiyyas in the 1950s and has persisted in its fierce opposition to the sect. More recently, the group Khatme Nabuwat has been actively inciting violence against Ahmadiyyas in Pakistan, Bangladesh and here in Britain.

For just a few of examples of dozens of news items on violent assaults against Ahmadiyyas see:

Ahmadi minority fearful after militants kill at least 80 members (30/05/10) posted to WLUML website and available at: <http://www.wluml.org/node/6355>

and

Protests Rise Against Muslim Sect by Roland Buerk (23/04/05) posted to BBC News website and available at:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4476121.stm

of the Quran.¹²⁹ The extent of their persecution led them to move their head quarters from Punjab to London (Robinson, 1988: 11).

The Ahmadiyyas have relied to some degree on British paternalism and protection as an increasingly persecuted religious minority whose status is accepted as grounds for asylum in Britain. Even though London is the base for their head quarters, Ahmadiyya Muslims continue to be a minority and British Islam is still very much dominated by Sunnis. Of 321 mosques in Britain in 1998, 87 per cent were Sunni and only 3 per cent identified as Ahmadiyya (Peach, 2006: 640). Moreover, Ahmadiyyas have continued to face harassment in local neighbourhoods in Britain. For instance, in 2010 the police launched a hate crimes investigation after reports that leaflets were being distributed in mosques in Kingston calling on worshippers to kill Qadiyanis (a far less respectful term for Ahmadiyyas) and a poster campaign in Tooting called on people to boycott Ahmadiyya businesses and sack Ahmadiyya employees.¹³⁰ Since 2010, Ahmadiyyas have embarked on their own 'community peace bus' campaign calling for religious tolerance. In May 2011 one such bus toured Newham and was welcomed by Stephen Timms MP.¹³¹

¹²⁹ *The Deadening Silence Of Good Intentions* by C.M.Naim posted on 18/11/11 at the Outlook India website and available at: _

<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?279021>

¹³⁰ See *Religious hate leaflets found in Tooting, Streatham and Kingston* by Omar Oakes posted on 14/10/10 and available at:

http://www.yourlocalguardian.co.uk/news/local/wimbledonnews/8451668.Religious_hate_leaflets_found_in_Tooting__Streatham_and_Kingston/

And

Worshippers told at Tooting Islamic Centre to boycott Ahmadiyya shops by Omar Oakes posted on 14/10/10 and available at:

http://www.yourlocalguardian.co.uk/news/local/wimbledonnews/8451539.Worshippers_told_to_boycott_Ahmadiyya_shops/

Some interviewees referred to the history of British protection as a source of justification for their own feelings of animosity. The British and Pakistani states' relationship with the category 'Ahmadiyyas' seemed to provide a framework for Revd Barnabas Matloob's refusal to engage with the issue of their marginalisation in local initiatives. Matloob noted that the Pakistani state's view of Ahmadiyyas as not Muslim was part of the reason for his own conclusions. Secondly, the British state's historical and contemporary support for Ahmadiyyas was reason enough for his acquiescence.¹³²

The proliferation of a sense of conspiratorial distance from the Ahmadiyyas was even projected by the otherwise left-liberal Alan Partridge who stated 'yes, I've heard about them'.¹³³ Curiously then Ahmadiyyas' assertiveness in challenging their persecution could place the onus further on them for being victimised. Clearly there are potential parallels between this logic and the backlash against feminists that seek to challenge sexism.

I want to briefly note two more subtle effects of these local multifaithism initiatives. Firstly, having been so clear about secularism and their critique of religious leaderships, there were signs that Newham Council's approach was being stirred and brought under pressure. At one meeting, the Mayor apologised for providing refreshments during Ramadan and was immediately reprimanded by Revd Canon Ann Easter for not issuing similar apologies to Christians during Lent. According to Sarah Ruiz this was an example of a concern that minority religions were being acknowledged, albeit in this tokenistic fashion, whilst Christianity continued to be hidden or down played.¹³⁴

¹³¹ News item in The Newham Recorder dated 18/05/11 and also see:
<http://www.loveforallhatredfornone.org/>

¹³² Interviewed 19/11/10.

¹³³ Interviewed 3/06/11.

Secondly, religion became a structuring feature of local discussions between the state and civil society. This is to be expected when religion becomes organised as a 'sector'. At a more recent public meeting hosted by the Newham New Deal Partnership (NNDP), once again the local council were criticised for ignoring religious groups as important civic players. Councillor Neil Wilson repeatedly referenced his interventions against an Anglican identity. Clearly this was a legitimising technique intended to both defend the local council and also provide Wilson with an authoritative voice. At this meeting, religious identity was a marker of authenticity, securing the right to speak or be heard and reminiscent of the most insular forms of Black identity in the 1980s and 1990s. This was clearest in the decision to have Albanians represented by a mosque in Walthamstow rather than offer a platform to the Newham based secular Albanian centre whose representative was seated in the audience and clearly had more information about the local Albanian population than those on the panel.¹³⁵

Respectfully engaging women through religious groups

Following on from the discussion about the NVSC Faith Sector Forum conference above, a number of points about gender/women emerged that reflect larger gendered codes for faith based engagement.

The Hindu spokesperson at the NVSC Faith Sector Conference discussed above, was an ethnic minority woman who provided information about Hinduism, which included claims about the different but equal roles for Hindu men and women. All of this was framed within an emphasis on family values. She stated:

Hindus have strong family values and both partners have equal status. It seems

¹³⁴ Interviewed 12/11/09.

¹³⁵ Field notes on seminar 'Eastern European worship in Newham' (10/05/11) organised by Newham New Deal Partnership.

outwardly that the women haven't got freedom but actually Hindu religion states that strength from each person contributes to run the family, using the strengths of both partners. For example a man is physically strong. Equally a woman has certain strengths like a naturally loving nature and she has got the strength to surrender. In order for family life to run smoothly all these have to combine and that is what has been taught to us, especially girls, from a young age. So equality doesn't mean that both the partners are doing the same thing, but using the strength from each partner and that is a real equality and that is practiced in our faith.¹³⁶

This notion of women learning to surrender seems to be repeating through faith circles. In Forest Gate, Sara Jawad Malik was running training sessions for local Muslim women called 'The Surrendered Muslimah' based on her adaptation of Laura Doyle's (1999) self help manual 'The Surrendered Wife'. Mizan Raja of Islamic Circles had invited Malik to run these workshops because he believed that there is a growing disparity between Muslim women and Muslim men, that Muslim women were running ahead with high expectations and unrealistic demands. He stated:

At the end of the day, the Muslim women have all the opportunities in the world, and the opportunities are being given by many organisations. The biggest obstacle, I personally believe with a lot of the women here, its money. A lot of them say for example we're doing the one-day Muslim youth course coming up. A lot of them don't want to do it because the youth work is basically working antisocial hours. It means the, wages are crap... But 90% of the time, the women are very materialistically orientated, both hijabi and non-hijabi. They want a quick solution to a problem. Look you've got a generation of Muslims who came in the 60s and 70s whenever it is. In one generation, our women are far more educated, far more successful, far more economically independent. It's not just the Muslims. The other communities are the same, Sikh girls, Hindu girls, Jewish women, all of them are complaining. It's men in general who have failed. In practice, men in general can't catch up with our women, can't catch up. But the other turn has been what? We've created a generation of Sex in the City and whatever, Ally McBeals. Have they found happiness? No. But they want a quick fix solution to all the problems. It's not going to happen overnight... Part of the problem is you see, and that's the reason why we do the marriage events. The marriage events, personally has opened my

¹³⁶ Jayashri Dandawate, page 9, *ibid*.

eyes to things like never before. Because I've had judges, ambassadors, women, come to me for husbands. 90% of the times one deals with one's ego. So stop blaming religion and men for everything and actually start dealing with, maybe 'I need to look in the mirror'. And think 'am I really looking for spirituality or am I looking for materialism?' And you'll find a lot of the time nobody wants to sacrifice. The root of the problem is, until the women sit down, calm down, sacrifice. If you want change, you've got to sit down, calm down. Stop blaming men for everything.

[Mizan Raja, Islamic Circles, 7/12/09]

Muslim women were projected as selfish, individualistic and materialistic. Sara Jawad Malik was called into train women to hold down their relationships including by re-orienting them to the spiritual commitments of marriage i.e. beyond making material demands of their husbands or potential spouses. I attended one such session. The other participants seemed to be genuinely struggling to make their marriages work but were unaware of established Asian women's groups in the borough and had been attracted to the 'Muslim' nature of these workshops. The workshop was a heady mixture of the temporal and transcendent where the motivation to do something about one's relationship in the present was guided by an overarching commitment to the word of Allah. The message, however, was unmistakably clear: women should try to suppress their disappointment in men, avoid nagging and see something positive in every little thing that their husbands do. Whilst formally not condoning violence against women, the onus was entirely on women to make their relationships work. The underlying sentiment advised women to express more appreciation and less criticism and most certainly to avoid confrontation. Laura Doyle's book is undoubtedly a critique of the legacy of feminist empowerment. These sessions for Muslim women are not publicly funded but need to be seen in the context of highly contested attempts to establish local norms and practices.

I want to briefly return to the NVSC Faith Sector Conference for a moment and note that the workshop on 'myths' raised similar concerns about non-traditional roles impacting on families. Under the recommendations, there is a specific section on the equality of women and it is very interesting that the areas of concern are by and large

to do with domestic violence.¹³⁷ Yet it is unclear why these issues need to be tackled on a faith basis especially when there are already long standing women's organisations working on them. Indeed many domestic violence agencies have argued that religious discourse is part of the problem. A worker at one Newham based ethnic minority women's organisation stated:

(A)lot of times women justify the inequality or the violence that they have experienced because of their religion, because, you know, it's the way their religion is or it's the way it is in the community... they often use religion as a justification for being oppressed, for unequal treatment, that there is a religious justification for their unequal position in society or in the family, in relation to men. So you know, patriarchy and religion, those ideas become confused into this, in the supremacy that religion has in their lives. And many times women say they remained in an abusive relationship because in their religion, women are viewed in a certain way or men are supposed to be able to control their wives and that men are supposed to be able to exercise their privilege within the relationship.

[Worker, ethnic minority women's group in Newham, 20/10/09]

In 2006, NVSC managed to secure a much smaller and shorter grant from the Community Development Foundation to employ a part time Faiths Participation Worker that followed through on some elements of the Conference Report by running interfaith sessions with women and young people. What struck me about these inter faith initiatives was the way in which issues themselves seemed to be born again, devoid of historical context and therefore any recognition of the reasons for secular provision or the longstanding work of secular groups in the borough.

Moreover, many of the interfaith initiatives referred to throughout this thesis comprised men, of a particular generation, talking mostly to other men. The question of engaging women through religious institutions was very controversial with a couple of interviewees asking for their comments about interactions with pious women and religious groups to be anonymised.

¹³⁷ Pages 18-19, *ibid.*

When interviewees were asked what they thought might be the impact upon local ethnic minority women of a growth of religion in the public sphere, most of them were quick to point to high levels of religiosity amongst ethnic minority women and particularly to faith based services and organisations in the borough that are lead by women. The suggestion that faith based engagement might be a problem for women was pre-empted by assertions that these pious women are successful and active in public life. Yet others advocating engagement with religious organisations also based their claim on the concern that isolated ethnic minority women could become further removed from the public sphere if they were not engaged through religious groups.

Some of the examples provided by councillors of interaction with women through local religious organisations were problematic. In one instance, Revd Quintin Peppiatt (a local councillor and vicar), a very sweet man, pointed to higher levels of religiosity amongst ethnic minorities than the white English population of Newham. He then provided an example of 'engagement' with a religious congregation in order to highlight the representation of ethnic minority women. However, this revealed normative segregation and real problems with his definition of 'engagement':

I always say my largest Christmas service is in the temple rather than in a church. The church we get quiet at Christmas but when I go down to the local Hindu temple they do a Christmas talent show come Christmas sort of thing festival celebration and I am always one of the slots... I wonder how much they can understand because some of them don't speak English too well in terms of the women. Nobody asks but I do my stuff and talk about Christmas and what it means to Christians. It's about inter-faith dialogue isn't it?

[Revd Quintin Peppiatt, Newham Councillor, 20/10/09]

He seemed happy recounting interactions like this when there appeared to be very little interaction to speak of. He knew that the Hindu women had no idea what he was talking about and there was no real exchange but he referred to it as *dialogue*.

Moreover, on the question of how much he is able to engage with Muslim women through mosques, he noted their absence but was decidedly hands off about the issue, saying that the presence or absence of Muslim women in mosques was an internal issue for Muslims.

Several other councillors pointed to the problem of interacting with the local mosques. One female councillor in particular explained that she had real difficulty getting the support of Muslim men in her ward who were actively trying to undermine her ability to represent them. On one occasion, she attended a meeting to find she was ushered into the back room of the venue and forced to address the group of men in the neighbouring room through a wall.

This mode of non-engagement was matched by dress codes that emphasised the embodiment of 'respectfully respectful' interactions with religious organisations. Another councillor's description of 'community cohesion' was deeply entangled with a sense of religious coexistence, which was actually underwritten by gendered dress codes:

Because every time I am going to church, I take Councillor Marway with me, he's a Sikh, I take Akbar Chaudhry with me, he's a Muslim. And if he's doing something, if they're doing anything, we all go to the Hindu temple and we all put our scarves on. Every time I go anywhere when I am in Newham, if I am going to any event, you will see me with my shawl. And when I get to wherever I am, as soon as I find that it's Muslim or they are just doing a prayer, I'll put my shawl on, that's how to respect each other. And I think we do that very well in Newham, you wouldn't see anybody wearing a short skirt when there are some other religious groups, they won't do it. You know, so I think the community cohesion and the way we do things in Newham is actually something that some boroughs should emulate.

[Councillor Joy Laguda, 2/12/09]

Far from the social and ideological engineering that is being supposed by the

implementation of Prevent Violent Extremism programmes particularly by focusing on women's representation (see, for instance, Kundnani, 2009), I found a real lack of willingness or interest in challenging the views of ethnic minority religious institutions.

Contesting Muslim Leadership

The search for Muslim partners has been another important dimension of the debate on religious leadership. Post 9/11, one might have predicted that Blair's 'faith agenda' would crumble in the face of spectacular displays of religious violence. Instead, he was able to exploit its beneficiaries and line up Muslim 'leaders' to defend his War on Terror. This section focuses on the 'soft' yet insidious side of the government's War on Terror as Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) programmes. By shining a spotlight on the expenditure of PVE funding in Newham it highlights the struggle over authority and sovereignty amongst Muslim groups that seek to control rather than oppose or critique PVE as public policy. This section also highlights the way in which Newham Council's response to PVE both reinforces and contradicts the central government agenda. On the one hand, Newham has contradicted the objective of identifying and co-opting partners by undertaking most of the PVE work in-house. On the other hand, it has utilised a 'cohesion' and 'Britishness' mantra not that far removed from the national call to patriotism and shared values, as a mechanism for sidestepping both Islamism and religious conservatism. At the heart of this struggle over power is the commitment 'omnes et singulatum', the balance between the role of the state in safeguarding the security of its population and its role in protecting individual rights to freedom of expression and dissent, especially the freedom of religion and belief (Foucault, 1978; Rose 1999).

After the 7th July 2005 suicide bombings of the London underground, New Labour established a Preventing Violent Extremism Working Group which identified four particular areas of concern through which radicalisation needed to be tackled at the local level: decision making and community engagement; deprivation and inequality; identity and debates about Islam; and Islamophobia. In essence the idea was to enact

forms of 'engagement' with Muslims to counter disaffection and engage in religious literacy to counter extremist projections of Islam. In 2007 New Labour launched the Preventing Violent Extremism pathfinder programme which sought to fund local projects that would work with Muslims to encourage them away from extremism. The Prevent programme comprised one strand of the government's Contest counter terrorism strategy. So whilst Contest focused on the hard face of terrorism legislation, intelligence gathering and the criminalisation of terrorist networks, Prevent was to focus on the 'softer' issues like disaffection and religious understanding. Of course none of this really addressed questions of poverty and deprivation or the contribution of the Iraq War to disaffection or radicalisation. Rather, Prevent can be seen as a form of old style government co-option, bringing risk factors within the realms of governance rather than allowing them to foment as opposition forces and critics on the outside. Moreover, according to Arun Kundnani (2009), funds were not distributed on the basis of local need and plans but rather in direct proportion to the numbers of Muslims living in each area, making Muslims or Islam the sole focus of the policy. Particularly pertinent in the context of Cameron's recent speech about 'muscular liberalism' is that in 2009 New Labour revised its counter-terrorism strategy and introduced Contest 2, which included a commitment to widening the focus of interest from 'violent extremism' to 'extremism' to ensure that organisations could be prevented from accessing state funding and support if classed as 'extremist' and even if they were not involved in criminal activity or violence.

On 4th November 2010, the Islamic Circles held a public meeting at the Froud Centre in Manor Park entitled 'Question Time: PVE in Newham - £2 million missing & unaccounted for'. The publicity material called for greater transparency in local government and sought to address how central government grants under the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) programme were allocated locally and to find out what sort of work was being undertaken. The publicity material contained additional comments about Newham Council's evasiveness and lack of response to requests under the Freedom of Information Act as well as reference to enquiries about 'corruption' within the council. The sardonic tone of the publicity material

extends this suggestion of corruption to allegations that PVE grants were used to 'employ relatives of councillors to attend English language classes' and to pay advisory consultants that were 'former spooks and Met Police Officers which bill into the thousands'. However, the publicity material also berated Newham's Muslims for being apathetic or consumed by material goals namely 'the Olympics property bubble' rather than investing their energies in useful acts of holding the local State to account.

A long list of politicians and speakers were invited including: newly appointed ministers Andrew Stunnell, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State to the Department for Communities and Local Government, and Sayeeda Warsi, Minister without Portfolio & Co-Chairman of the Conservative Party; the Mayor; and all 60 of Newham's councillors. The Conservatives, Stunnell and Warsi sent their apologies (Raja claimed that Warsi sent hers by text message indicating her relationship with Muslim groups and his relationship with central government) but not a single Newham (Labour) councillor responded to the invitation 'to explain themselves'. In the end the meeting was introduced and lead by Mizan Raja.

In addition to the lack of participation of invited speakers, the meeting did not match my own expectations of attendance on the basis that at an earlier in depth interview, Mizan Raja had claimed an extensive e-list membership. Moreover, the meeting took place within days of the conviction of a local Bengali woman, Roshonara Choudhry, for the attempted murder of the local MP Stephen Timms and soon after Barack Obama's call for the extra-judicial killing of the Yemeni based American national, Anwar Al Awlaki. So I was surprised to count just 25 people at the event. The attendees were predominantly south Asian men. The only non-south Asian male in the room was an English researcher from outside London. There were only six women present including myself and three particularly outspoken women (in hijab) at the front of the room. Aside from an Urdu teacher seated behind me and the two representatives of the Newham Muslim Alliance (including AK Sheikh), the vast majority of participants were in their late twenties to early thirties. Importantly, in

comparison to the highly structured performances of the Citizens' UK events discussed in Chapters 3 and 7, this was all very ad hoc, people were seated and spoke freely without any chairing. The only formal restrictions that I sensed were rather about 'authentic' representation and dress. I was particularly conscious that I was one of the few non Muslims in the room and that my skirt, low cleavage, uncovered hair and net tights seemed out of place in a room where the women were more than modestly covered up.

A number of the men seated at the centre of the room were able to kick start the discussion by explaining what sort of information their FOIAs had retrieved. Even then, it was clear that Newham council had dragged their feet in responding and avoided providing any real detail on the way in which their PVE programme had been devised, who had been consulted, the names of any providers and / or consultants and exactly how funding had been allocated. There was a general sense at the meeting that the pressure on Newham Council should continue and could be increased by engaging the local or national press.

However, rather than an expected critique of PVE as public policy, the meeting soon switched to a discussion about Muslim representation in the borough. AK Sheikh and his colleague were criticised for the complacency of local mosques. A number of the young men at the back of the room argued that a large central mosque akin to the East London Mosque in Tower Hamlets would be better because it would be active in the local area and exist as a central place for engagement with Muslims. Kevin Blowe (25/04/08) had already noted that AK Sheikh was working with the police's Gold Group. AK Sheikh claimed two things: political paralysis on account of being voted out of office and Green Street mosque had been active in representing Muslims such as by working with local schools.

Only the women at the front of the room wanted to steer the meeting back to a discussion about PVE expenditure and the accountability they expected as taxpayers

rather than as Muslims. Nevertheless, it was clear that the meeting was less about challenging or critiquing the nature of PVE and more about mobilising pressure to see how the money had been allocated. Indeed at our pre meeting, Mizan Raja revealed that he had accepted PVE funding to take young people to Turkey and then Bosnia. It was unclear what those trips were about and how they fulfilled the role of Preventing Violent Extremism.

There was very little reference to Muslim fundamentalism, its local, national or global impact and what, if anything might be the appropriate way to tackle this rise. Several members of the audience expressed defensiveness in relation to the press coverage of the Roshonara Choudhry verdict. However, their interest was not in how Choudhry had become radicalised but rather concern that the individual actions of someone that they depicted as disturbed and emotionally vulnerable were being projected by the media as an example of the persistent problem of Muslim extremism. The discussions that I had with Mizan Raja before the meeting and HT sympathisers after the event were particularly insightful. Firstly Raja's view of the problem in relation to Roshonara Choudhry was rather that she was the product of a dysfunctional family than politically motivated by her readings of Awlaki's sermons. Secondly, he suspected that Awlaki (and Ali Al Timimi and Moazzam Begg) were decoys for an imperialist agenda and even suggested that there was no firm proof that Choudhry had been accessing Awlaki's material on the internet. Indeed his defensive reaction to the question of Muslim fundamentalism involved reverting to conspiratorial claims questioning the authorship of the internet material being assigned to Awlaki and Ali Al Timimi. He maintained that both men were highly respected scholars. Infact in order to challenge the slippery concept of 'extremism', he noted that Sufi speakers at the recent Global Rally for Peace and Unity (summer 2010) did not fulfil the image of Sufis as peace loving and otherworldly but rather also advocated jihad.

In addition to this point about the slipperiness of the term 'extremism' and in line with Kundnani's (2009) analysis of the social engineering dimensions of the PVE

agenda, Raja noted that Newham Council had used part of its PVE money to establish a GCSE in Islamic Studies. Conversely, if Raja had any kind of analysis of the reasons for fundamentalism or religious violence this was focused on the breakdown of the family. Indeed he accepted that he shares with Cameron's Compassionate Conservatism as view that social issues are a consequence of the behavioural problems caused by the breakdown of family and society.

After the PVE public meeting, two of the young south Asian male participants boarded the same bus to Stratford station and continued criticising Newham Council. This time the basis of their complaint was the Council's refusal to rent rooms to the Hizb ut-Tahrir. A question about why anyone should want to rent public premises to a fundamentalist group sent an otherwise friendly interaction into a tense and heated exchange. It was met with the charge that Hizb ut-Tahrir is a legitimate political party with a formal membership and with support in the local borough whose residents pay taxes for the public use of such buildings. Moreover, the same men claimed that Shariah was widely supported amongst Muslims (one boomed 'Muslims want this, it is what they want!') supplemented with a reference to the hugely controversial Policy Exchange report on Muslims in Britain.

For his part, the then Councillor with the portfolio for Community Affairs and Community Intelligence, Unmesh Desai, did not seem to be focused on Muslims in the borough but rather on a range of 'extremist' ideologies ranging from jihadism to the predominantly white racism of the British National Party. He described a PVE agenda oriented towards a number of features: encouraging civic engagement and deterring political alienation; pushing away from segregation by actively inducing opportunities for interaction across differences; encouraging harmonious relations between diverse sections of the population and challenging discriminatory ideologies such as anti Muslim racism and anti Semitism. Contrary to the general flow of classless debates on cohesion, Desai seemed clear that material inequality persists as an issue that could give rise to grievance. He identified a series of routes through which these objectives could be fulfilled, specifically noting education and schools

work, leadership training, active citizenship and funding for a range of cross cultural/ethnic leisure activities including sports events, Flag Days (that mark the Independence Day of the countries of origin of Newham's residents) and a gala night that annually showcases difference. Moreover, he didn't seem at all reluctant to reel off the names of a number of organisations that he had been meeting with a view to commissioning PVE work including: Hope not Hate; Searchlight; the Anne Frank Foundation; the Quilliam Foundation; the Change Institute; the Swift Centre; Active Citizens Foundation and the Holocaust Memorial Trust.

However, given the number of complaints that I had been listening to about political practice and lack of democracy in Newham as well as the lack of debate about the Iraq invasion, it did seem ironic that Desai issued a commitment to engagement between the Council and the local population, a willingness to hear grievances, and a desire to ensure a sense of ownership and develop a democratic 'Newham Agenda'. Moreover, he acknowledged the role of the police and the surveillance dimensions of PVE.¹³⁸ On the question of unity, cohesion and Britishness he certainly was talking about a policy of social construction:

So it's actually being positive and using the Prevent agenda, and the money, it's not an agenda following the money, which has happened elsewhere, but here using those resources to promote our way of bringing communities together, which is the Newham approach to community cohesion. Not seeing groups in isolation but using collective resources, collective structures to actually promote the, to actually promote that unity in practice. You can talk about Britishness in isolation, this debate about what is British, to a large extent it remains a very abstract debate, Britishness is actually created in practice.

[Unmesh Desai, Newham Councillor, 8/10/09]

Desai later argued in a CiF piece for The Guardian that countering ideology is an important dimension of tackling extremism. He stated:

¹³⁸ Interviewed 8/10/09.

(Mehdi) Hasan defends the Federation of Student Islamic Societies against claims of not doing enough to challenge extremist ideology by saying that, in holding a conference on campus extremism, they have done their bit. One wishes it was so simple. Many of these societies have over the years invited odious, hate-filled speakers who are virulently anti-Semitic, anti-gay, anti-west and ideologues of terror. Unchallenged by a liberal academia who prefer to view such activity through the prism of academic debate and free speech, is it any wonder that such an environment has produced people like the alleged transatlantic bomber, Umar Abdulmutallab, ex-president of the University College London Islamic Society? ¹³⁹

Furthermore, he referred to Hasan's points about the impact of foreign policy on extremism as 'an excuse' that reflects 'lazy thinking'.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, whilst Raja seemed to deny the active mobilisation of Islamist groups and some anti racist activists focused solely on the State, Desai seemed unable to acknowledge the role of the British State, to critique the terms of the PVE debate or to reflect on the slipperiness of the term 'extremism' and the propensity for its use against dissenting political voices or Opposition. Moreover, the ease with which his response could be linked to the revival of patriotism was demonstrated in the comments reply to his article:

I don't know what Britishness is but I do know that all Britains share a common sovereign. Perhaps school children should have to sing God Save the Queen each morning as they face the Union Jack. Britishness may be a hard thing to unite around but all Britains can unite around their fealty to the Queen. Singing God Save the Queen will likely be preventative in the development of hardened Islamists owing to the God in question's main interlocutor being Rowan Williams rather than the Grand Mufti.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ *No you can not treat violent and non violent extremism separately* by Unmesh Desai posted on 14/06/11 at The Guardian's Comment is Free section and available at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jun/14/violent-extremism-tackled-london>

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the state's attempts to construct and consolidate communities through various social policy and funding measures. It is particularly interesting to consider the situation in Newham because the local state has not been willing to reproduce every element of the New Labour project even if it has been referred to as a model New Labour borough.

It is Goldenberg's suggestion that religious organisations can be viewed as 'vestigial states' that clears the way to see the shared pastoral and surveillance functions of the state and religious organisations. This relationship between the state and religious groups is embodied in the role of 'religious leaders'. In the last decade, central government has been actively reviving religious leaderships across the country. Some interviewees argued that religious leaders can promote cohesion and harmony but this chapter problematises this suggestion by raising questions about their tendency to police territories, boundaries and behaviour. Also, Newham Council's critique poses its own questions about 'community' or 'religious' leadership as a model of representation particularly with regards to their input on social issues.

Moreover, the section on inter-faith alliances shows that the engagement between religious groups is structured through the normativisation of the tropes of tolerance, decency and respect. These interfaith alliances are akin to Parekh's 'community of communities' in which the principle of co-existence enables relationships but also the perpetuation of certain views and values as norms and the consolidation of intra relations of power through interfaith dialogue. This is exemplified in the paradox that the Hindu Right can live comfortably within spaces established to create 'tolerance' whilst the repetitive exclusion or marginalisation of Ahmadiyya Muslims assumes the status of a common understanding across religious leaders and their organisations, even amongst the most liberal-left. Also, the spatial dimensions of the faith agenda are demonstrated in the glocal impact of Ahmadiyya persecution as well as the ability of the transnational supremacist project of VHP to sit comfortably within the local area because of its physical premises. Both the relationship of

religious organisations and the British state since colonialism as well as this issue of how local space is organised and utilised by religious communitarianism runs over into Chapters 6 and 7.

Also at the heart of interviews about engagement with faith based initiatives were anecdotes of the gendered nature of these encounters premised on 'respect' and requiring either physical distance between men and women or gendered codes of dress as pre-requisites for engagement. The 'respectfully respectful' nature of faith-based interaction was extended to push aside feminist legacies of empowerment and enforce the normative injunction for wives to 'surrender' to their partners at workshops for Muslim women struggling with difficult marriages. This was 'surrender' to differentiated gender roles and acquiescence over confrontation.

Particularly interesting is the fact that some of these exchanges and relationships were enabled by less visibly religious white bodies considered 'neutral'. Moreover, the unfinished business of local views of Newham council as undemocratic were strengthened when they either refused or restricted their engagement with these central government funded inter faith initiatives. Yet it was the Newham councillors' repeated commitment to secularism (and the reasons for its emergence) and a critique of the undemocratic nature of religious leaderships that acted as a greater protection for LGBT and women's rights and also the inclusion of minorities within minorities, such as the Ahmadiyyas, in an area where some streets had been 'cleaned up' of out gay bodies and pubs or bars.

Newham is even more interesting as the site for tackling violent extremism because the borough has been the subject of surveillance and brutal anti terror policing but also of religious fundamentalist mobilisations. Whilst the police continue to have a relationship with (older) religious leaders, they do not appear to have credibility in the eyes of younger people, more likely to turn to Islam as an alternative political narrative and authority. One instance where a socially conservative group attempts to

hold the local council to account for the expenditure of PVE funding notes the focus is not on any of the expected issues - fundamentalism or the problem with PVE funding - but rather focuses on legitimate Muslim representation and a lack of local transparency. This is a problematic situation in which Newham Council's anti democratic tendencies open up spaces of critique but that critique is led by the religious Right and social conservatives. Even if Newham's Labour Group is the only one challenging religious intolerance and hatred, they are subject to critique precisely because they are seen as far from democratic or transparent. The fact that they chose to deliver most of their PVE programme in-house is seen as another means of avoiding Third Sector participation or critique. Moreover, having retained a clear distance from New Labour's managerialist revival of 'leaders', Newham Council does reinforce New Labour's assimilationist turn to 'cohesion' and 'Britishness', partly as a technique to sidestep Islamist and socially conservative religious leaderships.

Chapter 5: From Anti Racism to Muslim Identity Politics

Introduction

This chapter focuses on sociologically important themes about the ways in which anti racist activists have attempted to negotiate the growth of Muslim political identifications, on the one hand and the state's War on Terror, on the other. I begin with activists' own reflections on the changing political context and the reasons for the emergence of Muslim political identities and groups. I then consider their attempts to challenge the encroachment of anti terror policing on civil liberties within the context of a resurgent political Islam. This section is followed by a note about what religion reveals of the divergent political locations amongst anti racists vis a vis the State, silences on the incidence of religious violence and techniques that are utilised to shift the focus back to the State. This does not mean that I wish to underplay or ignore the appalling State practices and legislation that have actively undermined civil liberties since 9/11. Rather, creating a space to pay attention to both the silences and the strategies is a significant element of the critique being offered by this thesis and an important means for rebalancing the focus of both academic and local political debates from the victims of State terror to the victims of fundamentalism.

Beleaguered Anti-Racism, Emergent Islamism

As part of the fieldwork for this thesis, I interviewed a number of anti racist organisations and activists covering each of the boroughs and/or the London area in general.¹⁴² With the exception of the significantly younger member of the 1990 Trust, all of these interviewees came into political activism during the 1970s and 1980s

¹⁴² This included: Suresh Grover of The Monitoring Group or TMG (formerly known as Southall Monitoring Group or SMG); Asad Rehman and Kevin Blowe of Newham Monitoring Project (NMP); Ansar Ahmed Ullah of the International Forum for a Secular Bangladesh or the Nirmul Committee; Pavan Dhaliwal of The 1990 Trust; Sarbjit Johal of the South Asia Solidarity Group (SASG); and Wilf Sullivan, the Race Equality Officer at the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

heyday of anti racism and 'black' politics. All of them noted the demise of anti racist politics and the rise and rise of religious identities, particularly Islam. A number of reasons were given, some of which were attached to key moments. Importantly, their combination signalled a double movement, from above and from below, which had enabled the growth and consolidation of religious political identifications.

Firstly, organisations that had emerged during the 1970s/80s had become immersed in service provision or the consolidation of their individual group, which meant that the thriving dynamism of that formative period had gradually subsided and a vacuum opened up. In Newham, Kevin Blowe also noted that the decimation of community organisations in the south of the borough opened up a space for the proliferation of evangelical Christian groups, a particular focal point for newer African communities.

Secondly, international events had impacted on the particular growth of a Muslim political identity. The specific historical moments referred to included: the White Revolution in Iran, the Rushdie Affair, the assault on Muslims in Bosnia (and criticism of the Blair-led NATO intervention) and the invasion of Iraq. Whilst some interviewees maintained that the faith agenda had been largely state-led, Asad Rehman (NMP) noted that young people that might otherwise have engaged in anti racist politics split off when Bosnia happened and veered towards Islamist organisations. These Islamist groups provided a new narrative for international events that drew connections between Afghanistan, Palestine, Algeria, Bosnia and Chechnya. Suresh Grover (TMG) argued that this emergent Muslim political identity accelerated at a pace that could not have been anticipated prior to the twists and turns of New Labour's War on Terror. He stated:

Some people have said they knew this was going to happen and they could have predicted 7/7. I think everyone in their worst nightmares expects the worst but I don't think anyone had shown historically and consistently the growth and immediate mass radicalisation. The reason I say that is because, objectively, a number of circumstances existed and began to come into play, which no one expected. Yes we could have expected Iraq to be invaded but prior to the Labour

Party coming into power, we would not have thought they could invade 3 or 4 countries in that space of time. Yes we didn't have any illusions that Blair would build a welfare state but we didn't expect them to take a position that 2 million people coming on to the streets would not have any impact on the Labour government. Even I expected some kind of reaction from the Blair government. But that march only succeeded in stopping this government and the Americans from invading Iran, in a preventative way.

[Suresh Grover, TMG, 14/02/08]

Thirdly, New Labour's administrative / managerial approach to government relied heavily on the construction of 'faith communities' and the consolidation of religious leaderships. Ansar Ahmed Ullah noted the following impact in Tower Hamlets:

In the eighties and nineties, I don't think that religious groups were consulted. Secular groups were consulted. I remember that if the police, if the local administration, the Home Office wanted to consult with the local community, the local Asian, Black, Bengali community, they came to groups like the Bangladesh Welfare Association, groups like the one that I was involved with, the Federation of Bangladeshi Youth. And in those days, faith groups had no role to play as far as I'm aware. Today the police, the central government, the local administration, the local political parties, consult faith groups when it comes to consultation with the local community. The East London Mosque is in a prominent position when it comes to consultation. It is one place where government ministers, local government, central government and other agencies will go and consult with them when it comes to consulting local community, they will not go to the welfare association or even to Brick Lane mosque. So the representation of the local community has shifted not only to faith groups but to *one* faith group, the one that is lead by JI (Jamaat-e-Islami). So that has definitely happened in the last 10-15 years.

[Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Nirmul Committee, 3/10/07]

Amongst most of these anti racists there was a sense of regret that a certain kind of (better) politics had been lost and was being replaced by more problematic and

closed identifications.¹⁴³ Suresh Grover depicted the most positive dimensions of that period of political activity as located within a larger Left socialist and emancipatory project connecting many streams of disadvantage (class, race, gender and sexuality) and dynamic debates about political ideas.¹⁴⁴ He described the ways in which anti racism was located within a cultural politics that embraced art and music and created spaces for new hybrid forms. Moreover, it was a period of hope and possibility where activists in these new movements pushed out beyond their comfort zones to make seemingly impossible demands that transgressed the bounds of political structures and social policy. Importantly, several interviewees described the youth movements of that period as breaking with an established hegemony

¹⁴³ This is also part of the momentum behind recent attempts to document and revisit the most positive dimensions of 1970s and 1980s activism. See, for instance, Anandi Ramamurthy's work on Kala Tara (at <http://www.tandana.org/>) and Shakila Maan's work on The Southall Story (at <http://www.thesouthallstory.com/>). Both projects emphasise the secular and diverse basis of local struggles. In her essay on Asian Youth Movements, Anandi Ramamurthy (2006) argued that young people's affinity with the political notion of a Black identity was 'resolutely secular and non-sectarian' and invoked a 'unity in diversity' approach to religious and cultural identity (2006:46).

¹⁴⁴ The interview with Kevin Blowe revealed more recent attempts to supplement activism with political debates. He referred to the particularly vibrant Radical Activists Network (RAN), created in 2004 after the London meeting of the European Social Forum. RAN was expressly set up to create a space away from the imposing politics of the organised Left (and its anti racist wing) and saw itself as a network of non-aligned Left-leaning people. As such it encompassed the kind of rainbow spectrum alluded to by Suresh Grover in his account of 1970s Southall. It brought together discussion of policing issues with a wider civil liberties agenda that encompassed a critique of the international development paradigm and environmental consciousness. However, it is my view that this initiative also carried a less than critical edge on religion and politics, especially when it came to Islam. So, it may have sought to break away from The 1990 Trust / Operation Black Vote / SWP schema of assuming that Muslim representation equals religious representation as well as the Stop the War Coalition's conspiratorial murmurings about Jews, but some of the individuals involved with this new circle (and the connected 6 Billion Ways event) also embraced theo-politics and provided platforms for two key Islamic Right personalities - Tariq Ramadan and Moazzam Begg. Moreover, sexuality and reproductive rights were not part of these debates. I think this goes some way to showing that, post-9/11, feminism or LGBT rights continued to be seen as outside anti imperialist and class politics whilst the new religious/Muslim turn was inside them.

comprising religious and community leaders. Anandi Ramamurthy's (2006) essay on Asian Youth Movements described the divergent approaches of the older more established ethnic minority and religious leaders as 'integrationist' and the younger members of the Asian Youth Movements as based on 'open revolt'. The former, she stated, 'wanted to work with and through British social and political organisations and wanted negotiation' whilst the latter were characterised by direct action methods and a discourse of self-defence (2006: 42).

Suresh Grover's reflections on the changing political context are particularly illustrated by his comparison of the responses to the 1979 riots, on the one hand and the 2001 riots, on the other. Whilst he noted similar causes - Far Right mobilisation and police harassment - and parallel responses in terms of local community self organisation, he also highlighted the following:

In '79, despite gross brutality by the police, arrest of something like 750 people and charge of 345 people, we were able to mount a campaign and actually turn things around, develop a national campaign on Blair Peach. In the first four weeks of trials, the conviction rate was 74%. We turned it to 51%. 23% difference! 11 people were sent to prison. We had TUC arguing for disbanding SPGs (Special Patrol Groups). There was that Left stream that supported us. Come to 2001, media goes down and members of parliament like Marsha Singh, who were part of the youth movement with people like me in Bradford, asked for more policing and water canons! The Blairite legacy had taken over and no dissent whatsoever, massive police arrest, 500 people arrested and massive number of young people had gone missing. And who takes them in? Their parents and the mullahs! And how many people were convicted? In our case because of the movement that existed around us, 1 person, in 345 people charged, only one person pleaded guilty. But with Bradford riots, 99% of people pleaded guilty.

[Suresh Grover, TMG, 14/02/08]

Of note here is the role of religious organisations in handing over rioters through forms of soft policing.

Several anti racist activists continued to emphasise the possibilities that 'black' as a political concept inheres. However, they drew clear distinctions between their use of the term and Tariq Modood's (1988, 1994) projection of it in his critique. Even whilst interviewees noted the empirical reality of significant transformations in political identifications, they did not support suggestions that the term 'black' repressed religious identities and cultural differences in favour of a constructed homogeneity defined largely by the British Caribbean experience. Rather they appeared to be in agreement on a number of key points. Firstly, several of them argued that the phrase, 'the black community', had not been intended to erase difference but rather to create a layer of unity based on shared experiences of racism, colonialism and immigration rules. Secondly, religious identities and places of worship had always existed and were a daily reality as people prayed and practiced their religious beliefs at many levels. This also involved anti racist activists attending religious events where religious rites were being performed, for instance, for someone that had been killed through racial violence or in custody. Suresh Grover referred to the religious service for Zahid Mubarak, the Asian teenager that was murdered in 2000 by his racist cell mate at the Feltham Young Offenders Institute, and the request from Doreen and Neville Lawrence to invite a preacher to lead a public meeting about the murder of their son, Stephen Lawrence. Moreover, anti racist organisations had worked with religious groups on shared areas of concern, notably on campaigns against racial violence and immigration rules, which had a wide appeal because they were obstructing family reunification.

In comparison, Suresh Grover (TMG) depicted the new wave of religious political identities as parochial and inward facing with little cross over or empathy with other spaces of politics. He noted that amongst the informal networks in Beeston, Leeds, 'Islam is a way of life, everything is about Islam'. The point here is that some political identifications are now based on an Islamist cartography of a so-called 'Muslim world'. This comprises a view of the actions of the British State and international affairs through a religious lens coupled with conceptions of Muslim sovereignty. Rather than revealing a previously forgotten natural affinity, this

religious cartography has been constructed by Islamist social movements. It is a modern invention that presumes unity across a Muslim community (Ummah) irrespective of local, regional, historical and ethnic differences (Bhatt, 1997). It contests the overriding authority of the British State, defers to Muslim intermediaries and indeed it decentres the political subject through a dangerous 'coupling of human self-importance and a denial of responsibility for human agency' by displacing agency and authority to god (Bhatt, 1997:106). At the local level, this is an important feature of new 'glocalised' identities and related political formations that knit diasporic kinship and political networks together and transform them into context-specific local actions (Back et al 2009: 5). Mizan Raja and Islamic Circles, referred to throughout this thesis, are prime examples of such a politics.

These changes have given rise to new systems of representation, related claims, authenticating and legitimating practices. Asad Rehman (NMP) expressed a great deal of frustration with the fact that religious identity had become a pre-requisite for engagement. This is best illustrated by his frank and open revelations about the preference of some Muslims subjected to anti terror policing to be less interested in being (legally or otherwise) represented by those with a clear perspective on the State and their preference to project Muslims as 'prisoners of war' and connect with people that fulfilled their criteria for Muslim religious practice. In particular, he gave the example of those expressing a preference to be represented by the solicitor Mrs Irani because she wears a hijab rather than by Gareth Pierce who has a strong track record of uncovering miscarriages of justice.¹⁴⁵ Rehman's points were affirmed by Mizan Raja's assertion that Harris Rafique of the Sufi Muslim Council could not claim to represent Muslims because 'he doesn't even pray'.¹⁴⁶

Rehman described his own interventions as attempts to break through what he saw as a self-fulfilling mirror game between the State and Islamists, each reinforcing the

¹⁴⁵ Asad Rehman, 9/08/07.

¹⁴⁶ Interviewed 7/12/09.

other's terms in order to consolidate a view of Muslims and the West as incompatible. Thus he stated:

Well actually what you need to be doing is moving this to a space, if you define it as Muslim, nobody else is going to engage with you. Unless there is something else and it gives people a language that they understand, where people can see the concepts, they can relate to you, they can see you as a human being, they can do all of those things. If you do what the State wants you to do, you just reinforce each other. It's like the dance of the devils ain't it? We all know Bush needs Osama, Osama needs Bush. And it's the same in terms of this. The right wing loves the fact that the State represses and the State loves the fact that there are these mad Muslims. They justify each other and, you know, we were trying to break that discourse within our communities, or at least within a limited area of our community because we weren't able to fight everywhere.

[Asad Rehman, NMP, 9/08/07]

In particular, Rehman seemed exasperated by the inability of these new Muslim political organisations to locate their experience as one facet of anti racist and civil liberties struggles.

Grover, Blowe and Rehman seemed clear that there is an established Muslim leadership and then other Muslim representatives located outside the spaces of State governance. Many people have argued that not all Muslims look to 'religious' leaders and rather define on secular lines but within the spectrum of Muslim identity politics certain groups are not represented. Kevin Blowe argued that Newham's mosques are not ethnically diverse. They are predominantly Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Somalians are excluded. Suresh Grover was quick to point out that many of the young men articulating jihadi positions that he had been working with do not see themselves as represented by Muslim groups like the Muslim Council of Britain and the Muslim Safety Forum who position themselves as intermediaries between Muslims and the state. Grover noted the groundswell of Somali politicisation and its lack of representation amongst predominantly South Asian and Middle Eastern Muslim

leaderships in Britain. He described a meeting that he had attended in west London dominated by Hizb ut-Tahrir activists where the audience largely comprised Somali young men.¹⁴⁷ Interestingly, Rehman noted that the new religious political identifications engaging younger people, particularly Hizb ut-Tahrir, are at some level, broader than 'race' based politics because they encompass people from a range of ethnic, cultural, national and linguistic backgrounds. Paradoxically, Chetan Bhatt's (1997) work draws out the distance between the diverse membership of these new religious political mobilisations and their supremacist politics constructed around restricted hereditary claims to land, blood and rights.

Moreover, these arguments about membership and representation are particularly interesting because of their parallels with Ghaffar Hussain's (Quilliam Foundation) points about the distinct tactical differences amongst Islamic Right groupings. Specifically, the Jamaat-e-Islami groups (manifesting in Britain as the Bangladeshi and Pakistani dominated Muslim Council of Britain, East London Mosque and the Muslim Safety Forum) are interested to work through the British political system in order to Islamicise existing relations, such as by fielding political candidates in elections and by creating enclosures of governance where they can exercise influence and control (such as the Muslim Council of Britain's guidance for schools). The Hizb ut-Tahrir, on the other hand, do not field political candidates, they still aspire to a revolutionary overhaul of the existing system and the establishment of an Islamic state, notably the return to a Caliphate. The Jamaat-e-Islami groups view the Hizb ut-Tahrir as an 'out of control younger brother', even if in real terms they have very similar ideological ambitions.¹⁴⁸ So it is a simple but important fact that, for all the reasons just given and many others, those 'Muslim leaders' in relationships with the State quite possibly do not represent the young people subscribing to other Islamic Right groups and particularly those at the harsher end of jihadi politics as well as State surveillance practices. These other Islamic Right groupings seek political leverage through civil society rather than the State.

¹⁴⁷ Interviewed 14/02/08.

¹⁴⁸ As discussed at a meeting on 26/09/11.

'We are willing to get our hands dirty, not shout from ivory towers': Negotiating the Terrain of the War on Terror

Importantly the transformations outlined in the previous section appear to have impacted on the nature of anti racist organisations; during the height of the War on Terror they seemed to be almost entirely focused on the surveillance functions of the State. There was an acceptance that the terrain had changed, bringing about a new alignment of interests between those challenging new forms of racism and defending civil liberties, on the one hand, and those engaged in Muslim identity politics, on the other. By seeing themselves as civil liberties organisations that check the power of the State, anti racist activists made an active decision to negotiate this difficult terrain. This section considers those difficult negotiations.

Anti racists employed a number of strategies for negotiating this complex new field. The starkest distinction in approaches came from juxtaposing the contributions of the Nirmul Committee's 'no platform' position and the 1990 Trust's decision to establish a 'Faith and Race Committee'. Ansar Ahmed Ullah spelt out the Nirmul Committee's view as follows:

And I guess the argument one could use, well if one was to work with say the white working class poor communities and you wanted to find groups that could go and work with that community, well I guess you would not choose the BNP or the National Front because of their racist views or their right wing ideology. The same situation we've got here. If you wanted to work with the Muslim community, then I think, for us, it would be wrong to get the JI (Jamaat-e-Islami) or their front groups to go and work with that community. Whereas I have no problem with the Brick Lane mosque. So it's not faith groups per se, it's what groups we are talking about. And if those groups are in the business of oppressing other communities, or are seen as Islamist, then we can't really work with those groups. Not only that, we must oppose them and challenge them just as one would do with the BNP and the NF.

[Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Nirmul Committee, 3/10/07]

Conversely, some of the people that both Ansar Ahmed Ullah and Suresh Grover were critiquing as part of their work for Awaaz, the south Asian anti communalism network, were part and parcel of the post New Labour religious leadership that The 1990 Trust had engaged for their new Faith and Race Committee, namely the Muslim Council of Britain and the Hindu Forum. Pavan Dhaliwal explained The 1990 Trust position as follows:

We identified that this has become, from before we were talking more about race politics, we've seen that it has become more about religious politics as well. Religion has been brought into it. So we can't ignore that, that is absolutely fine for people to assert themselves on the basis of their religion, it's not their primary identity but it would be part of their identities. And if people you know sign up for these organisations, they feel represented by them, then we are happy to sit at a table with them as well to see what they think are the pressing issues of the time and how we can may be support. So in the current climate, if we have all those religious leaders at the table and then the Muslim leader says well this is our problem here and this is what we are facing, then the other leaders can also work with and support the Muslim leader and the Jewish leader on their issue. It's like strength in numbers really. (It's) about them supporting everybody else. And the Trust has got a history in that, in terms of race relations and anti racism. There is no conflict in having an element of religion in that as well.

[Pavan Dhaliwal, The 1990 Trust, 3/12/07]

Members of The Monitoring Group and Newham Monitoring Project described attempts at more nuanced positions, emphasising the complexity of the field. Thus Suresh Grover stated:

From September 11th things are very different in organising than they were before. Some of the meetings we have gone to such as in Beeston (Leeds) where 3-400 people turn up involving around 20 activists, out of which 9 are now in prison for terrorist activities... So the milieu we work with is like that, some of them are innocent, some of them implicated because they knew others... In Beeston our question was how did it happen and how can we stop it happening? ... We are willing to get our hands dirty, not shout from ivory towers. We go into areas for work where the view is not censored. (That includes) pockets of white under-privileged

marginalised geographical areas, poor people, no one cares a shit for them. People have censored themselves from that group because they are deemed racist. We came to the conclusion that if it comes to working in that area then we have to go there to defeat them there.

[Suresh Grover, TMG, 14/02/08]

Similarly Asad Rehman (NMP) spoke of his decision to engage with some elements of Muslim identity politics in the hope that he could convince them to rethink their framework and draw them away from Islamic Right organisations. On his contact with Newham Public Affairs Committee (NPAC), he stated:

So it was this, are they a progressive force? Can you influence them? Can you make them a progressive force? How do you make them progressive? And I felt, you know, that these are people worth fighting for, you know. You shouldn't allow just because somebody says these people are religious, that they should align with reactionary forces.

[Asad Rehman, NMP, 9/08/07]

Suresh Grover drew parallels between the contemporary work of his organisation on Muslims and the War on Terror and their previous work with Sikh men subject to arrest and detention at the height of Khalistani mobilisations in 1980s Southall. He argued that TMG's approach had been to 'look at a local situation, try to understand it in a global sense and try to develop a secular response'.¹⁴⁹ In practice this 'secular response' was actualised through a series of distinctions that sought a clear separation between TMG and any kind of validation of fundamentalist politics rather than seeking to push religious practice and beliefs out of political spaces altogether. So, for instance, Grover referred to the following: working on cases referred by religious groups and attending religious functions such as memorial services for victims of violence but not those set by fundamentalist groups (Grover had refused to attend a service organised for Ricky Reel's family by a known Khalistani front organisation);

¹⁴⁹ Interviewed 14/02/08.

engaging with religious organisations on pertinent issues (such as discussions about Ayodhya and their willingness to oppose immigration rules) but not mobilising through religious sites of worship or with a view to mobilising people *as* religious people (Grover identified this as a 'critical difference' between TMG and SWP approaches during the Stop the War Coalition); being reflexive about allowing religious practices to take place in otherwise secular spaces but not institutionalising these practices so that they become mandatory.

To a greater or lesser degree than each other, both TMG and NMP accepted some Muslim practices during the Stop the War Coalition's demonstrations. For instance Grover noted that he had no problem with a call to break fast in Trafalgar Square at the end of one demonstration that happened to coincide with Ramadan. Indeed Asad Rehman (NMP) organised the food for the breaking of fast. Grover did not feel that these practices were Islamicising the character of public protest. As with some of the responses to the question of religious welfare services Grover's conclusion hinged on points about proportionality. Specifically, he argued that half the demonstrators were Muslim and so when there was a request (he made a point of emphasising that it was not a demand) it did not seem unreasonable to allow a 3 minute recital from the podium by a Muslim preacher in comparison to the 15 minutes given to the Christian Bruce Kent who spoke on behalf of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Conversely, Grover opposed Ken Livingstone's attempts to institutionalise prayer rooms at meetings, such as at the European Social Forum event in London, and described this as a tokenistic politics. Particularly interesting was the way in which Grover linked the accommodation of religious needs as part of an ethics of care (such as the prayer spaces available to patients and family members in hospitals) with accommodating requests for prayer at demonstrations.

The particular way in which defence of civil liberties merged with the dynamics of anti Muslim racism was illustrated by what came to be known as the 'Forest Gate Raids'. On 2nd June 2006, an estimated 250 anti terror police officers carried out an armed raid at a terraced house in the Forest Gate area of Newham, in which 23 year

old Mohammed Abdul Kahar was shot in the shoulder and then detained along with his brother, 20 year old Abul Koyair. The police claimed to have been acting on intelligence that there was a chemical device in the house intended to kill hundreds of people.¹⁵⁰ The Independent Police Complaints Commission was called in to investigate the shooting. News reports suggest that Newham's Respect Party called a local meeting very soon after the event at which Yvonne Ridley told Muslims to boycott the police because of their Islamophobia.¹⁵¹ Abdul Kahar and Abul Koyair were released after the police failed to find the suspected items. Assisted by NMP, the brothers appointed Gareth Pierce as their legal representative and made an application for damages and a formal complaint against the police.¹⁵²

The Forest Gate Raids revealed the extent of police surveillance that had been under way in the area, notably that the Kahar brothers' workplace lockers, emails and telephone messages had been accessed and monitored. The morning after the raid, those members of NMP that live in the local area had woken up to discover several streets cordoned off by anti terror police giving little information on what they were doing. Kevin Blowe explained the multiple reasons why local people became concerned and NMP decided to get involved in the case:

But the issue without a doubt was the Government's reaction to the terrorist threat and the consequences of its rhetoric around that. And the fact that one of the consequences could be that people storm into somebody's house at 5 o'clock in the morning, shoot them and potentially run the risk of being able to kill them. That's

¹⁵⁰ See *Police Raid Hunt Chemical Device* posted on 3/06/06 at BBC news online and available at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5042724.stm>

¹⁵¹ See *Calls to Muslims over Police Help* posted on 7/06/06 at BBC news online and available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5054600.stm>

¹⁵² The Kahar brothers' own account of that terrifying ordeal during which they were shot at and physically assaulted by the police and then vilified by the press, can be read here: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5075618.stm>

what mobilised people. It was the shock that the State could do that... And so, our involvement on it was as a civil liberties issue and as an issue around the targeting of people on the basis of the colour of their skin. And I do accept there is such a thing as Islamophobia, clearly, but I think it's a form of racism rather than being something that's different. I think we'd all probably argue that's the case. But that was the focus. For others it wasn't, clearly, there were other people who saw it as an attack on Muslims specifically, and others, like Newham Muslim Alliance (AK Sheikh) didn't want anything to do with it, they were dragged kicking and screaming by people like (name).

[Kevin Blowe, NMP, 25/04/08]

Asad Rehman stated that he had been arguing within Muslim circles to change the narrative proffered by Islamist interpretations of such experiences as an assault on Muslims. Notably, the police killing of the Brazilian Jean Charles De Menezes threw up a space to unite such experiences under a larger defence of civil liberties and critique of State powers. Rehman described the symbolic unity between the Menezes' family campaign and the Kahar brothers during the subsequent NMP-led march through Forest Gate:

The Menezes came and they walked with them. Abdul Kahar and his brother went then to the anniversary of Jean's death and wore Brazilian tops. We were showing that actually the victims of this War of Terror were not so just because they were Muslims. So you see this was a completely different discourse. We were trying to challenge whereas they were trying to make out that it was an Islamic response to all of these things. And we were saying absolutely not, it should be a response based on rights. It's a rights response. That's what you should have. It's a rights framework. It was not a religious framework that we would be basing our responses on.

[Asad Rehman, NMP, 9/08/07]

However, in contrast to Grover's statement above about seeking a 'secular response', Rehman decided on a faith-based dimension to the campaign around the Forest Gate Raids. I believe it is worth reproducing Rehman's own description of the thinking

behind this at length:

The response within the community to these things, they wanted to keep that response as being a Muslim response. We said absolutely not, absolutely not, that is not a response. It's a response that goes across the board. So, for example, when the two boys were shot, when Forest Gate happened and Kahar was shot, we got Gareth (Pierce) to be the rep. And that was a big fight to get Gareth to be the lawyer. She got them out. We held a press conference. Where? In a church. Who did we have opening it? We had a priest there as well. We were showing that this was not a Muslim issue. This was not an issue of 'they are Muslim' or 'he is Muslim'. This is an issue of we are citizens and as citizens, the State is violating our rights... It didn't necessarily have to be a faith based response but it was important in terms of, you see, you've got to remember how people talked about the shooting. Mad Islamists, beards, suicide bombers, 24 hours before London is poisoned. I mean it was completely Islamophobic and the whole of the media that whole week was talking very much in terms of, we have to cordon off these streets immediately, you know 250 police officers, cos this is the most serious threat that London has faced and we have these Islamist terror networks and you don't know who is under the bed. It was like the 'red scare'. It was that type of thing. Then you suddenly had this priest there and then you had these boys, yes they had beards but they were talking about how the cat was scared and they don't know where it has gone and the garden and how the peas that their mum was growing were destroyed. And these were, we were challenging the State who was saying that somehow these people are not British, they are Muslims. And we were saying well actually you can't get anymore British than this... Here you had two very, very likeable lads but who challenged your impressions because when you looked at them, they had all the characteristics, beards, shaved heads. (One was) a postie and one working in a supermarket, they were the classic good boys.

[Asad Rehman, NMP, 9/08/07]

As far as a 'no platform' position was concerned, Suresh Grover drew a distinction between sharing a platform with the British National Party (BNP) or Abu Hamza and being politically active in the same spaces as the Islamic Right. Moreover, he had been invited to speak at a public meeting where Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) were on the panel and his response had not been to step away from attending but rather to

participate in the event and also speak out against them. Interestingly, both Kevin Blowe and Asad Rehman were clear about avoiding the distinctly separate demonstrations organised by Al Muhajiroun outside Forest Gate police station after the 2006 Raids but noted that the NMP events had included HT. This is a complex area so I want to narrate the way in which Blowe and Rehman attempted to understand and negotiate this without imposing weighty judgements.

On the activity around the Forest Gate Raids, both Kevin Blowe and Asad Rehman were up front about the fact that HT members had attended the same meetings and had also mobilised participants for NMP's march. HT was not invited to join the platform of speakers for these events but neither Blowe nor Rehman saw cause to exclude them from participating. Yet it did seem from Blowe and Rehman's descriptions that they were uneasy with HT's presence.

The difficulty I found was the distinction being made between Al Muhajiroun and HT. It was clear to me from these interviews that the way these anti racist activists were relating to HT members had changed since the 1990s when I had personally witnessed a far stronger separation and indeed explosive arguments with HT about their demands for a Caliphate and their critique of 'man made' systems. Now, in this new context, there was a begrudging acceptance of their presence and even a suggestion that HT had changed. However, the only changes that interviewees specified were superficial, a change in tactics rather than ideology, specifically that they could be distinguished from the 'table thumping' of Anjem Choudary (Al Muhajiroun). Examples were provided of HT's engagement with 'rational' debate and their willingness to work in alliance, including engaging with seemingly unlikely candidates such as Peter Osborne of The Spectator. Two specific reasons were given by Rehman for engaging with HT activists - to try and draw individuals away from their Islamist world view and because too many other people were scared of working on the War on Terror. Indeed he made a very interesting distinction between speaking out about the BNP and challenging the State's War on Terror. In Rehman's experience, the latter had been the more difficult and unpopular area of work. Indeed

the reluctance of established religious leaderships and non-Muslims to sign up to the campaign left Rehman in a position where most of the bedfellows were Muslim organisations. As convincing as Rehman's personal accounts are of his own struggles on these issues, some parts seemed not to make sense to me such as why, in the context of some 2 million people having marched against the invasion of Iraq and the Blairite War on Terror, it was difficult to identify secular partners for such work.

Nevertheless, Rehman provided multiple examples of how, for the best part of a decade post-9/11, he had been attempting to counter the traffic of Islamist political domination, and especially of the new War on Terror terrain including by participating in debates on the Islam Channel and speaking on platforms otherwise dominated by the Islamic Right. Moreover, the search for Muslim 'progressives' led to the foisting up of Moazzam Begg and Tariq Ramadan as articulate 'moderate' speakers that could draw Muslims to a civil liberties and human rights framework that also engages with other political spheres.

I am sure the ironies of Rehman's actions were not lost on him. Yet in 2010, the Quilliam Foundation launched a research report claiming that the Islam Channel promotes intolerance and violence against women and had provided platforms for a number of speakers supporting religious violence including Anwar Al Awlaki's sermons and sets hosted by members of the Hizb ut-Tahrir.¹⁵³ Moreover, I attended one meeting that Rehman addressed that had been jointly organised by the Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC) and The Centre for Study of Terrorism (CFSOT). My personal view is that, certainly by the date of this public meeting (14/03/08), Rehman's impact was nominal and his participation involved being squeezed on to the tail end of a long list of Right wing speakers including: Kamal el-Helbawi (who was listed as the CFSOT Chairman but is actually the Muslim Brotherhood's key spokesperson in London), Saghir Hussain of Cage

¹⁵³ *Re-Programming British Muslims: A Study of the Islam Channel* by Talal Rajab published by The Quilliam Foundation in March 2010 and available at:
<http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/index.php/component/content/article/723>

Prisoners, Azad Ali of the Muslim Safety Forum and Muhammad Habibur-Rahman of the Islamic Forum of Europe. Indeed, given that the interview with Rehman took place some years after many of the key events marking the War on Terror and his huge personal investment in struggles against this attack on civil liberties, there was an element of tragedy in Rehman's own admission of defeat, even if he argued that the alternative would have been to do nothing at all. Thus he stated:

I think, what we did was not always perfect. But what we did was we tried to remain true to principles and we tried to remain engaged and active. We didn't disengage and we didn't do nothing. Now, sometimes we learnt. We did things and we learnt. Now I, I, on a personal level now, I'd say that I tried to engage on lots of different levels and some of them failed. The forces were too strong. That is not because the concept was bad, it was just that we didn't have the forces. We didn't have enough progressive people to take on people that, not even in the way that the 1930s Communist Party organised in terms of discipline, numbers, organisation, political identity, all of those things. Our people don't want to get their hands dirty or prefer to talk about all of these things at dinner tables. But don't actually want to engage in the hard fight that community politics actually is, because these politics are forged, not in abstract, they are forged by doing those things and yes you are going to make mistakes. Of course I've made mistakes, I look back and I think I have always tried to do the right thing but some of these initiatives have given too much support to the right wing Islamists.

[Asad Rehman, NMP, 9/08/07]

Fundamental Silences

This new terrain comprises muddy hills down which one can slip slide into a working relationship with the religious Right whose fast changing tactics act as a veneer for their consistently undemocratic and supremacist visions. This is not a note of condemnation from 'ivory towers' but rather an observation on the problems of engagement within this field. In real terms, what is to be done when one is sandwiched between two poles of ostensibly Right wing 'Muslim representatives': the Salafist constellation of groups, such as the Islamic Human Rights Commission and Cageprisoners on the one hand, and the Jamaat-e-Islami led Muslim Council of Britain and its local branches, on the other?

It is clear that NMP and TMG shared the perspective that they hoped to shift these issues away from questions about religious identity and towards a wider rights-based framework discussing civil liberties. Their alignment was clearest in their critique of the tokenistic way in which the SWP had assumed the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) to be the voice of *all* Muslims and the way this had led the Stop the War Coalition to move from hosting a range of different Muslim speakers to only religious Muslim speakers selected by MAB. However, there is a qualitative difference between their ideological frameworks. NMP see their focus as the State and particularly its policing function. Any interventions in local struggles between ethnic minority communities is rather about pulling minority communities or local populations away from divisions or sectarian struggles so that they can stand united as a check on the State ('United We Stand, Divided We Fall'). Having said that, I have noted above that, as a 'progressive Muslim', Asad Rehman saw his role as two fold: to fight against the crushing blows to civil liberties post-9/11 but also to challenge the voices of violent Jihadi politics seeking to dominate the response. He expected Sikhs and Hindus to go into their respective areas and challenge the incursion of the religious Right there. Grover, however, described TMG as being located within a larger liberatory and emancipatory project that is not only concerned with the power that lies with the State but rather with inter-related struggles that cross over between State and communities, to concern themselves with other dimensions of power such as violence against women. TMG has historically also challenged communalism.

With a few exceptions, there was little recognition amongst interviewees that anti racist, civil liberties and human rights groups could afford legitimacy to the Islamic Right. Part of the reason for this lay in the lack of clarity about the ways legitimacy is acquired. Moreover, for NMP, I think it is fair to say that any legitimacy for the Islamic Right was not seen to match the power and problem of the State, its surveillance functions and the 'War of Terror'. One could suppose from this that the sheer fact of religious organisations' locations within civil society, rather than in relationships with the State, could make them the underdog.

However, on 7th February 2010, the particular problems arising from working on the War on Terror in the context of fast paced Muslim radicalisation were brought to a flashpoint by Gita Sahgal's public critique of Amnesty International's relationship with former Guantanamo detainee, Moazzam Begg and his organisation, Cageprisoners. Sahgal, the former Head of the Gender Unit at Amnesty International, gave an interview to The Sunday Times in which she declared that 'to be appearing on platforms with Britain's most famous supporter of the Taliban, whom we treat as a human rights defender, is a gross error of judgement'.¹⁵⁴ In summary, she argued that Moazzam Begg and Cageprisoners are located within salafi-jihadi networks in Britain and have been actively promoting particular Islamic Right tendencies by publishing and reproducing, in a non-critical way, salafist lectures and books including those of: Abdullah Azzam, thought to be a founder of the jihadist group Lashkar-e-Taiba; Dhiren Bharot, connected to Al Qaeda; Anwar Al Awlaki and Ali Al Timimi, thought to be the spiritual mentors of a number of convicted Islamist bombers. She also criticised Begg and Cageprisoners' sympathies for the Taliban, which she described as an inherently and systematically discriminatory political project. At the heart of her critique were questions about the legitimacy acquired through alliances as well as the role of human rights organisations in challenging the violations and political projects of non-state actors. She called for a clearer distinction between hearing the horrendous experiences of former Guantanamo inmates and legitimising them as partners because of the propensity of such alliances to enable the entrenchment of certain Islamic Right ideas and discourses. She used the word 'sanitisation' to describe this process.

Until I started to look into this issue I had little information about the nature of the

¹⁵⁴ *Amnesty International is 'damaged' by Taliban link* by Richard Kerbaj dated

7/02/10 published in The Sunday Times and available at:

<http://www.human-rights-for-all.org/spip.php?article2>

Jamaat-e-Islami, Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed I was also of the view that the word 'jihad' could just as easily be used to refer to self-determination struggles, the mainstay of anti imperialist movements and post-colonial writing. Sahgal's notion of 'sanitisation' shed new light on this word. I watched numerous speeches by Moazzam Begg in which he consistently compared 'jihad' with liberation struggles such as in Ireland and South Africa. He also repeated the claim that whilst the word 'jihad' was now being vilified, it had previously been of use, even to the US government for whom 'jihad' as Mujahideen had been so useful in fighting against the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.¹⁵⁵ Infact 'jihad' is about making clear distinctions between believers and non-believers and part of the lexicon of discriminatory communal projects that label certain lands as 'Muslim lands' and claim to be liberating them from *anyone* that is considered an illegitimate resident. These are closed political projects structured by strong views on the role of women, opposition to apostasy and heterodoxy.

Notwithstanding the great number of criticisms that Sahgal did not substantiate her claims about Begg and Cageprisoners in good time or in a language accessible to others, I want to highlight two particular responses from Left activists that suggest there is some kind of flipside to what academics like Sara Ahmed mean when they talk about proximity and how racism works.¹⁵⁶ From Ahmed's perspective, the repetitive proximity of certain words can produce and reproduce racist discourse and in turn has material effects. For Ahmed, the proximity of certain words reveals the

¹⁵⁵ Such as *Moazzam Begg: Against Islamophobia: June 2008* loaded up by 'adycousins' on 18/07/08. Accessed on 21/02/10 at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJPpSP_eY3M

These arguments are re-iterated at other public meetings including at a Goldsmiths College event organised by Lewisham Stop the War Coalition, loaded up by 'adycousins' on 9/05/07. Accessed on youtube on 20/02/10 at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41m5_lmWUMU

¹⁵⁶ *Problematic Proximities, or Why Critiques of "Gay Imperialism" Matter* by Sara Ahmed posted in October 2009 to <http://monthlyreview.org/>

short distance between liberalism and racism. From Sahgal's perspective, relationships between human rights or civil liberties organisations and the Islamic Right can 'sanitise' fundamentalist discourses and their political projects; she highlighted a short distance between anti racism, human rights and fundamentalism.

Responses to Sahgal's claims have been met with accusations that these depend upon 'guilt by association', and in the words of one activist, that Sahgal's condemnation of Begg in 'a court of feminism' was akin to 'the thought crimes aspect of the law on anti-terrorism'. Another posting described this as the 'end result of furious bullshit campaigns around the world against NGOs like Amnesty International, premised on utter bad faith and tissue-thin innuendo. I trust those responsible are pleased with themselves' followed by a link to a piece in the Israeli Haaretz newspaper reporting on the findings of an Israeli poll that large numbers of Israelis would back a gagging clause against human rights groups. There is no mention in the article of Amnesty International or the Sahgal/Begg Affair. Yet such retorts are pertinent because of the continuity they reveal on the question of time. They repeat an old cycle where anti racists have highlighted reasons why it is inappropriate to talk about women's rights or intra relations of power. This cycle includes: 1970/80s objections to public campaigns on domestic violence because of the pathologisation of the Black family (also reproduced by the feminist contributions in the CCCS (1982) volume 'The Empire Strikes Back'); to the possible impact on immigration laws of a campaign against forced marriage; to accusations that criticisms of Begg and Cageprisoners have directly undermined both the campaign to close Guantanamo and *also* Palestinian rights.

A number of accusations based on proximity were made almost immediately against Sahgal to undermine her claims including: that the interview took place in The Times rather than any other newspaper; that some of the pro Iraq War Euston Manifesto group (known as 'The Decents') jumped in almost immediately behind her; that the journalist Martin Bright also embraced her cause. Unsurprisingly then, Sahgal's allegations were met with counter allegations that she was less than perfect because

of her own associations. References to her 'strange bedfellows' enabled questions about her motives. She was characterised as pro war, anti Muslim, and even pro Zionist. It was particularly curious to see a longstanding member of Women Against Fundamentalism being accused of being a Zionist and more so, that few people saw this as a contradiction.

Karima Bennoune (2008), Professor of Law and a member of the Centre for Constitutional Rights (CCR) in New York, argued that a more rigorous and 'fuller human rights position' (located within a radical universalist framework) obliges civil liberties groups to tackle both Terror and Torture as different permutations of the same intention to compromise human dignity and the value of human life. One task is neither greater nor less important than the other. Thus she stated:

Furthermore, abuses on which the human rights movement classically focuses, like torture, rest on the same philosophical assumption as practices, like terrorism, which claim the attention of many concerned with security. This assumption is the permissibility of instrumentalizing severe and deliberate human suffering. Such a commonality suggests that, to take the approach that best champions human dignity, one must look attentively at the human rights impact of both what is labeled "terrorism" and what is labeled "counter-terrorism."

[Bennoune, 2008: 6]

Sahgal had argued that upholding the 'universality' and 'indivisibility' of human rights ought to be the way to ensure a consistent and morally robust position on both the War on Terror and fundamentalism.¹⁵⁷

Interestingly, Kevin Blowe's willingness to recognise the need for a debate about

¹⁵⁷ *'Soft Law' and Hard Choices: A Conversation with Gita Sahgal* by Deniz Kandiyoti dated 19/04/10 published by Open Democracy and available at:

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/deniz-kandiyoti/soft-law-and-hard-choices-conversation-with-gita-sahgal>

Muslim fundamentalism specifically called for stepping outside the terms set by the State by disentangling this from the State's War on Terror:

I think in a sense they are two debates that overlap but they're not the same debate. And part of the problem, I think it's absolutely true, that people find it very difficult to have an argument about, for instance, Islamic fundamentalism or any types of fundamentalism. Is that they try and lump the two debates together as though they are linked, but actually they are two separate debates. And it's partly to do with the fact that the Government tries to lump the two things together, by that sense of saying those arguments say you need to get your house in order. Well, to which my immediate answer would be whose house? There isn't such a thing as 'the Muslim community'. If you accept the argument there's no such thing as 'the Muslim community', whose house are you talking about? ... I think there needs to be a good solid discussion about what do we do, how do we confront the issue about who are, about fundamentalism, whatever kind, because it's a deeply reactionary conservative thing which is completely opposed to the type of Left politics that we argue for. It's a more difficult debate to have because I don't know the answers in a sense, because a lot of the answers around how you address fundamentalism are either about defeating people through ideas, which is not simple, and is not an argument I would use for instance in relation to the BNP, or it's about placing demands upon the State to intervene, which I also don't accept because they will always use those demands against everybody in a blanket way.

[Kevin Blowe, NMP, 25/04/08]

However, most of the anti racist groups referred to in this thesis describe themselves as human rights organisations or work within a human rights framework. Karima Bennouna demonstrated the connection between the two debates and appealed for a rebalancing of the emphasis of human rights groups from the rights of victims of State torture to the need to also safeguard and protect the victims of terror, of non-state armed military groups. In her own facing down of the bravado surrounding CCR's decision to act on behalf of Anwar Al Awlaki, she called for an equally proactive legal campaign for the protection of victims of religious fundamentalism, an area that she feels has been neglected by civil liberties groups and legal academics. She stated:

How can we defend the principle that assassinations are wrong by standing silently next to an advocate of assassinations? I urged CCR to find other ways to challenge the Obama administration's policy without associating with Awlaki. I appreciate that CCR says it merely seeks to challenge US government policy, and opposes all killings of civilians. Yet, the organisation has been quiet about who Awlaki is and what he has done, describing him simply as a "Muslim cleric" or a "US citizen"... Awlaki should not be assassinated as a result, or subjected to human rights abuses, but he should be brought to justice in accordance with international law for his own crimes against humanity. And he clearly should be denounced by human rights advocates, rather than represented by them when he is at large and not a detainee.¹⁵⁸

Conclusion

This chapter engages with the positionings of anti-racist activists and their experience of Muslim identity politics. They provide a number of reasons for the transition from anti racist politics premised on a secular Black unity to a growing Muslim political identity including: the professionalisation and growing self interest amongst social movement groups; the demise of a larger Left liberatory narrative; the growth of an Islamist narrative that offers explanations for global and local events and the active consolidation of religious identities and religious leaderships by the state. These features have converged to ensure that Muslim political identifications are all the more viable and have grown at a pace that might otherwise have been unimaginable.

As much as they could see the reasons, most of them were not comfortable with this new politics, which they described as inward facing and parochial. Only one interviewee took a no platform approach to Islamism and only one directly reinforced the terms of the state and established an advisory group made up of religious leaders already recognised by the state. The others sought to negotiate what

¹⁵⁸ *Why I spoke out on Anwar Al Awlaki* by Karima Bennoune posted on 19th November 2010 at The Guardian and available at:

[http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/nov/19/human-rights-usa?](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/nov/19/human-rights-usa?INTCMP=SRCH)

INTCMP=SRCH

they saw as a complex terrain.

The War on Terror reinforced both the power of the state and some anti racists' focus on the surveillance dimensions of the state. So their engagement with the field arose from a sense that local politics is 'forged'. That means one has to engage and influence it or construct it in whichever way one wants, one shapes the political field. Also several interviewees didn't want to pander to self-censorship post-9/11 and wanted to invest in changing the perspectives of people being recruited by Islamists, those being radicalised. Moreover, there was a growing alignment of interests around the need to challenge the state's incursion on civil liberties and a new securities agenda.

Apart from The 1990 Trust, there seemed to be an acknowledgement that these new political identifications were either Right wing or very conservative. There was an interesting discussion about the negotiation of religious-secular boundaries. Religion as practice existed within anti-racist political spaces for many reasons including as rites of passage for those murdered in racist violence or in custody. Without repeating the multiple distinctions proffered by Grover, I want to focus on the question of fundamentalism.

A key distinction between Grover and Rehman was Grover's assertion that he sought secular solutions. Whilst both challenged the tactics of an SWP approach that enabled the Muslim Association of Britain to select all Muslim speakers, Grover continued to seek a secular response whereas Rehman had definitely engaged more in faith based responses including identifying other Muslim voices. Rehman described himself as a 'progressive Muslim' and seemed to see himself as carrying an ethical and moral responsibility to influence Muslim debates. Whilst these new Muslim voices began to speak within and to a larger civil liberties and human rights framework that Rehman had been pushing Muslims to locate their experiences within, some of the personalities were firmly located within Islamic Right political

constellations.

Notably the cumulative effect of such exchanges was highlighted by Sahgal's critique of Amnesty International, which revealed the ability of the Islamic Right to work through human rights spaces in order to proliferate a particular understanding. These spaces could enable the 'sanitisation' of Islamic Right projects. Sahgal's point was that working with partners enables the accrual of benefits, gives access to new resources and spaces. The Muslim groups and leaders referred to by all interviewees in this thesis were all right wing, with the Jamaat-e-Islami dominating the spaces created by the State and the Hizb ut-Tahrir and Salafists dominating the spaces within civil society.

Anti racists sought to challenge the surveillance agenda and also the growth of Muslim political identities by pushing away from the terms of the State but they seemed to be pushing towards the terms of other Islamic Right factions, if for no other reason than the capacity of these new political formations to carry their agendas into other forums.

One of the most significant effects of this process seemed to be an almost automatic, proximity of feminist concerns with the iterations of the state because of the role afforded to the state to intervene in the proliferation of fundamentalist ideologies whilst, on the other hand, the anti-racists were concerned to influence fundamentalists because theo-politics and particularly political Islam was being brought into the inside of anti imperialist politics. This is not to say that either side directly agreed with or pushed either the draconian anti civil liberties measures of the state or the supremacist politics of the religious Right.

Moreover, the British National Party appeared to be a normative marker for determining partnerships but this could run in many different directions. In the

previous chapter, Sarah Ruiz referenced the BNP to explain her colleague's description of Ahmadiyyas as 'beyond the pale'. In this chapter, Ansar Ahmed Ullah based his 'no platform' position towards the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami on the anti racist history of a 'no platform' approach to the BNP. In Chapter 7, I note that the only organisation that Catherine Howarth of the Citizens UK would not want to work with was the BNP. The Citizens UK is otherwise an alliance of religious groups that is reluctant to talk about racism and sidesteps questions about fundamentalism for fear of breaking the bonds between its member groups. So the BNP could act as a reference for socially conservative religious forces, for the persecution of a minority sect, or as a comparison for objections to fundamentalist Islam.

Chapter 6: Shape Shifting and Sikhism in Southall

Introduction

This chapter seeks to extend earlier critiques of the culturalist and ethnicist turn in anti-racism to take account of state sanctioned religious projects. It reveals the ways in which community formations develop at a local level notably how addressing the question of negative identity plays out in a way that actually reinforces the moral agenda of the state. It also shows how these formations draw strength from state agendas. Indeed both the state and local religious groups are engaged in a complex dialectical process that brings them both into being.

As noted in previous chapters, Sikhs have been active within various overlapping political fields for some decades including workers' struggles, anti racism and electoral politics. This chapter provides an important backstory to some of the religio-political identifications in the Southall area and demands for religious accommodation. In particular, it focuses on the ideological tendencies of the main Sikh organisation, the SGSSS, whose numerical and physical presence are both cause and consequence of its prominence in the representation of Sikhs, claims about their belief systems and religious practices. This is followed by a critical engagement with claims for religious accommodation, notably in relation to food and schooling. This chapter shows how attempts to move beyond cultural negation, including by making religious demands, has the propensity to create the negation of other, more ambiguous, Sikh traditions and practices. The final section of this chapter extends the analysis within Chapter 4 of local relations of power and precedes the discussion of the East London Mosque and social capital in the next chapter in order to develop an argument about the local emergence of new systems of 'election' and access to finite public resources.

Constructing Sikh Boundaries

In Southall, there are twelve gurdwaras but one specific organisation, the Sri Guru

Singh Sabha (SGSSS), dominates the field. This section provides background information about its political leanings. I also note its cultivation of a relationship with the British state and the ability to perpetuate Khalsa norms through this connection.

The Khalsa norm, Singh Sabha movements and Khalistan

Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Singh Tatla (2006) describe the formation of the Sikh identity as structured by three particular struggles: the birth of Khalsa as formal resistance to Moghul rule; the emergence of the Singh Sabha movement as a reaction against the colonial administration and the rise of the Hindu Right Arya Samaj; and the Khalistani mobilisation for the secession of Punjab from the Indian state. Structured by the Khalsa norm and carried largely by Jat Punjabis, these staging posts are pivotal in the attempt to construct a uniform, bounded 'Sikh community' (or Panth). My view is that these antagonisms produced three key adversaries that repeat as figures within the dominant Jat Sikh imaginary, drawing renewal through projections of itself as victorious and valiant yet continuously fighting external threats from Muslims/Moghuls, westernisation/British colonialism, and Hindus/the Indian state. They are the Jat Sikh's significant Others and are periodically recalled as part of the process of identity consolidation. Importantly, from the 1800s, this progression is abetted by the procurement of a paternalistic relationship between Jat Sikhs and British colonisers, which has carried a mutual indebtedness to the present day. In spite of the many inherent contradictions of these narratives, the specific trajectory of the Khalsa norm secured a place within the contemporary British political and welfare system.

Sikhism actually originated with the syncretic folk tradition, devotional practice and charitable work of Guru Nanak who emphasised meditation on a formless god and pushed against unanimist and orthodox tendencies within Islam and Hinduism (Singh and Tatla, 2006). Nanak's practice was intertwined with a social equality agenda and opposition to caste. However, he was succeeded by a further nine gurus that made major transformations to the theological content and objectives of the religion. The

struggle against Moghul rule from the 1600s was specifically marked by Guru Hargobind's instigation of a sense of Sikh sovereignty by establishing an Akal Takht (seat of temporal authority) opposite the Golden Temple (seat of spiritual authority) and a boundary wall around Amritsar (Singh and Tatla, 2006). It is this process that was strengthened by successive Gurus and particularly settled during the reign of the 10th Guru, Gobind, who established the Khalsa. Singh and Tatla described its founding as follows:

(Gobind was) the last guru who introduced new major innovations that were to lay the foundations of modern Sikh identity. First, on Vaisakhi (Sikh new year) 1699 he baptised the Khalsa (the pure), the elite saint-soldiers of the fledgling community who were to be distinguished by external symbols of identity, the five Ks - kesh (unshorn hair and beards), kacha (short drawers), kirpan (sword/steel dagger), kara (iron bangle) and kanga (comb) - and were renamed as Singh (male) and Kaur (female). Second, before his death Guru Gobind invested the guruship in the Guru Granth Sahib, thereby terminating the line of personal guruship. In due course these two changes were to draw the boundary around Sikh identity much more clearly than hitherto: whereas the end to personal guruship set a limit on schismatic pluralism, the Singhs (and Kauras) of Guru Gobind were destined to assume a pre-eminent position within the panth (Sikh community).

[Singh and Tatla, 2006: 13]

By the 18th century, Moghul rule was in decline and a Sikh sense of state formation was in the ascendancy. Maharaja Ranjit Singh in particular managed to generalise the Khalsa norm in Punjab and established an elite Khalsa army. Thereafter, the decline of this Sikh regency and the British annexation of Punjab in 1849 marks the beginnings of a paradoxical relationship between Sikh and British sovereignty, in which Jat Sikhs espousing a Khalsa norm, gained a privileged position and consolidated this at an economic and cultural level across Britain and the Punjab. They were duly rewarded for their co-operation with British colonisers in the projection of Punjab and Sikhs in particular as 'orthodox, separatist and martial' (Singh and Tatla, 2006: 15). There was also real economic recompense. Singh and Tatla (2006) and Dilbagh Chana (interviewed 14/06/11) noted material rewards

including income, pensions and rights over some of the most productive land in the Punjab. Moreover, this was the beginning of a new system of patronage. Two histories and sovereign identities were assimilated through the confluence of mutual privilege along status and class lines.

As Singh and Tatla (2006) point out, both colonial rule and anti colonial mobilisations then created the conditions for the emergence of the Singh Sabha movement of gurdwaras. On the one hand, these attempted to strengthen a sense of Sikh identity in the face of a new politicised pressure from the Hindu Arya Samaj to incorporate Sikhs and extend the Hindu base. On the other, they sought unity and coherence in the face of colonial attempts to restrict the independence of Sikh gurdwaras and convert these into administrative and tax paying civic institutions. Importantly, it was the Singh Sabhas that established 'distinctive Sikh rituals that have subsequently become enshrined in the Rahit Maryada (Sikh code of conduct)' (Singh and Tatla, 2006: 17). The political continuation of the Singh Sabha movement was consolidated in the establishment of a new legal body, the Shrimoni Gurdwara Parbhandal Committee (SGPC) and carried politically by the Shrimoni Akali Dal (SAD).

The migration of Sikhs to Britain provided a new context for the development of this identity. In Southall, the first gurdwara was established by a merger of two separate Jat groups from different regions in the Punjab. This is the body that eventually established itself as the SGSSS and purchased two prominent sites - first on Havelock Road and then on Park Avenue. Dilbagh Chana (14/06/11) noted the ongoing close links between the SGSSS and the dominant legal and political bodies in Punjab, the SGPC and the SAD.

In accounts of the 1970s onwards, a number of commentators have noted the transnational relations between Sikh gurdwaras in Britain and the mobilisation of the Sikh separatist Khalistani movement in India. I want to briefly note the persistence

and proximity of the Khalistani agenda but its precarious relationship with the SGSSS. The SGSSS was originally led by Jats with a combination of SAD and IWA sympathies. After Operation Bluestar, two things happened: Sikh sympathies for an otherwise unpopular claim to independence from the Indian state received a huge boost and secondly, a number of young men involved in Khalistani politics fled the Indian state's crackdown in Punjab and claimed asylum in Britain. According to both Radhika Chopra (2011) and Suresh Grover (interviewed 15/08/07) many settled in Southall. The impact was that a fairly integrationist SGSSS gurdwara committee came under pressure from a new wave of militancy and indeed Didar Singh Randhawa (interviewed 11/05/09) recalls that the gurdwara was taken over by Khalistanis from the late 1980s into the 1990s. They were eventually usurped by an older generation of SAD supporters, and original founders of the gurdwara, concerned about the scale of debt and mismanagement but also because the Khalistani cause had started to peter out in India and the SAD relationship with the Indian state was recovered. It would not be appropriate then to accuse the current SGSSS of being a Khalistani body as such but I want to note the continued proximity of the Khalistani cause to the SGSSS. In particular, there is a common Khalsa ideology that lies at the heart of both the Singh Sabha formations and the Khalistani movement. Moreover, the Khalistani front organisations in Britain are never too far away. I attended one of the annual '1984 Never Forget' demonstrations in Hyde Park organised by Khalistani front groups. It had been advertised at one of the SGSSS sites even if Balwant Singh Gill (interviewed 21/05/09) was clear that the charitable nature of the SGSSS didn't permit it to overtly claim such affiliations. Moreover, there is an easy, often seamless, intermingling of Khalistani flags and Khalsa symbols at the annual Vaisakhi processions, which are entirely organised and led by the SGSSS. I would suggest that the key distinction between the two is not really about religious beliefs as both are underwritten by the Khalsa norm but rather marked by their respective integrationist and confrontational strategies with the SGSSS committed to the production of law abiding subjects and invested in relationships with the British and Indian states. There are potential parallels here between the points made in the previous chapter about the relationship between the muted perpetuation of Jamaat-e-Islami codes by the Muslim Council of Britain and the more rhetorical style of the Hizb ut-Tahrir's call for a return to the Caliphate.

Notably, in both cases, there are generational differences.

Making Sikh Claims

This section considers the kinds of claims that have been made in respect of religious accommodation as part of social welfare provision. In particular, by making connections between Sikh claims and earlier forms of religious accommodation, these claims were being positioned as 'rights' or 'needs' rather than as preferences.

You are what you eat

One particular dimension of religious accommodation was the issue of dietary requirements. The 'communing' dimensions of religious belief are often highlighted by advocates of faith-based organising, referred to in Chapter 1, to emphasise the altruistic side of religion. This has indeed been an important element of support provided by religious groups to those not covered by the welfare state, particularly reaching out to precarious subjects surviving the strictures of immigration rules. However, this projection of the magnanimous dimensions of religious belief was fractured by competing demands for the accommodation of religious dietary requirements. Conversely then, some demands revealed the etymological connection between 'communing' and 'communalisation', the sectarian strengthening of boundaries against outsiders.

Some Sikh interviewees talked about demands for jhatka meat, which involves severing the head of the animal with a sword rather than slicing its throat as in Muslim or Jewish ritual. Rai (2005) noted that jhatka is part of the Rahit Maryada, or 'Sikh Code of Conduct', but has not been common practice amongst Sikh families in Britain. As noted above, the Rahit Maryada was introduced by the Khalsa imperative of the Singh Sabha movements. In all the time that I had spent with Sikh Punjabis in London and India, I had never before come across such demands. Both Gurcharan Singh and Dilbagh Chana explained that demands for jhatka meat arose as a follow on from the accommodation of Muslim demands for halal meat. There are two

aspects to this issue. The first is to understand its theo-political location. If one travels the Khalsa/Gobind road of Sikhism then one might view jhatka as one of Sikhism's defining characteristics. However, if one travels the Nanak road, it really doesn't matter what you eat because Being is defined by one's philosophical orientation towards the world rather than by the enactment of rituals. The second part is to consider this demand as an effect of the consolidation of both Muslim and Sikh identities and of the more subtle and normative aspects of the Khalsa-Singh Sabha trajectory. I would like to suggest that the development of a demand for jhatka meat reflects attempts to position the Gobind tradition as the primary representation of Sikhism in Britain. It also arises from another aspect of this tradition and that is the emphasis on asserting strong distinctions between Sikhism and Islam (indeed of the naturalisation of an enmity with Muslims that relies on recalling the Moghul era), something that was not there for Nanak who rather claimed Sikhism as an amalgamation of various facets of both Hinduism and Islam.

As noted in Chapter 3, for some people religious belief is an existential reality. It has implications for their everyday lives, the way in which their world is organised and exchange is conducted. This could pose a number of ethical questions for the state as summarised by Revd Michael Bolley:

This comes back to the question of a diverse community of people that have strong religious beliefs that affects daily life in terms of what food they will eat and then there are questions about what is the responsibility in terms of the state's role vis a vis that. Is it the case that we provide one thing that has to suit everybody. And you say well is that actually possible and if it's not possible then you got to make special provision and then got to put funding into making provision. Whether we are talking halal meat or whatever. So there is a whole issue there about accommodating difference. Then if you are going to accommodate difference then you can't say one size fits all.

[Revd Michael Bolley, Holy Trinity Church, 14/07/11]

Conversely, Dilbagh Chana argued that the reality of democratic participation required people to think beyond themselves. In this projection, the state has an

arbitration function. He stated:

In a civilised society, in an organised civil society there are always allowances that people have to make, civilisation is artificiality because you are going to have to put down your strongly held views... Something may be comfortable and right for a certain set of rules but doesn't have to continue to be of the same benefit. The state then has to decide if it must provide facilities. Democracy actually prides itself on the facility that it can create for differences of opinion to be addressed in a forum, with opportunity to be given to individuals to express that opinion and to come to a consensus. It means that people at the extremes of that consensus are going to have to compromise for 'the greater good'.

[Dilbagh Chana, 14/06/11]

Chana's tendency towards a deliberative democracy model is enhanced by a discourse of 'the common good'. Both Chana and Bolley made multiple references to this phrase, part of a political language proliferated through local actors by the Citizens UK. It is particularly interesting that the practice involves consensus building, which seeks to establish a central point between extremes. This central point fluctuates in line with the changing context and nature of society. I want to recall the limits of this deliberative approach as discussed in Chapter 1 specifically that it is not premised on political principles but rather depends on who participates in the debate. As such this model presumes the space is flat and does not take account of local cartographies of power. If the field is dominated by vociferous Right-leaning or conservative actors, determinations will also flow in that direction. This is clear in the claims that flow from the predominance of the Khalsa norm and is also the case with the Strangers into Citizens campaign discussed in Chapter 7.

Living by the Jewish example

In the melange of recognition politics, additional claims were made in relation to Jewish and Christian accommodation. Dilbagh Chana, not a supporter of faith-based services, explained that the drive for Sikh schools, for instance, is referenced against the particular success of Jewish mobilisations in Britain.

Sikhs have continuously quoted Jews as an example for what the Sikhs ought to be trying to do but Sikhs forget that the Jews have 5-6000 years of history and what they believe today comes from the result of centuries of discussion and talks within itself and there was a historical need for that. We don't have that. The world is a very different place today... Jews were a persecuted people that just ran from place to place. (They are) the only other religious group that is supported in the Race Relations Act 1976 as you know... Number one it's convenient, two it's a very obvious grouping, they can't compare themselves with anyone else.

[Dilbagh Chana, 14/06/11]

The problem with the dynamics of the Sikh claim is its arbitrary location within the realm of 'race' and ethnicity whilst Islam and Hinduism remain within the socio-legal status of religion. This is clearest when Dilbagh Chana attempts to explain why Sikhs reference the Jewish example rather than the Muslim one. There is normative acceptance of a Jewish claim that denies legitimacy to those that converted to Judaism and infers a settlement between Christians and Jews that other groups seek to replicate:

Muslims are not the same ethnic group. You can be a Muslim but in ethnicity terms you can be miles away. A Jew is born a Jew, there is no way you can become a Jew.

But Sikhs you can become?

But yes that's where they make their mistake. That's why I say that in comparing themselves with the Jewish community they don't know what they are talking about.

It's convenient?

Because it gives them strength. Simply because the Christians cannot go against the Jewish interests.

[Dilbagh Chana, 14/06/11]

It struck me that the distinction between the SBS argument for Black women's groups and those making religious claims was their orientation. Whilst the former is

oriented towards challenging Black women's position in wider society, particularly their experiences of racism and sexism, the latter were immersed in discussions about the inside and outside of group boundaries. Chana also highlighted the effects of religious accommodation either as inspiring others to make similar claims (Sikhs following the Jewish example) or as a source of competition and tension (Sikhs on the accommodation of Muslim demands for halal meat). Indeed Ranu Samantrai (2008) noted that religious claims abound precisely because of the prior acceptance of other religious claims and the overall Establishment position of the Church of England.

Moreover, the Court of Appeal's finding in 2009 that the Jewish Free School's admissions policy was in breach of the Race Relations Act 1976, was a strong reminder of the gendered proximity of 'race' and faith in determining religious boundaries and pursuing the framework of other religious claims. By defining Jewish as determined by the mother's biological origins, the school refused a place to a child whose mother had converted to rather than been born into Judaism even though the mother regarded herself as an orthodox and practicing Jew.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ *The boundaries between race and faith* by Afua Hirsch dated 25/06/09 published by The

Guardian and available at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/jun/25/jewish-school-race-religion>

Interestingly, the Court of Appeal ruled that the school's refusal to admit the child was based on ethnicity rather than religious affiliation, thereby constituting a breach of race relations law, but leaving discrimination (referred to elsewhere as selection) on the grounds of religion untouched. Subsequently, other Jewish schools have revised their criteria to emphasise degrees of religiosity. This has resulted in a Jewish (born) girl being denied a place in favour of a non-Jewish girl who had greater proof of Jewish religious practice including synagogue attendance. As Calmus quite rightly points out, this was 'the first case to give substance to fears that the JFS ruling would effectively exclude Jewish children from non-observant homes'.

See *Jewish girl's King David place goes to non-Jews* by Jonathan Calmus dated 11/06/10 published by The Jewish Chronicle and available at:

<http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/32947/jewish-girls-king-david-place-goes-non-jew>

An equally problematic issue with regards to the multiple references to the Jewish experience was the way in which the history of Jewish persecution became an important metaphor for keeping the Khalistani cause alive. After my second meeting with Didar Singh Randhawa, the former President of the SGSSS, I noticed a booklet on his desk entitled '1984: The Sikh Kristallnacht'. The publication of this document coincided with a national march (now an annual event) on the 25th anniversary of Operation Bluestar, led by Khalistani factions in Britain. Whilst the organisers may be recalling the Indian state's massacre and anonymised mass cremation of around 800 bodies near Amritsar during a 'clean up' operation, this London based graphic mobilisation (with young people carrying coffins, large pictures of bloodied bodies and photographs of the missing or dead) lines up self determination arguments (with the backing of the Green Party and Tamil groups) to regularly renew the case for a separate Sikh state.¹⁶⁰

The 'right' to a state funded Sikh school

Unsurprisingly, the comparative socio-legal status of religions in Britain has collected around the debate about faith schools. Some interviewees would not support faith-based services, such as Sikh housing, on the grounds of segregation but fervently argued for the 'right' to state funded Sikh schools. I want to hone in on discussions about the establishment of the Khalsa Primary School, the first state funded Sikh primary school in Britain. This debate provides insights into the way that melancholia and morality gain relief through religious communitarian arguments about education.

In Southall, interviewees highlighted cultural challenges to assimilationism that pre-date the confrontational anti-racist politics of the 1970s/80s. These revealed that for some ethnic minority activists, breaking through white hegemony also involved questioning Christian worship and pushing for linguistic and religious

¹⁶⁰ From fieldnotes on the 1984 Never Forget demonstration from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square on 7/06/09.

accommodation. Three Southall councillors became involved with local schools because of a commitment to getting those state secular schools to teach Asian children their mother tongue languages - Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu. Amongst the reasons given for the importance of linguistic inheritance were statements about the loss of knowledge, history and traditions amongst second generation Asians. They also noted that religion had been one component of a larger lobby for racial equality, which included demands to promote Asian teachers and recruit ethnic minority school governors. Councillor Swarn Singh Kang for instance came to Britain in 1965 and recalled his anxieties about racism as cultural domination, the normative production of white/Christian superiority and the potential 'threat' of losing Asian children to 'Westernisation':

The education head teacher and education department thinking we came from culturally poor backward areas so they wanted to completely assimilate our children into their culture. And they were against our children to speak their mother tongues. This was the attitude in schools and the general thinking was that our children were retarded. After some time, we kept going in that environment but when we saw our children are drifting away, away from our culture and under the influence of British culture, so then we became very much aware and we were thinking we came here for good living but were losing everything because we came here to earn more, to get better living, but then we saw our children are culturally drifting away. You know, children are our property, these are our values.

[Councillor Swarn Singh Kang, 28/09/09]

This emphasis on owning children parallels the communitarian anxieties about losing women, projected as the vessels of culture and community renewal (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Yuval-Davis, 2000). Moreover, concerns about the loss of Punjabi are not unconnected to the growth of a dominant Khalsa discourse in the latter half of the twentieth century. The Punjab based language movement (Punjabi Suba) of the 1950s and 1960s in India sat alongside a post colonial anxiety amongst Sikhs that they had been overlooked in the carving up of India and Pakistan and their identity (taken as a package including religion and language) would be subsumed within an ostensibly Hindu Indian nation-state. The Punjabi Suba movement was

eventually swallowed up by a revitalised Khalsa ideology that claimed the language as one more marker distinguishing Sikhism from Hinduism and Islam. Indeed some of the Southall interviewees would have precisely transported this perspective and adapted it to a British discourse about racial equality. However, Chopra points out that Punjabi can be written in three ways - either as Gurmukhi, meaning the words of the Guru, or Shamukhi, a persio-arabic script, or increasingly as roman script in the context of globalisation and diaspora (2011:1).

Kang further explained that the SGSSS had been an important platform for mobilising on these issues:

There were teachers and other good thinking people that had come from India and we had a good platform in the gurdwara so we formed an association of parents and then we recruited some parent governors in the schools, it was given a very broad name so any faith can enter. 1978. Called the Association of Asian Parent Governors. Before this Association came into force we tried to contact the education department to say we have an identity - faiths, culture and language - we want to impart that to our children and it's important for us because if our children don't know our language we can't impart our faith, language was important to keep the faith alive... we thought we are not Christian, why should our children be taught Christian education. Our association went from home to home and said this legislation only makes sense when Christian kids but we are not. So we sent petitions in large numbers to homes and schools demanding our own worship.

[Councillor Swarn Singh Kang, 28/09/09]

The demands of this association were couched in the language of 'parental rights' and diversity, two streams that have continued as key facets of a religious lobby within education.

As a consequence of pressure from the Association of Asian Parent Governors, local schools started to introduce Asian languages and mark religious festivals. Four festivals in particular were referred to throughout this research - Vaisakhi, Diwali,

Eid and Guru Nanak's birthday. Moreover, Swarn Singh Kang described the introduction of a Multicultural Officer within the education department as intended 'to see that demands of ethnic communities was heard and met'.¹⁶¹ Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs) were established to provide determinations for those schools that wanted to change their Christian worship to collective worship on the basis of the numbers of ethnic minority children in their classes. Historically, SACREs contained Asian councillors with strong religious identities, particularly invested in determining how their religion was projected within mainstream state schools.

By 1992 some of these lobbyists saw the 'grant maintained status' option within the Conservative Education Act 1988, which offered state schools the opportunity to opt out of local authority control, as providing the space to convert a local comprehensive into a Sikh school. Pragna Patel recalled that Southall Black Sisters allied with other secular forces in Southall to establish the Save Our Schools campaign. This campaign successfully opposed religious organisations. Thus she stated:

One of the earliest shocks to the system, to people was the way in which Sikh fundamentalists in Southall tried to take over using a particular piece of Tory legislation to try and get certain state schools within Southall to opt out. And in fact, if you like, it was perhaps one of the moments of Southall history when secular forces had to really come out as secular forces to oppose that kind of fundamentalism... feminists had already come out because of the Rushdie Affair... More or less everyone accepted that the religious groups could not get their way.

[Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters, 15/10/07]

According to Patel, a key element of the demand for this Sikh school related to the desire to control and police young women. However, none of the other allies in the Save Our Schools campaign wanted to draw attention to this for fear that raising gender might fracture the alliance (Southall Black Sisters, 1991).

¹⁶¹ Interviewed 28/09/09.

The campaign to oppose the opt-out was won but in 1993 a privately funded Sikh secondary school, the Guru Nanak Sikh School, was established across the border in Hayes and this has had significant reproductive effects. In 1999, not long after New Labour came to power, the school gained Voluntary Aided status, marking the fruition of two processes: New Labour's pre-election promise to extend Voluntary Aided status to ethnic minority faith based schools as part of its parity approach to racial equality; and links nurtured between the SGSSS and Labour Party politicians. Randhawa confirmed the Guru Nanak Sikh School's fraternal links with the SGSSS. He applauded the gurdwara's work in raising money for the school and demonstrating its viability and the strength of demand for Sikh schools in the area. This placed the SGSSS' subsequent lobby for the Khalsa Primary School in good stead because it could be referenced against the popularity (judged by long waiting lists) and academic success of the Guru Nanak secondary school in Hayes.

Southall Councillors confirmed that the demand for the Khalsa Sikh primary school in Norwood Green came from the SGSSS and was strengthened by their capacity to independently fundraise vast sums of money. Importantly, Councillor Dhindsa explained that the local council has not opposed the establishment of faith based schools in the borough but more so, the council had to do very little aside from authorise the development because SGSSS had already raised significant funds from its congregation and synchronised these with central government programmes. In actual fact, the gurdwara provided just 10% of the capital expenditure to build the school whilst central government provided 90% of the capital and the local authority now meets 100% of the running costs. This is not to belittle the SGSSS' phenomenal capacity to raise millions of pounds but to highlight the reproductive effects of its operations, namely access to both spaces of representation and additional state resources.

According to Didar Singh Randhawa the demand for the Khalsa Primary School came from the 'sangat' (the Sikh community of believers, another Khalsa term) who

wanted the younger generation to acquire knowledge of their religion. Randhawa explained that the school would provide the same curriculum as any other school but with a stronger focus on providing information about Sikhism. The interplay of the terms 'sangat' and 'seva' take on a new dimension here. Rather than project themselves as a political body engaged in initiating demands, Randhawa's multiple references to serving the sangat acted as a veneer for the role of the SGSSS in perpetuating a specific cultural politics.

Former Councillor Gurcharan Singh summarised the constitutive elements of the ongoing demand for Sikh schools as follows:

Alot of parents want their children brought up a particular cultural way. And they say, they want their children to be taught Punjabi, they want children to be taught religious education and that is not possible in a state school. They would like their children not cut their hair, they would like that children have a 'jura' (hair tied above the head) and children or girls do not cut their hair either and (that they) behave in a particular way. Basically, if they are educated in Punjabi, they are speaking Punjabi, they do not, they don't forget their cultural background or their religious background. So say, normally the state school tells you how the Gurus were brought up, where they were and that kind of thing. But in a faith school they are likely to give more information about the Sikh gurus, and like in Muslim schools they would be telling what the code of conduct is for Muslims.

[Gurcharan Singh, former councillor, 9/10/09]

Indeed Gurcharan Singh described the Sikh school as a 'need' rather than a 'demand' and summarised this 'need' as having two dimensions: religious instruction and academic results.

Councillor Dhindsa made additional arguments that highlighted the problematic dimension of narratives about migration and belonging. He claimed that one reason for lower standards and achievement in state schools arose from the level of support and attention required by the children of new migrants. This was detracting from the

ability of a more established cohort (also ethnic minorities) to achieve their full potential. He also noted that some teachers had low expectations of ethnic minority children whilst the culture of faith based schools induced higher aspirations. The Sikh school in the neighbouring borough became a means of circumventing the pressure on teaching that came with waves of migration. This is a curious paradox, a narrative about the difference of a specific minority crystallises as an argument to escape the reality of structural inequality for others. Councillor Dhindsa took his son out of the local secondary comprehensive as Somalian and Afghani children entered, not because he had anxieties about mixing, he was certainly more to the left than Gurcharan Singh and Swarn Singh Kang. Rather he noted that new waves of migrants needed additional teaching support which, because of the limitations of funding versus capacity and needs, meant that less attention was being given to the more 'ready' children (to use the word 'capable' would feed the suggestion that children with greater English proficiency are also more 'capable'). Curiously then, the state was now funding local Sikh and Catholic schools, which in turn became a siphon for ensuring that second generation Sikh children would achieve good academic results. At some level these arguments and actions parallel the 'white flight' phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s but without the geographical relocation of households. The Sikh schools become a means of escaping the problems associated with 'race', poverty, migration and a retracting welfare state without anyone actually moving out of the area.

Moreover, Councillor Dhindsa, a governor on a secular state school and otherwise unsupportive of faith based services, admitted that the Sikh school in Hayes had provided his son with the following: good academic grades; an excellent grasp of Punjabi; a real confidence in carrying his religious identity, particularly noted by the pride with which he wore his turban. He compared his son's (Sikh identity) confidence with his own acquiescence when he arrived in Britain in the 1960s.

Questions about exclusivity or inequality were sidestepped through a new discourse of affirmation. In this context religious schools were not described through public

statements about what they oppose but rather a positive articulation of opportunity and diversity. Yet curiously when Gurcharan Singh provided an example of the scale of demand for the Sikh secondary school in the neighbouring borough, it was of a Hindu parent that had written to him because his child had been denied a place. Particularly important in the context of the predominance of Khalsa ideology, was Gurcharan Singh's distinction between supporting those faith schools that provide 'mainstream faith education' and being cautious when it came to supporting similar demands from 'fringe' communities with a 'different interpretation of the religion'. As such he bolstered the projection of SGSSS as mainstream Sikhism. In this way, social welfare provision and society itself becomes re-ordered where the most Right wing interpretations are couched as normative whilst other Sikh practices (potentially including the Afghani and Ravi Dass gurdwaras) come to be positioned as 'fringe' elements carrying all the metonymic associations with religious bigotry and sectarianism.

Yet Gurcharan Singh passed off questions about the discriminatory nature of faith schools with references to the Jewish and Christian settlement in education and the reality of selection:

Discrimination would be if you say “no, you can’t have that, only Sikhs can have it or Christians can have it.” So I do not regard this as discrimination. Selection we always do in our life, we make selection, we go out and buy a different 'subzi' (vegetable curry) and all these things, we always make selection.

[Gurcharan Singh, former councillor, 9/10/09]

This corresponds with the points made by other Labour councillors such as Kamaljit Dhindsa and Swarn Singh Kang. Taken together they seemed to enact a process of rationalisation utilising the tropes of 'choice' and 'achievement' to justify phenomena that they otherwise described in affective terms - as demands arising from loss, mourning and victimisation. Perhaps this rationalisation provided the authority to sponsor religious initiatives that potentially conflict with the (nominally) secular politics of their Ealing Labour Group. Moreover, as the head of a Catholic school

astutely observed, local politicians are vigilant about the possible backlash from making any strong statements against faith-based schooling.

At the heart of this discussion are questions about the purpose of education - as enabling control or as nurturing critical enquiry. As already noted in Chapter 1, K. Moti Gokulsing (2006) has argued that whilst the state's support of faith-based schools may be pitched as a concern for academic achievement, the 'non-negotiable absolutes' of faith based services do not fit with a view of education as learning to question and to think critically.

Moral Decline and Religious Codes of Conduct

Concerns about cultural and religious transmission and the need to counter the relegation of ethnic minorities to images of themselves as 'backward' flowed seamlessly into concerns about 'Westernisation', slip sliding into a discourse about the failure of state schools and onwards to statements about the need for a stronger morality. It was claimed that greater discipline and better values could be provided through an expressly 'Sikh code of conduct'.

Gurcharan Singh was not advocating a withdrawal into religious orthodoxy but rather a greater engagement with society *through* a Sikh morality:

Muslims have a different code of conduct. Sikhs have a different code of conduct. Sikhs are basically, our basic code of conduct is like reciting Gurbani, going to the gurdwara, doing all these sorts of things. I do not want that a faith school will bring up children who are so religious or orthodox or something, but I would like that that faith be integrated into the normal society... Also I believe it imparts higher moral values. State schools do not do that, unfortunately. Although we give the education, which is basically common to everyone: speak the truth, don't do anything wrong, or anything else, we do not go into great details about that one... Well, I have come across in my life so far, more children getting into trouble who are from state schools than children who were coming from faith schools. And I think that people in faith schools are, if I can use the word in inverted commas, are 'strict disciplinarians', and

that sometimes is lacking in State schools... And the culture seems to be 'let children do what they want to do' and other culture seems to be 'we are treating children as adults.'

[Gurcharan Singh, former Councillor, 9/10/09]

To identify different codes of conduct but also claim commonalities for faith-based education is an interesting juxtaposition that reproduces the 'different but equally strong' tenets of the multiculturalism model of old. Indeed Councillor Swarn Singh Kang revealed a history of reciprocal relationships between religious organisations in Ealing in which they joined forces to press for religious accommodation. Each religious group defended the ontological separateness of the others. Kang's defence of faith schools was also anchored in claims about moral frameworks by which he essentially meant discipline, restraint, respect for hierarchy and the need for teachers to be moral role models. This is a strong example of Nikolas Rose's (1999) 'etho-politics' that places the onus on people's behaviour and sees moral rectitude as the answer to crime, drugs, domestic violence and poverty. Kang stated:

What is education for? It gives children the knowledge to be successful in their lives, one is just to earn their living and the other is moral education, which is important. Livelihood and morals. Morals tells them their discipline. In Sikh faith we say that all humans are equal and we should respect everybody especially the teachers that teach you and they are in a good place in society, they give you moral education and other education to stand on your feet throughout life, treat other children as equal. Against bullying, crime and drugs. If there is good moral education children will stay away from these things... Crime here in this country is not due to poverty. Poverty is created because they get bad habits such as drugs and start robbing others and can't work or when they create problems between husband and wife, so create all these things like violence in families, comes from husband being drunkard and he not looking after kids. That sort of thing brings problems. It doesn't come from poverty. It's a self-made problem.

[Councillor Swarn Singh Kang, 28/09/09]

However, the demand for faith schools as arguments about religious transmission are in conflict with the empirical fact that the criteria for admission to faith schools is entirely dependent on an already existing religious commitment, knowledge and practice. So concerns about control and discipline move even further to the foreground. This paradox is highlighted by another one of Swarn Singh's statements:

And these schools have waiting lists and will only give admission to parents that are *really* Sikh, that come from religious families. But state schools are bound to accept every child even from families that don't care for their children, that are split families, that's why there is ill discipline in schools because some families don't have any moral values, their parents are drunkard and druggies and those kids mix up with the others and we say few black sheep spoil the whole group. There are a few kids in the school that are anti-social or bully but it's because the parents have no hold on them.

[Councillor Swarn Singh Kang, 28/09/09]

As is clear from these rather shocking comments from a Labour Party councillor, the faith schools debate also reveals the fact of ethnic minority conservatism sitting comfortably at the very heart of nominally Left political projects.

Even more alarming was the proximate nature of arguments made by Swarn Singh, Gurcharan Singh and the views of the Christian Right politician Alan Craig. Craig also invoked connections between religious communitarianism and morality and in turn mobilised these towards a critique of secular state schools:

And it is no wonder that if you provide kids with that sort of moral framework and the desire for excellence and good teaching and believe that actually children need to be taught well within that framework, that moral and ethical framework, then no wonder these schools are doing well. Provided the schools are teaching the children to be good citizens, members of the community teaching them to understand other religions other faiths and no faith then I think the faith schools are a very good thing.

[Alan Craig, Christian Peoples Alliance, 22/10/09]

It is safe to say that for Alan Craig, all roads lead to the breakdown of the family and the role that religion would play in keeping the family strong:

The family is at the core of Christian teaching. And as our society has decided it says farewell to the basic Christian underpinning of our society, the basic Christian moral capital, so our families begin to break up. And we try experiencing new types of family, and the net effect we can all see on the street; it's self evident for anybody to see.

[Alan Craig, Christian Peoples Alliance, 22/10/09]

Points about family and morality were high on the agenda of many interviewees and cut across political parties to connect conservatism of all backgrounds.

Ranu Samantrai (2008) cited the differential socio-legal status of religions in Britain as one aspect of the technologies of ethnicity deployed by the state. Foucault's work has already pointed to the way that morality and discipline are constitutive elements of state technologies. However, I want to add that this is a grotesque parody of Fanon's call for the need to validate the black psyche. Here we see that psyche bolstering the contemporary meta-narrative of the Conservative Party's rhetoric about 'doing God' where the quest for strong moral frameworks provides public validation for organised religion. The Conservative ideology relies on a Victorian morality that comfortably intermingles with a multicultural ethos derived from (Victorian) colonial governance and supplanted to Britain in order to manage south Asian communities here. Ethnic minority communities now travel that road in order to access state resources. In turn, the particularly conservative minority religious projects that have emerged actively contribute to a growing British political consensus about religion, morality and the breakdown of the family.

Conversely, Dilbagh Chana warned against using religious ideas as a moral compass:

(Morality) is a difficult word to find acceptable definition because what is moral for one group can be construed as not moral or immoral for another. So for instance one group might believe that girls have the right to choose their own partners but you may have another group that thinks it's the male members of the group that make that decision. The state has to find ways to keep out of that kind of battle. That is when most problems start. Religion can be a very dangerous thing. Because in a lot of issues, in a lot of periods in history, it has been responsible for very major cruel events... The religions were involved in education when education was not available. Churches were responsible for creating conditions where education was provided because there was no other facility. Now that education is available in an organised fashion there is no need for it to be organised by religion. The practical result of faith schools is that it has created a lot of division.

[Dilbagh Chana, 14/06/11]

This was matched by Pragna Patel's grave concerns about claims to a distinctive morality amongst Hindu schools in London and her strong critique of the acclaimed virtues of faith-based schooling:

And I think what's happening is in the process of re-building, re-inventing and strengthening religious identity, actually the worst most horrific, the most oppressive, the most prejudicial, bigoted, discriminatory aspects of our own religions are being kind of projected as part and parcel of that difference.

[Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters, 15/10/07]

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to draw together some comparative points to highlight the emergence of new systems and practices of 'election' within local areas.

In Southall one Sikh organisation (the SGSSS) out of twelve in the local area has the ear of local and national politicians and increasingly harnesses public resources. Beyond the two key SGSSS gurdwaras, the Miri Piri and the Ramgharia gurdwaras

also carry the Khalsa norm. Miri Piri literally means temporal-spiritual, as derived from the assertions of Hargobind noted above. Also the Ramgharias are engaged in mimetic processes of building authority (referred to by Singh and Tatla (2006) as a form of ‘Sikh sanskritisation’) where they stake a claim to the Khalsa norm even if they have also faced discrimination from the Jat dominated Singh Sabha gurdwaras.

Beyond this, the entire stretch of Sikh formations is represented in some shape or form within Southall and potentially provides a rich array of Sikh heterodoxy. There are a number of caste based sects - Adi Dharmis, Ravidassis and Valmikis - and sects based on admiration for particular Sikh preachers or devotion to living saints - Namdharis, Radhaswamis, Nirankaris, Nanaksar, Beas - and also a distinct group of Sikhs from Afghanistan whose language and religious practice is entirely different. Some of these carry historical tensions with the Singh Sabha movement because of its unanimist tendencies. For instance, there has been violence towards Nirankaris that lay claim to a living guru after Gobind closed the line of succession. Moreover, some of the gurdwaras claim to have been established because of their experience of discrimination by the Jat Punjabi led SGSSS.

Importantly this plurality amongst Sikh belief systems is not reflected in local relations with the state. For instance, only the SGSSS and its sister organisation, the Sikh Missionary Society, are referred to by councillors in their declarations. The low caste Ravidass gurdwara is based in Councillor Dhindsa's ward and a far shorter distance from his home than the SGSSS. However he carries membership of the SGSSS and claims that although he visits the Ravidass gurdwara, he is not able to become a member because of their caste focus. He did, however, admit that the Ravidass gurdwara had been complaining about the ways in which they were being marginalised in the relationship between religious organisations and the state.

This is an interesting claim that relates back to the points made by Gurcharan Singh above that seem to imply that non Singh Sabha or Khalsa versions of Sikhism are

somehow inauthentic. If you ask the SGSSS why there are other gurdwaras in the area, they say that those other sites of worship are sectarian whereas the SGSSS, as a Singh Sabha gurdwara, does not restrict its membership to caste affiliation and is open to all. Indeed interviewees claimed that as the primary reason why they are recognised and consulted by state officials, precisely because they are a non-aligned gurdwara of generic membership. Yet this becomes a counterfactual statement when one notes the predominance of Jats at the helm and the claims of discrimination that led other sects and castes to self-organise.

Moreover, the SGSSS recently changed its constitution to establish even tighter boundaries for the Sikh claim by restricting membership of its gurdwaras to those that use the names 'Singh' and 'Kaur' and accept that guruship ended at Gobind. There are local views that this change in the constitution is linked to the re-iteration of the original Singh Sabha distancing from Hinduism and happens to have coincided with the local Sikh defections from the Labour Party discussed in Chapter 2. It also coincided with the establishment of the Khalsa Primary School for which admission is connected to religious affiliation. It is likely that the SGSSS acts as gatekeeper or validator for admissions to that school. Put differently, by delimiting who can be considered Sikh according to the Khalsa norm, there are real material consequences for the ability of those that do not fulfil this criteria to be able to access publicly funded education services.

The SGSSS has actively and continuously renewed its power and local and national standing in two specific ways: by investing in the prominence of its buildings and through the annual Vaisakhi processions. Figure 1 shows one of two SGSSS sites in Southall, the Havelock Road gurdwara. Its large golden dome is visible from Southall station and it has become a key tourist attraction. It is listed as the largest Sikh gurdwara in Europe. The capacity of the SGSSS to raise its own funding was specifically highlighted by the cost of purchasing and refurbishing the two sites. In particular the former President, Didar Singh Randhawa (interviewed 11/05/09) recounted the following figures: the premises on Park Avenue cost £1.2 million of

which £800,000 was raised from the congregation and the rest attained as a loan; the Khalistani leadership of the gurdwara (1987 - 1994) defaulted on the loan repayments landing the organisation in £1.8million debt, of which £800,000 was repaid through congregation donations within six months; the Havelock site cost a total of £18 million to refurbish to its present condition and this was part covered by a loan of £14 million, which they have been paying off at a rate of £1 million per year; recently they purchased the land at Norwood Hall for the Khalsa Primary School for £2.7 million. Aside from specific collections for 'causes', a regular income is raised from the performance of religious rites.

I have positioned the picture of the SGSSS site against figure 2, a picture of the East London Mosque whose building also attracts a great deal of attention. It is important, to note the differential racialisation of the Sikh gurdwara and the East London Mosque vis a vis the national state. The gurdwara focuses on links with politicians and doesn't bother much with civil society alliances. However, the East London Mosque is continually renewing its power through local civil society mobilisations like TELCO and the United East End alliance *also* because of the differential racialisation of Islam and its contingent hot-cold links with the state. However, there are similarities, including the architectural design. Both sites also enable the organisations to make representational claims and carry their own reproductive effects. They are both developing a 'cradle to the grave' position in their local areas, notably by performing religious rites but also by developing on site, in house, advice and support groups right through from an investment in children's activities to women's groups and spaces for the elderly. The religious rites are a source of private income and some of the welfare services provide access to public funding.

Moreover, Dilbagh Chana (14/06/11) suggested that the Vaisakhi processions were another significant source of income for the SGSSS. I would like to argue that they are also a hugely significant source of renewing power and relations with the state and the perpetuation of the Khalsa norm. Notably they are rife with ritual and re-iterate the Khalsa norm as frequently as possible. Figure 3 illustrates the Panj Pyare,

men acting out as saint-soldiers ordained by Gobind in 1699. This is a highly prestigious role. One set of the Panj Pyare carry flags and the other set carry swords, together emphasising the militarised nationalism at the heart of the Khalsa norm. Figure 4 shows the way in which the same norms have been rolled out and encouraged amongst the students of the Khalsa primary school. The Panj Pyare walk barefoot from the SGSSS' Havelock Road site, through the main streets of Southall to a final prayer at the SGSSS' Park Avenue site. It is a dramatic display of Sikh sovereignty with the SGSSS firmly at the centre. It has been estimated that the 2011 Vaisakhi procession in Southall received 100,000 participants and certainly this annual event has become an important source for consolidating ties with local and national politicians.

Added to this, figures 5, 6 and 7 reflect a number of nodes in the formulation of the symbiotic British-Khalsa Sikh identity: the predominance of the Gobind version of Sikhism seen in the use of orange and the Nishan Sahib (Sikh flag); the importance of ritual in enforcing purity; the strength of militarization through the entrenched projection of Sikhs as a 'martial race' and the enactment of martial arts by young people in the processions; and their complicit, reciprocal and mutually validating relationship with the British state. Members of the local Territorial Army (figure 5) often march at the front of the procession alongside Sikh men that fought for the British Army (figure 6). Finally, figure 7 shows the projection of new hybrid identities encompassing imperial British and Khalistani signs as mutually enforcing and co-existing. As can be seen from figure 7, women are not excluded from these projections, they are also reproducers of the nationalist discourse, and for a religion depicted as perpetually at war, the image of them as fighters is prevalent. A sense of honour, now built into the Rahit Maryada (the Sikh code of conduct devised and determined by the Singh Sabha movement), structures these images; the pride of the flags and the covering of the head and the body ensure Sikh ascription, modesty and honour.

Additional insights can be gained by paying attention to the comparative fortunes of

the dominant Khalsa version of Sikhism and the persecuted Ahmadiyya version of Islam (discussed in Chapter 4), right through from the colonial encounter to contemporary relations with the British state. Both the Singh Sabha trajectory now dominating the Southall landscape and the Ahmadiyyas facing marginalisation within Newham's civil society emerged in the context of the rise of the Arya Samaj. Both constructed themselves against Hindu and Muslim Others. Both found patronage amongst British colonisers. Clearly these histories are long but are ever present in the glocal politics of British public policy. Neither of them appears to have a critique of the British state. Yet in one instance the state offers protection and in the other it supports a body that perpetuates discrimination against others.

Figure 1: Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall

Havelock Road, Southall

Photograph taken by Clifford French

Dated 31/03/08

Posted at http://gallery.nen.gov.uk/asset80217_14645-.html





Figure 2: The East London Mosque

Whitechapel High Road, Tower Hamlets

Photograph taken by Nick Baines dated 18/09/09

Posted at <http://nickbaines.wordpress.com/2009/09/18/diversity-challenge/east-london-mosque/>



Figure 3: 'Southall Vaisakhi Procession'

posted on 10/04/11 to the Visit Southall Website at:

<http://www.visitsouthall.co.uk/News/NewsDetails.php?recordID=439>



Figure 4: 'Thousands turn out for Southall's Vaisakhi Parade'

Image reproduced from Ealing news item

by James Gates dated 12/04/11 and available at:

<http://www.ealinggazette.co.uk/ealing-news/local-ealing-news/2011/04/12/thousands-turn-out-for-southall-s-vaisakhi-parade-64767-28507556/>

Figures 5, 6 & 7: Vaisakhi Procession Southall

Photographs by Roberto Capocelli (dated 12/04/2009)



Chapter 7: Faith in Political Action - The Citizens UK

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the movement from below, the changes taking place within civil society that have impacted upon the State's relationship with religious organisations. The comparative dimension of this thesis was premised on the predominance of Sikhs in Ealing and Muslims in Newham and their potentially differential relationships with the state. However, the level of Christian mobilisation in each of the boroughs was an unexpected discovery. The legacy, indeed revival, of Christian interventions in the public sphere gained equal place and even began to dominate the picture. This chapter focuses on one particular Christian-led but secular civic alliance, the Citizens UK, which is organised on the basis of geographical 'Chapters' that encompass the two London boroughs. West London Citizens (WLC) covers four boroughs including the London borough of Ealing whilst The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO) covers five boroughs including the London borough of Newham.

During the stretch of the fieldwork, the Citizens UK moved from a marginal emergent position to acquire a central place in British civil society. Indeed their significance can not be overstated in the current political context where the restructuring of the state *and also* some of the critics of that restructuring *as well as* those advancing faith based mobilisations now coalesce around the same ideas. These ideas have been articulated and pushed out into the public sphere by Citizens UK and their growing base of academic supporters. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Citizens UK is an important reference point for the revival of a (religious) communitarian discourse that now forms the bedrock of Big Society, Good Society, Red Tory and Blue Labour as well as other resurgent emphases on associationalism and relationality. Surprisingly little is available by way of critique.

If the alliance draws great interest and is the subject of little if any interrogation, this

begs the question of what is novel and exciting on the one hand and what is usual and accepted as common sense on the other. This chapter suggests that the answer lies in the taken for granted and simultaneous novelty of religious organisations in contemporary society. They are already an established feature of multiculturalist engagement and yet it is the liturgical framework, the symbolic weight of religious dress and the central place of religious organisations in the alliance that has drawn the interest of academics, even if this entails overlooking the problems of engaging some religious groups. A lot of academic attention has already been paid to the Living Wage Campaign (see Bretherton, L., 2010; Glasman, M., 2008 and 2011; Holgate, J and Wills, J., 2007; Jamoul, L., 2006). Also, the aesthetic dimensions of the Citizens UK initiatives have been discussed in Chapter 3. Therefore, this chapter focuses on three specific areas: a critical analysis of the tenets; the 'Strangers into Citizens' campaign; and a focus on the darker side of faith as social capital.

Broad Based Organising

Previously known as the Citizens Organising Foundation, the Citizens UK was established in 1988 by Neil Jameson but also with a great deal of assistance from the Church of England. Jameson, a particularly charismatic man, was frustrated by what he described as service-oriented social work. He travelled to the USA where he was inspired by the ideas of Saul Alinsky and Edward Chambers of the Industrial Areas Foundation, now famously debated as part of Barack Obama's personal history of community organising. Jameson imported six main features of Saul Alinsky's organising model namely: a focus on building and strengthening one to one relationships, freedom being defined in terms of association such that collectivism is favoured over individualism; financial independence from the state – the core costs of the alliance are covered by member groups' contributions in terms of dues; research – a problem solving approach that focuses on how to turn problems into winnable issues; tensions – the idea that one has to seize and take power which will not be willingly ceded by power brokers; the importance of holding Assemblies as a fundamental way of ensuring accountability; and to encourage and bring through leaders from the community. This section considers Citizens UK's adaptation of these to the London context.

Constructing geo-political communities of action

Drawing on the work of the Industrial Areas Foundation, Citizens UK's 'Chapters' see themselves as 'broad based organisations' in which large numbers of people are brought together through an alliance of membership groups in order to campaign on clearly identified and "winnable issues". There is an emphasis on galvanising qualitative durable relationships between institutions. Citizens UK specifically seeks groups that they claim have longevity in local areas and they emphasise the kind of permanency that comprises the backbone of recent interventions by Philip Blond (2010) and Maurice Glasman (2011) discussed in Chapter 1.

The campaigns are organised on the basis of a problem solving approach that lays claim to a strong distinction between pragmatic and ideological politics. Organisers are supposed to assist groups to identify "mutual interests" and convert these into achievable goals. Citizens UK expects member groups to move beyond their specific remit in order to work on issues outside their usual concerns and carry an agenda determined by the larger geopolitical alliance. It is for this reason that there has been much discussion about the ability of 'single issue' groups to feel motivated to join the alliance. The Executive Director, Neil Jameson claimed that 'single issue' groups could not fit with the framework because they can't see beyond their own issues but the ex Lead Organiser for West London Citizens, Catherine Howarth, stated she had been actively trying to engage the migrant women's charity, Kalayaan, whose main reason for not joining was the high (£600) membership fee and a lack of time to get involved in issues beyond the immediate focus of their organisation. However, my own discussions with those that decided not to join the alliance revealed deeper problems including: a view that the organisation is undemocratic; it places too much focus on turning out numbers for events at the cost of political principles; it focuses on 'law abiding' citizenship; and it has shown a distinct unwillingness to work on the more difficult issues, namely trafficking, deaths in police custody and the impact of anti terror legislation.

Nonetheless, Citizens UK Chapters have been particularly adept at bringing together

the interests of local residents, consumers or service users with low paid workers in the construction of geographically bounded communities of political action. They lobby at the point of consumption (rather than production), by raising working terms and conditions as concerns about the quality of care or the quality and desirability of services. It is widely argued that Citizens UK has shaken awake some sleeping and defunct trade union branches through its highly regarded Living Wage Campaign (Bretherton, L., 2010; Glasman, M., 2008; Holgate, J and Wills, J., 2007; Jamoul, L., 2006). Indeed there is much to be applauded as the Living Wage Campaign has brought real material benefits for some of the poorest and most precarious workers in London including a significant number of ethnic minorities, particularly women.

Importantly, Citizens UK espouses an overtly communitarian politics; the membership emphasis is on institutional affiliation and there is an implicit critique of individualism:

Individuals can't join these organisations. You have to be in an institution so we have a lot of people coming to us saying I want to join and I really like your campaign on such and such. And you say sorry you can't, go and form a group and then bring the group in to membership. Because partly what we're trying to do is to create associations. We think that democratically, democracy in Britain is seriously threatened by people pretending that they are free when they're just individuals and actually we believe it's our experience that people are free if they're in an association with people because that controls, that contains the centre of activity or fundamentalist activity of the left or the right. So people are healthier in association, even if it's with their extended family. People just running around on their own are a liability for democratic process.

[Neil Jameson, Executive Director of Citizens UK, 7/06/05]

This is a communitarian politics where it is assumed that freedom is derived entirely from association against a narrative that equates individualism with self-interest. Also key for this chapter the way Jameson associates groups with containment on the one hand, and fundamentalism with unaffiliated individuals, on the other. This is

juxtaposed against the events that took place exactly one month after this interview. On 7/7/05, just a few streets from Citizens UK's offices, Shehzad Tanweer, enacted his association with a global Muslim polity, by detonating a bomb at Aldgate station that killed seven people.

Moreover, individuals do have two fairly significant roles to play within Citizens UK's chapters. Firstly, as Community Organisers or charismatic Leaders that are able to galvanise and nurture relationships between member groups. Secondly, individual personal testimonies and trajectories take centre stage at the public events as discussed in Chapter 3. During the opening session of their Leadership Training event (13/07/07) participants were expected to divulge intimate historical accounts of their personal paths (resembling Suzanne Fernandes' Christian evangelical 'personal walk'). Participants introduced themselves with a mixture of reflections on political but hypocritical family members, of proximity to corrupt and inept political systems, of religious belief and the desire to make it relevant to everyday life and of either witnessing or directly experiencing the hardness of life. By and large these were narratives of disillusion and a desire for hope. Interestingly I was the only one at this training event that talked about ideological - socialist, anti racist, feminist - political commitments. Moreover, I was pushed for the names of my supervisors and any mentors. This focus on inspirational mentors chimed with the notion that the participants could themselves become leaders and resonated with the American evangelical style emphasising charisma and the art of persuasion.

Professionalisation, political apathy and public trust

The Citizens UK is concerned with political apathy and a breakdown in the connections between the individual, family and community. It positions itself as an alliance that is 'reweaving the fabric of society' (Deneulin, Hussein and Ritchie, undated). This claim is based on the view that state funding regimes and bureaucratisation enabled co-option and inured political apathy. Other interviewees reinforced this point about professionalisation and the way service contracts have reduced the propensity of groups to engage with campaigning.

For some, the Living Wage Campaign highlighted a sense of deficit in secular organising. One community organiser expressed a deep frustration with her trade union, one of the five largest trade unions in the country. She complained about their lack of responsiveness to migrant workers that she had spent long hours recruiting to the trade union branch. In contrast, she saw Citizens UK as a particularly dynamic force that seemed both willing and able to listen to and press the concerns of the workers that she had mobilised. Yet Chapter 3 has shown that beyond the performance of democracy, Citizens UK is itself a rigid hierarchical body with quite a fixed remit.

Moreover, there is an emphasis on financial autonomy, particularly financial independence from the state to avoid co-option and an apathy that stems from service contracts. The core costs of the alliance (and sizeable staff team) are supposed to be covered by member groups' contributions, referred to as 'dues'. However, the problems with this are clear from Citizens UK's continued reliance on Charitable Trust funding for around 75% of its budget.¹⁶² Even more pertinent since the election of this current Coalition government is the way that Citizens UK's communitarian discourse has been utilised by the Conservative Party to frame a further retraction of the state and public sector. Ironically, this in itself has led to the resurgence of political activity because of a widespread commitment to a role for the state and public institutions.

¹⁶² This is a figure that was provided at the Leadership Training on 13/07/07. The Citizens UK funders listed on their website (at 27/01/11) demonstrates even more clearly that there is a problem raising money solely through dues and there is little distinguishing them from many other voluntary and community organisations in receipt of mixed funding - from state bodies, charitable trusts and the private sector - since the incursion of neo-liberal governance. Specifically their list of funders includes the Metropolitan Police and the Mayor of London's office. See: <http://www.citizensuk.org/about/funders/>

Activating religious groups

Citizens UK's membership includes trade union branches, schools, university departments and more recently, ethnically defined community associations. However, religious institutions are at the helm when it comes to determining the alliance's agenda. According to one of the Lead Organisers, this is because they are particularly good at mobilising large numbers of people for demonstrations and assemblies:

To be honest the backbone is the faith communities. The schools and the labour unions are important players but they are not the central players in terms of the weight that they bring to the organisation and the input that they have in what we are doing... the voluntary sector, the kind of service delivery oriented voluntary sector tends to be quite poor at organising citizen turnout. We take the discipline of being able to turn out to public meetings to press your interests and to demonstrate a kind of connected body of people that are visibly together in a room pressing somebody who is powerful for something really seriously. The groups that are good at that and make strong members of our network (are) the churches and mosques and temples... (They) are more comfortable placing a real expectation on those people to play their part in the public life of the neighbourhood and make their demands and be active citizens.

[Catherine Howarth, former Lead Organiser WLC, 18/08/06]

Religious groups are characterised as congealed masses of membership that can be activated to great effect. Organisers are involved in getting people to see their religious identity as relevant in the here and now and getting religious institutions to recognise their obligation to campaign for socio-economic justice:

The vision is one where, OK, if you hold the view as a Christian, Muslim, or any of our faith traditions say *you can't just pray; you have actually got to act*. The vision is of an organisational vehicle that actually gives you a practical means of living out your faith and the demands and expectations of your faith.

[Catherine Howarth, former Lead Organiser WLC, 18/08/06]

So the Living Wage Campaign is driven by our members' experiences of racism and our members in that instance are mostly black cleaners who are not in unions, who

often go to black Pentecostal churches and praise Jesus on a Sunday and get nothing from their congregation. The congregation does not know what to do with their work problems so that they continue to praise Jesus and they think that will sort of change the world. A few of them join TELCO hopefully because we say we can help you praise Jesus if that's what you want to do, but you have to do something about the wages and conditions of your workers if only because, and this is totally pragmatic, the collection plate is getting emptier, Father, that people have not got as much money as they had so if you want to fight for Jesus you've got to give these people the experience of what the Kingdom of Heaven is about.

[Neil Jameson, Executive Director of Citizens UK, 7/06/05]

The architects and some academic supporters of Citizens UK go further by arguing that community organising can assist religious groups to realise their potential as 'first force' rather than 'third force' members of the voluntary sector on the basis that their moral vision is an antidote to the liberal political system and capitalism and therefore, best placed to lead a 'contra' civil society. Deneulin, Hussein, Ritchie (undated) and Barry Knight (2003) argue that 'first force' groups remain outside of partnership relations with the state and thereby retain their radical edge. They also note the British state's increasing interest to engage faith-based groups in service provision but appeal to religious groups not to succumb to this temptation. So this sense of engaging in the public sphere is no longer about making a case for faith based service provision but rather about supporting the capacity of religious groups to uphold what Maurice Glasman (2008) has referred to as the 'sword of moral justice'; to mobilise the social democratic tenets of religious organisations in order to reign in the excesses of capitalism by reasserting their moral telos.

Catherine Howarth and Neil Jameson referred to the Citizens UK as a 'secular civic alliance' that may comprise many religious organisations but where 'the agenda will not be about faith at all, it will be about neighbourhood matters and economic affairs' (Catherine Howarth, 22/08/07). Jameson has stated that he wants to get religious groups 'off religious issues' (7/06/05) and the alliance has the capacity to steer religious groups away from closed identity politics towards an outward facing

concern for the 'common good' in local areas.

Many reasons were provided for seeing religious organisations as central players. Firstly, they are seen as natural partners for associationalism because of their congregations and also as institutions that could act as spaces for debate. Secondly, religious groups demonstrated a greater capacity to bring people out for actions not least because of the growth of congregations in London. Thirdly, there is an assumption that religious leaders *embody the trust* of people at a time when other studies are showing a distinct decline of trust in politicians (such as Pattie and Johnstone 2007). Religious leaders were depicted as counsellors, representatives and providers for the lowest paid and most vulnerable members of society. Indeed, the alliance has been actively mobilising religious leaderships, already bolstered by multiculturalist practice, and the subject of decades of Black feminist critique. At the Strangers into Citizens rally in 2007, the speakers comprised notaries from the Catholic Church, the Church of England, the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Muslim Council of Britain. Moreover, Chapter 4 has already noted the interest of religious groups in liaising with rather than opposing the state and the multiple ways in which they can act as a second tier of policing, as advisors to the state, as members of state funded multifaith exchanges and increasingly as providers of state funded services.

Fourthly, both the former lead organiser (Catherine Howarth) and the current lead organiser (Julie Camacho) of the West London Citizens (WLC), view religious organisations as more participatory and democratic than other Third Sector bodies, which they depicted as dour and dogged either by rigid hierarchies or state funded service contracts. Conversely, the question of whether or not secular groups were willing to work with religious institutions was taken without context and history to project those that expressed concerns as afraid of diversity and pluralism and also entrenched in closed ideological positions. When social relations are dislocated in this way, when they are removed from their historical and socio-political location, new fictional narratives are introduced (Bell, 1999) providing a great deal of space

for religious authoritarian movements (Bhatt, 1997).

Yet organisers claimed religious groups to be interested in equality even whilst they admitted institutionalised sexism and other potential biases:

Religious organisations are really, of course, in the way that people sometimes get treated, and especially women, I agree there's a bias there. On the other hand, they do have a kind of philosophy of equality amongst people in the eyes of God I suppose, which is a real challenge to the way that society is so kind of economically stratified. And out there in the labour market we're certainly not all equal. Out there in the housing market we're certainly not all equal. Out there in the education market we're certainly not all equal. In that sense, I feel as society becomes more and more unequal, the role of faith communities in challenging that to some extent is crucial.

[Catherine Howarth, former Lead Organiser WLC, 22/08/07]

One of the key problems with the premises underlying Citizens UK's mobilisation of religious organisations, is the projection of religious groups as having been passive, social and cultural formations that need to be encouraged into political activity. This thesis starts from the perspective of de-secularisation and a view of religious organisations as political formations that have been actively garnering and consolidating power. Moreover, Citizens UK was established in 1988 during a period that saw a marked and sophisticated mobilisation by religious organisations of all hues (Sahgal, G and Yuval Davis, N 1992; Marty, M.E. and Appleby, R.S., 1994; Bhatt, 1997; Bruce, S, 2000). That was an important decade for the re-orientation of religious organisations including, as highlighted in the previous chapter, by exploiting spaces created by Thatcherism for a new conservative morality.

Citizens UK's emergence can be seen as part and parcel of this widespread rethink by religious groups about their relationship with the public sphere. Lina Jamoul's (2006) research provides a rare insight into the history of the Citizens UK and makes clear

that the alliance was founded and constructed by a small group of people connected to the Church of England including Neil Jameson, who at the time was the Director of the Church of England's Children's Society for the west of England and Wales. Jamoul explains that the motivation lay in the confluence of the following factors: the impact of Thatcherism on trade union organising and economic deprivation; the first Church of England 'Faith in the City' report which noted the unfolding of an 'urban crisis'; the lack of a Church perspective on that crisis but also concerns about 'declining church attendance and the weakening of the Church of England as an institution' (2006: 70-73). Moreover, Jameson came across the IAF as early as 1979 but was not able to act upon this until the late eighties when the Cadbury Trust paid for 'social workers, faith leaders and researchers to go to the US and attend IAF's 10 day training, building a cadre of broad-based organising advocates that included Barry Knight, Stephen Lowe the Bishop of Hume, Jack Nicholls the Archbishop of Sheffield, and Tim Stephens, the Bishop of Leicester' (Jamoul, 2006). Neil Jameson set up the first Chapter in Bristol as early as 1988. It wasn't until TELCO was established in 1996 and the Living Wage Campaign took off that people really noticed his work and yet Citizens UK had already been in existence for around a decade. The initial setting up was funded by the Church of England through its newly established Urban Fund. The Church of England continues to be a major contributor to the alliance.

Moreover, the claim that this is a 'secular civic alliance' is also undermined by the normative insistence on religious affiliation. Religious identity is often assumed and reified during interactions. At my first meeting with the former West London Citizens Organiser, Catherine Howarth (8/08/06), she voiced concerns about access to Sikh groups and had clearly assumed that I am a practicing Sikh who could potentially nurture such connections. She introduced herself as a Roman Catholic and it was clear her identity was principally constructed around the axes of 'faith' and 'place'. The latent tendency to locate people in terms of 'religious identity' and 'location' was particularly highlighted at the Leadership Training event (13/07/07) where one of the facilitators interjected during a role-play exercise and insisted that my role-play partner ask me more about my 'Hindu identity and background'. I had to

explain that I didn't have a Hindu identity, whilst it was the case that my parents are religious (but they are Sikhs not Hindus) I didn't have any religious affiliation. Infact, the facilitator had interrupted a line of questioning where my role-play partner was practicing his ability to glean the kinds of issues that need addressing in my neighbourhood, Southall. I was emphasising the prevalence of sexual harassment and my focus on women's safety but these were displaced and religious identity was super-imposed. The Citizens UK's reluctance to consider sexual harassment to be one of their concerns relates to the proscription of "Wedge Issues".

By their admission, the Citizens UK membership is deeply conservative. The telling of personal stories at the Leadership Trainings hung in direct contrast to the stated unwillingness to deal with "wedge issues", viewed as private not public concerns. Notably, these encompass personal relationships, sexuality, domestic violence and divergent theological interpretations. These are seen as issues on which the membership is unlikely to reach agreement. They are informally known as "wedge issues" because of their propensity to fracture the alliance (Denuelin et al, undated).

The Strangers into Citizens Campaign

As an extension of their concern with working terms and conditions, the Citizens UK initiated the Strangers into Citizens (SiC) campaign in 2006 calling for a one-off amnesty for around 450,000 undocumented migrants currently living in the UK. The SiC literature made the following point about the responsibility of the Catholic Church to campaign on issues affecting its increasingly diverse and economically disadvantaged migrant congregations:

Go to any central London Catholic church on a Sunday and you are struck by the numbers and diversity of its congregation. In other denominations – the black evangelical congregations, or some Anglican parishes – the diversity is less marked, but the immigrant presence is just as strong. Some of the foreign-born are wealthy professionals: middle-class people who have moved to London to work in well-paid jobs. Others are passing through –to study, say. But very large numbers are working in the capital's low-paid sector, unskilled or barely skilled. A massive 90 per cent of

London's unskilled jobs are done by migrants.¹⁶³

If numbers is a good measure, the SiC campaign appeared to have gathered a great deal of support.¹⁶⁴ In May 2007 they held a rally in Trafalgar Square for which they mobilised over 10,000 people including representatives of the main Christian churches, the Jewish Board of Deputies, the Muslim Council of Britain and three of the five largest trade unions in Britain as well as a host of community organisations working in the field. They managed to usurp the attention from what was becoming an increasingly tired and weathered trade union lead May Day rally. In comparison, the SiC campaign comprised a lively mix of thousands of people. By 4th May 2009, SiC claimed this figure had doubled to 20,000 people who marched from three different points in London to a rally in Trafalgar Square.¹⁶⁵ Heightened press interest in the demonstrations stemmed from the crowded religious services that marked their starting point and the parade of religious clerics that dominated the speakers' platform at the end.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ From *Stranger into Citizens Briefing Paper No 1: Out of the Shadows, the story of the Strangers into Citizens Campaign* by Austin Ivereigh available at:
<http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk/index.htm>

Last accessed 10/06/09.

¹⁶⁴ See the following newspaper articles: *Earned amnesty for illegal workers* by Will Somerville in *The Guardian* (23/07/08); *Phoney policies only backfire: we need an amnesty for illegal immigrants* by Polly Toynbee in *The Guardian* (4/05/07); *Why we should grant illegal migrants an amnesty* by Anthony Browne in *The Independent* (26/09/08).

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk/pages/get-involved/rally-4-may.htm>

Last accessed 11/06/09.

¹⁶⁶ Ruth Gledhill estimated the turnout at 20,000 in her piece for *The Times Online* on 4/05/09 and available at:

<http://timescolumns.typepad.com/gledhill/2009/05/strangers-who-hope-to-become-citizens.html>

Moreover, these were incredibly vibrant demonstrations that sought to highlight the plight but also the scale of undocumented workers in London. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 6, religious organisations have a history of intervening on immigration and this stems from both the levels of religious affiliation amongst migrant workers, and the local impact of a shrinking, racialised welfare system that discriminates on the basis of immigration status. According to Catherine Howarth, the SiC campaign enabled religious organisations to raise the concerns of their congregations and sew the practical support they were already providing to a larger concern with public policy. A 'moderate proposal' emerged, which was intended to 'win political support nationally'; it was considered more radical than proposals advanced by the vast majority of politicians but less radical than that being advanced by anti borders groups like No One Is Illegal. Thus Howarth stated:

It was about trying to get a balance between something that would really be progressive and enable people in that horrendous limbo of living here illegally to have a chance to stay and something that would be politically palatable and achievable. So in that sense, it was a perfect example of what we try and do in London Citizens, which is to come up with demanding but achievable campaigns, things that we don't think are kind of pissing in the wind of totally being impossible politically to win. But which are nevertheless really about shifting things in a progressive direction.

[Catherine Howarth, former Lead Organiser WLC, 22/08/07]

The outcome was a proposal that advocated an 'earned amnesty' delivering exceptional leave to remain in Britain for those that have already been in the country for four years and successfully completed an additional two years during which they should be working and self financing. Its Early Day Motion gained the support of 97 MPs across the political parties.¹⁶⁷ Whilst the campaign made a compelling argument about the financial benefits of legalising migrant workers and the ways in which regularisation can prevent further exploitation and abuse, its demands have been problematised. In particular, its 'qualifying criteria' makes a strong demarcation between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' categories of migrants (Gupta 2007). In order

¹⁶⁷ <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=37768&SESSION=899>

to qualify for and complete the additional two year pathway to citizenship, one needs to have a clean criminal record; to have been working and self-financing (i.e. no recourse to public funds); to demonstrate knowledge of English; and to provide employer and community references. Indeed the campaign literature (and speeches on 4th May 2009) noted that as many as 750,000 undocumented migrants were living in the UK at that time but only proposed to regularise 450,000 of them. Those that fall into the 'undeserving' camp are categorised on the grounds of: legality; employment or economic productivity; and also patriotism. The intersection of such categories in the context of immigration may be usual but makes for a very conservative campaign.

More than this, there has been a tacit understanding that Britain has a right to police its borders and that a one off amnesty may justify tighter immigration controls. The text of their Early Day Motion is as follows:

That this House recognises the cross-party commitment to tightening UK borders and reducing undocumented immigration; notes with interest that such undocumented immigration has fallen by well over 50 per cent in Spain following the 2005 regularisation programme; further notes that a regularisation would lead to significantly less opportunity for low paid workers to be undercut in the UK labour market as well as increased tax revenue for the Exchequer; recognises that the status quo leaves 500,000 people with no recourse to the police or justice system open to abuse, exploitation and profiteering by criminal gangs; and welcomes the debate on regularisation led by a broad collection of think tanks, unions, academic institutions, religious organisations and service providers and the Strangers into Citizens campaign.¹⁶⁸

SiC point to the Spanish case in their defence but both Gupta (2007) and Kundnani (2007) noted the particular problems with the Spanish experience, specifically that it drew out many undocumented migrants that did not qualify for the amnesty and this in turn enabled a high level of deportations and a tightening of immigration laws. So the proposals offered government the possibility to police and regulate areas of

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

society and economy previously inaccessible to them. This is particularly problematic in the context of an organisation premised on countering the totalising power of the market and the state. The proposal itself can only be understood in the context of the problems with deliberative democracy models, where consensus can be determined by majoritarian concerns rather than political principles. Historically, immigration campaigns conducted by anti racist groups may also have fallen short of a 'no borders' position for pragmatic reasons where they have focused on gaining exceptional arrangements for a few. However, they have not gone so far as to ask for these in exchange for the state's right to tighten border controls and strengthen immigration rules.

It is clear that the SiC material is concerned to counter dominant arguments against immigration, such as claims about opening the floodgates, abuse of process, and financial burden on the state. Yet this demarcation of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' is a moralistic category that bears echoes in religious text and was performed by religious leaders at the May Day rallies. Whilst they drew on parables to illustrate the injunction to 'love thy neighbour' and welcome strangers, their speeches and the qualifying criteria of the campaign *act together* to re-introduce notions of 'election' as a normative concept pinned to the enactment of particular law abiding subjectivities.

Moreover, whilst elsewhere those campaigning on immigration have highlighted the particular gender dimensions of immigration and the scale of sexual violence against women with uncertain immigration status (Brah, A, 1996; Anderson, 2000; Gupta 2007) and this was also reflected in SiC's collection of case examples¹⁶⁹, neither gender nor sexual violence featured as aspects of the campaign's demands, background information or within its four briefing papers. Indeed, there was a distinct lack of correlation between the particularly degrading experiences and circumstances of the protagonists in the SiC stories and the remit of the campaign; several of them entered the country 'illegally', were unable to work, in need of health or state welfare because of the impact of trauma, and would have been ineligible for

¹⁶⁹ <http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk/pages/the-campaign/stories.htm>

the proposed 4+2 Pathway to Citizenship or 'Earned Amnesty'.

Finally, I want to focus on the use of the Union Jack and other tropes of Britishness, namely the singing of 'God Save the Queen' and 'Rule Britannia' at the end of the SiC rallies (described in Chapter 3). I believe they assist in the revival of an expressly imperial sense of Britishness that has accompanied the marginalisation of questions of power relations within recent government interventions in 'the social' (community cohesion, social capital, social investment, social enterprise). Since 9/11, religion in particular has been framed within questions of loyalty and disloyalty to the British state. As a consequence, a pace has gathered which seems to attempt a metonymic association between religiosity, cohesion and patriotism.

Whilst there has been some change since the seminal study by Paul Gilroy (1987) of the integral 'race' dimension of Britishness, others working on immigration and 'race' have continued to emphasise the 'race' dimension of the immigration debate and indeed a renewal of the assimilationist tendencies of the British state (see Back et al, 2002; Gupta, 2007; Kundnani, 2007; Lewis, 2005; and Yuval-Davis, 2006, McGhee, 2010). It seems to me that growing displays of these imperial signs by religious and ethnic minorities are an extension of what Back et al (2002) argued in their critique of 'community cohesion' as leaving normative whiteness unchallenged.

I asked Catherine Howarth about the origin of the decision to use the Union Jack and the choice of songs. Her response seemed to indicate the desire of membership organisations to reclaim existing (indeed older) notions of Britishness rather than to critique or reconstruct them. She stated:

For almost all the actual documented and undocumented migrants that took part in the march... you can see the pictures, people carried that flag. And people want to be British and they're quite proud of, they feel, you talk to migrants, some people have had an awful experience of this, that or the other, but my overwhelming experience, and I'm not universal, but my overwhelming experience is that people are amazingly

positive about Britain as a country. And my response to that is that well what London Citizens are trying to do as an organisation is to make Britain something to actually be proud of... The thinking was that it was important to demonstrate what a positive contribution migrants have to make. What a sense of loyalty to, and kind of a sense of loyalty that they have to this country. That it would disarm Right wing opponents to see migrants carrying the Union Jack. It was also echoes of the absolutely extraordinary Million Person March in Los Angeles last year where the American flag was carried by thousands of mainly Mexican and Latin American migrants who were undocumented in America. That migrants and people of different races and nationalities, faiths and colours are what makes Britain a great country and a good country.

[Catherine Howarth, former Lead Organiser WLC, 22/08/07]

When long-term British residents raised the problems with deploying such symbols, this was downplayed as 'some people (are) just allergic to the Union Jack because of its associations with right wing bigoted racist parties and people' (Catherine Howarth, 22/08/07). This wasn't the only time that community organisers sought to dismiss concerns about the ideological underpinnings or critical value of their campaigning. I certainly felt that critique was not received well, if at all, and that the alliance falls far short of the antagonistic character that is being claimed in some academic accounts (such as in Lina Jamoul's thesis, 2006). Moreover, Howarth revealed that the SiC team were accused of peddling 'imperialism' and criticised for the nature of the demands by what she described as 'fringe organisations', reflecting a minority view.

After a while I certainly had the sense that certain issues and styles of organising were considered old hat. This included: an aversion to the Union Jack; caution about working with religious groups; individualism of any kind; black self organisation; single issue or ideological campaigns, amongst which a desire to end all racism was noted by Neil Jameson as wholly unrealistic and unworkable.

Building Power and Legitimacy: the Dark Side of Social Capital

Advocates of the concept of social capital have used the phrase 'the dark side of social capital' to make passing reference to some of the problems with the concept. As such the phrase is now common parlance for reference to some generally accepted shortcomings, namely the inherently discriminatory nature of many faith-based organisations (referred to in this thesis as systems of 'election') and the poor representation of women within the upper echelons of religious institutions. However, this propensity for social capital and faith-based organisations to have a 'dark side' is frequently acknowledged but rarely elaborated.

Importantly, the key differences between James Coleman, Robert Putnam and Pierre Bourdieu's uses of the term social capital depend upon the incorporation or denial of power relations and their understanding of individual agency. Putnam's work is particularly popular in the emergent 'faiths' literature but his version of social capital is distinctly functionalist whilst Bourdieu's own writings were rather about the vying of interests and the production of legitimacy through networks (Siisiainen, 2000). Citizens UK has tended towards this functionalist projection of social capital as networks of mutually assisting relationships of trust, oriented towards the greater good. Rather, this section explores the ways in which Bourdieu's sense of networks, as spaces that are exploited and provide aggregate rewards, applies to the membership of the Citizens UK, who, I argue, have gained much by way of symbolic and economic capital through alliance working. In particular, Bourdieu stated:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. These relationships may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them. They may also be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name (the name of a family, a class, or a tribe or of a school, a party, etc.) and by a whole set of instituting acts designed simultaneously to form and inform those who undergo them; in this case, they are

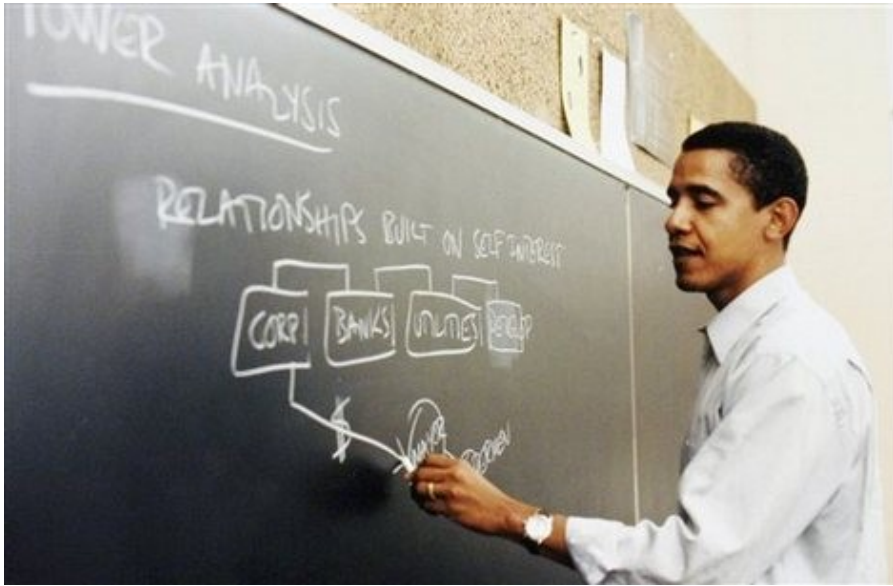
more or less really enacted and so maintained and reinforced, in exchanges. Being based on indissolubly material and symbolic exchanges, the establishment and maintenance of which presuppose reacknowledgment of proximity, they are also partially irreducible to objective relations of proximity in physical (geographical) space or even in economic and social space.

[Bourdieu, 1986: 242]

Moreover, he argued that these are not natural but rather they are constructed and one profits from them through their continual renewal but also carries a responsibility for supporting the position of the others (Bourdieu 1986: 242). I believe this goes some way in explaining what is happening in the Citizens UK's insistence on working with the Jamaat-e-Islami lead East London Mosque. The limits of Bourdieu's analysis, however, is that it remains economically deterministic and I want to argue that whilst I agree with his sense of the 'elective' nature of alliances and the East London Mosque do access resources through the alliance, their main concern is not economic but rather the perpetuation of a particular ideology.

The power analysis

Citizens UK has been particularly applauded for reviving relationality, a geopolitical relationality that garners the associative strength of local civil society organisations to revive a collective dimension to campaigns for socio economic change (see Jamoul, 2006 and Massey, 2005). Their understanding of power is drawn from the Industrial Areas Foundation model and is now famously depicted in the following photograph of Barack Obama conducting a training session on community organising.



Source: <http://tinyurl.com/c25zbq7>

The same analysis is taught within the Leadership Training run by Citizens UK. I attended one such training event, conducted over three days to enhance the development of relationships between participants.¹⁷⁰ The Citizens UK power analysis is not complex. It identifies a number of key power brokers - the state, corporations and the media. It also notes the role of the state and media in protecting corporate interests and power. Citizens UK's response to this matrix of power calls for civil society organisations to build geographically based political communities of resistance based on mutual interests as opposed to the self interest of corporations, the state and other power brokers. Through association, these civil society organisations are thought to constitute a kind of counter-power, groups that gain and mobilise power through their relationships with each other. This power analysis relies on fairly strong binary notions of state and civil society. It does not identify any organisation as 'powerless' but rather depicts a battle between a politics of self-interest and one defined by mutual interests and the 'common good'. Power itself is thought to flow from the equation 'organised money plus organised people'.

However, I found the Citizens UK 'power analysis' lacking so I queried the omission

¹⁷⁰ From fieldwork notes to the Leadership Training event on 13/07/07 and 14/07/07.

of religious organisations from the power matrix particularly pointing to the Establishment position of the Church of England. Even if Neil Jameson, the trainer at that particular session, acknowledged the material wealth of some religious organisations, he certainly did what he could to revert back to a focus on large corporations. Indeed not only does the omission of religious groups reflect an incomplete picture of power brokers, it also reveals a great deal in its inability to take account of the movement of people and groups across spaces and to create and utilise pathways between civil society and the state, a lining up of interests, and hegemony at both material and discursive levels.

Importantly for this thesis, this flawed analysis of power prevents Citizens UK organisers and participants from taking account of the long-term legitimacy that is sought by Right wing constituents of the alliance. Indeed the alliance represents a collection of quite powerful organisations, political formations, which are asserting their own realignment of the public/private divide, that are reproducing rather than stretching the bounds of state endorsed morality, and whose claim to autonomy from the state can be questioned.

Fundamentalists in alliance

The Citizens UK analysis of power intentionally avoids the structural position, ideological commitments and ambitions of its religious member groups. This has significant implications that have not thus far been discussed by other analyses. Two kinds of arguments were presented by Citizens UK (and other interviewees) to bat away difficult questions about fundamentalism, alliances and legitimacy. Firstly, there was a common belief that fundamentalists could not be in alliance. Thus Catherine Howarth stated:

It would be an impossibility for fundamentalist organisations to be involved in London Citizens I think. Because I think they are, they basically reject different fundamentalists and they can't handle the fact that other people who don't share their religious views can also stand for the common good and that we can work together with each other. And I think all of these faith communities are grappling,

some more than others, with the challenge of fundamentalist people within their own communities... to me fundamentalist attitudes are ones where people hold a kind of dogmatic view that their own position is the correct one. That by definition people that hold different views are wrong, are destined to go to hell. And obviously that shades at the worst end into willingness to actually undertake violent acts towards other people, even towards people from your community with whom you disagree. So that's absolutely intolerable in a democracy. Our values are fundamentally democratic values. And fundamentalist values are I think anti democratic.

[Catherine Howarth, former Lead Organiser, WLC, 22/08/07]

Indeed Howarth's contribution presents an interesting dilemma: how can anti democratic fundamentalists be part of a democratic alliance? The problem lies in an understanding of fundamentalism as being so immersed in one's beliefs that one cannot connect with those that do not hold the same views. Other interviewees equated fundamentalism with orthodoxy, where religious belief entails a retreat from public life. The perception of fundamentalism here is of 'narrowness' and isolation but this is a misconception. One only needs to look at the representations that are made on the issue of gender, sexuality and reproductive rights at any international conference (see for instance Women Against Fundamentalism (1995) report on the Beijing Conference) to see that fundamentalism *depends upon* public presence and on the ability to forge alliances with other groups nationally and transnationally. Connections are built around the furtherance of mutual interests but also an implicit reassurance that some areas remain off limits. So there are potential parallels with Citizens UK.

According to Catherine Howarth, the simple fact of being 'in relationship' circumvents the possibility of fundamentalist views and can stop or alleviate prejudice. At some level there was hope that engagement with the outside world and with other religious groups would force the more Right wing members of the alliance to let go of their prejudices, to embrace diversity and find a common commitment to the alleviation of human suffering. This is thought to be the case because the alliance forces groups into a relationship with Stranger Others and compels them to find

common ground. Neil Jameson provided anecdotal evidence of the way membership groups had grown in their understanding of the Other because of a new physical and political proximity fostered by Citizens UK.

Secondly, there were concerns about being too purist in politics. Rahila Gupta has referred to this as 'the counsel of perfection' accusation levelled at feminists when they raise questions about political alliances.¹⁷¹ For Howarth, to talk about fundamentalism was to 'go in there looking for problems' (22/08/07). Instead she emphasised that 'these organisations are totally imperfect, society is imperfect, human beings are imperfect' (22/08/07). This sense of an alliance of imperfect organisations chimes with Luke Bretherton's contribution as his argument for the political enactment of one's faith is precisely based on the understanding that one can act in the present, to make changes to an imperfect world (which he calls 'Babylon') and still aspire to a perfect heaven. So the deal is precisely that one works through seriously flawed institutions towards pragmatic ends rather than expecting an ideological affinity. Bretherton and Howarth reinforce each other's assertions as she views human behaviour as 'naturally problematic and selfish and full of sin' and interaction with these fallen human beings as an attempt at getting them to be 'their best possible self'. These comments bear resemblance to the comments of other Christian interviewees discussed in Chapter 3.

Moreover, Howarth likened taking a stand on fundamentalism with refusing to work with the Catholic Church because it doesn't allow women priests. This comparison is interesting, not only because it highlights the prevalence of sexism across institutions and the difficulties that entails for political activity, but rather because the imperfection of Christian institutions becomes a norm that prevents a critique of other, notably minority, religious organisations. To begin to question Christian institutions at the centre and the forefront of the Citizens UK carries the potential of disintegration. Given that part of the unmarked background for the alliance

¹⁷¹ See *Feminism and the Soul of Secularism* by Rahila Gupta dated 8/03/11 and available at:

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/rahila-gupta/feminism-and-soul-of-secularism>

comprises support for Joseph Ratzinger and also Austin Ivereigh's attempts to circumvent critique of the Catholic Church (he was an organiser for Citizens UK whilst he was fending off critique of the Catholic Church during its child sexual abuse scandal), there is a potential for complicity. Moreover, to then expect the alliance to critique or distance itself from other religious organisations leaves them open to questions of hypocrisy and double standards. Indeed it carries the potential of reflecting a spotlight back on to the bigger players within the alliance and its various Chapters.

Nonetheless, amongst TELCO's longest standing members is the East London Mosque (and its sister organisations the London Muslim Centre and the Islamic Forum of Europe). South Asians in Tower Hamlets, with long histories of anti racist and community activism, have been writing about the links between this triumvirate and the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami Party (JI). The JI was formed in 1941 in colonial India and is based on the work of Abu a'la Maududi, one of the first Islamic Right thinkers to formulate an ideology of an Islamic state and of modern jihad. The JI has been implicated in the genocide that took place at the "war of liberation" of Bangladesh. This political moment marked a significant rupture between secular Bangladeshi nationalists and the Islamic Right. The JI continues to be associated with 'acts of systematic repression, anti-minority hatred or violence in Pakistan'.¹⁷² On their influence in Tower Hamlets, a member of a local group of secular Bangladeshis pointed to the following:

By far the most organised and biggest political Islamist group is the Jamaat-e-Islami, which also operates in England, but under different names.... They have front groups. In the east end of London their biggest group is the East London Mosque, the London Muslim Centre and then a number of groups that are organised around that centre. Mainly the Islamic Forum Europe, Dawatul Islam, the YMO and there are a few other community youth groups that operate in Tower Hamlets... one could say that the leadership or some of the key figures of MCB (the Muslim Council of Britain) are definitely members of Islamist or fundamentalist groups like the Jamaat-

¹⁷² For more information about the Jamaat-e-Islami Party see *The Islamic Right - Key Tendencies* produced by Awaaz-South Asia Watch in June 2006.

e-Islami. Some of the leadership are definitely from that strand... like the current secretary general (Dr Abdul Bari) is Bangladeshi JI... You will see a clear link between them and JI because over the years they have had regular key leaders of JI visit the East London Mosque and meetings, seminars, conferences being posted by the East London Mosque where the JI leadership and the East London leadership are sharing a platform and sharing views... they have always defended JI people. Every time we have challenged JI ideology or when their leaders have come over here, there has been a very strong defence from the East London Mosque.

[Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Nirmul Committee, 3/10/07]

Tower Hamlets is a politically fused borough, very tense. There are a number of mosques and secular and cultural organisations (and now also sections of the local Labour Party), some of who played a central role in the definitive anti racist struggles of the 1980s, that are now engaged in what can only be described as a cultural war of attrition to counter what they claim is the expansionism of the East London Mosque. I want to highlight four points from their arguments: the East London Mosque and its partner organisations have links with fundamentalist political groupings in Bangladesh and Pakistan; in Britain they have been mobilising through local political parties of all hues but also drawing legitimacy from civil society alliances and anti racist mobilisations (such as the recent United East End coalition against the English Defence League); they have established pathways into the local state to access limited resources whilst secular community spaces in the borough have been decimated; and the East London Mosque has come to be regarded as the main representative of Muslims in the area such that despite the existence of over 40 mosques in the borough of varying ideologies and practices, the East London Mosque has maximum space to reproduce its particularly narrow version of Islam. Some secular Bangladeshis in the borough take a 'no platform' approach to this triumvirate akin to the stands taken in relation to the British National Party. In effect, this is an equalisation of two forms of Right wing politics.

It is noteworthy that Citizens UK's unwillingness to look critically at religious

organisations differs from the practices of its American counterpart, the Industrial Areas Foundation.¹⁷³ However, when questioned about the East London Mosque, Catherine Howarth claimed that she would only entertain criticism if there were information about their behaviour here in London and particularly in Tower Hamlets, rather than about their connections abroad. For me, this was another indication of Citizens UK's preference for form over content, for numbers and outcomes over political principles. Paradoxically, for an organisation that overtly refuses to work on gender/sexuality/reproductive rights as 'wedge issues', Howarth's comment below shows that she referenced her commitment to tackling violence against women as a way to defend Citizens UK's allies. This inversion of the dominant discourse about gender as a standard of governance that restricts or moderates religious mobilisations (as here the same claim enables fundamentalist ones) also carries epistemological problems because, as can be seen below, Howarth is not really certain of what she knows about the East London Mosque but she still stands boldly by the claim that they are a local force for good:

I'd have a much bigger problem if I felt that East London Mosque were supporting views which were extremely repressive of women within Tower Hamlets or something like that. That's what would really bother me...if they weren't challenging domestic violence or if they were encouraging negative views towards people of other faiths. But it seems to me they, what I know and obviously I don't sit in there, I don't speak Bengali and I don't spend a lot of time with them, but they are broadly locally a force for good I think.

[Catherine Howarth, former Lead Organiser WLC, 22/08/07]

This is also interesting for the way in which geo-political spaces are imagined. Citizens UK identifies along the axes of faith and place, it is about turning one's religious convictions into a force for good at the neighbourhood or local level. The socialist feminist geographer, Doreen Massey, is also one of Citizens UK's

¹⁷³ Both Mark Warren's presentation at the 'Faith and Citizenship Conference' in London on 27/08/08 and Andy Banks' (1991) writing on the Justice for Janitors Campaign indicates that the American Chapters make some level of distinction between progressive and non progressive religious groups. They also include organisations regarded by Citizens UK as 'single issue' groups, such as women's or environmental groups.

supporters. Yet if Massey (2007) has articulated any critique of Citizens UK at all, it is a wish to see them making clearer transnational connections so that they are linking local politics with the global and not just picking up on the way that global capital impacts on the local. Most of what she says is about taking account of the transnational nature of corporations by linking the struggles of local workers within areas of Britain with workers in other parts of the world, no doubt akin to socialist internationalism. Notwithstanding the fact that the East London Mosque are actually considered a problem for women's rights and people's freedoms within Tower Hamlets, I believe that Citizens UK also has an ethical responsibility to take account of transnational networks of religious violence where fundamentalist organisations are fast learning to separate out the language used in the British context and their activities abroad.

The aggregated benefits

The TELCO 12th Anniversary Assembly (12/11/08) provided an insight into how local politics actually takes place and can directly or inadvertently provide a space for the consolidation of fundamentalist forces, paving the way for them to access limited public resources. The event was clearly being used to nurture and forge political ties between local councillors, businessmen and fundamentalist groups in Tower Hamlets. Abdul Bari of the Muslim Council of Britain (referred to above by Ansar Ahmed Ullah as a JI member) was given centre stage and provided the keynote address for the event. Members of the Muslim Council of Britain, the East London Mosque and local Labour Party councillors grouped together in the seats at the front of the hall, networking, shaking hands and congratulating each other. The Citysafe item on the Assembly agenda was led by a member of CADAA, a body closely allied to the East London Mosque. The CADAA representative, a young Bengali man, was given a platform at the TELCO event as part of their emphasis on personal testimonies. He talked passionately about the prevalence of drug use in Tower Hamlets and his own personal 'salvation'. East London Mosque have for some time been lobbying for access to state funding for their existing drug and alcohol rehabilitation work with young people in the borough. Indeed Catherine Howarth noted her support for their bid to receive public funding for this work even if

otherwise she would not encourage religious groups to engage with service contracts. At the TELCO Assembly, the local council representative announced that it would release more funds for their 'safer city' work. It seems likely that the East London Mosque, and their various mutations, would be seen as a strong contender for such funding.

Clearly, legitimacy for members of Citizens UK chapters is gained on lots of fronts. If nothing else the Citizens UK publicity machine gives its members the appearance of being highly relevant in so far as 'relevance' has come to be closely associated with numbers. When combined with earlier points about the active erasure of other identities and political histories, one can see how this is likely to ferment in the reproduction and institutionalisation of the government's own 'faith agenda' at a local level. However, it is worth noting that there is a slight imbalance in this alliance. If Lina Jamoul's (2006) account of TELCO's Whitechapel Watch campaign is anything to go by, the East London Mosque could be gaining far more from Citizens UK affiliation than they are putting into the alliance and its campaigns. Jamoul's (2006) thesis notes that TELCO provided support for the East London Mosque's (ELM) bid to secure the land on which the London Muslim Centre was later built. She also notes that TELCO saw through the Whitechapel Watch campaign in 2003 whose key components were determined by the East London Mosque and comprised street cleaning and 'law and order' concerns including public drinking and prostitution. The demands were akin to those made by the West London Citizens Bin the Rats campaign which included increased rubbish collections but also greater policing and surveillance equipment.

Even though Citizens UK is opposed to state funding contracts, I believe the alliance still acts as a power broker enabling religious groups to increase and consolidate their relationship with the local and national state. In turn, this helps religious organisations position themselves as representatives, as recognised by local people and other agencies and therefore as viable recipients of public resources. Of course the East London Mosque does not rely solely on its participation in TELCO. It has

been working on many fronts to extend its reach. Its sister organisation, the Islamic Forum of Europe, fielded and boosted political candidates both through the Labour Party and the Respect Party. This Jamaat-e-Islami triumvirate is also very close to the current Mayor Lutfur Rahman who now has overall control of the borough's budget.

Ansar Ahmed Ullah emphasised the subtle ways in which power is consolidated, legitimacy is gained, resources are annexed, Right wing Islam is perpetuated and dissent is quashed. For instance, he stated the following about the Jamaat-e-Islami groups in Tower Hamlets and the uses of their client base:

Generally if you wanted to consult with young people, again the youth groups that are most active and organised, are the groups that are being lead by (JI) ...I think they are following the Islamist way of working... Hamas, Hizb ut-Tahrir, they all have this way of providing community welfare. They will have hospitals, clinics that provide health support or they will have their own schools that will provide education to young people. And I guess in times of crisis, they could fall back and draw support from their contacts in those groups. I give you one example. A few weeks back there was an Islamist that came over here from Bangladesh, a guy called Delwar Hossain Sayeedi (recently indicted for war crimes), and we called a demo at Altab Ali Park, not too far from East London Mosque to protest about his presence here... so the young people that go to their clubs and people that go to mosque, they were told that, this guy is an Islamic scholar and as Muslims we have to provide protection for this guy. That it's their duty as Muslims to go out there and challenge us lot who were demonstrating outside the mosque.

[Ansar Ahmed Ullah, Nirmul Committee, 3/10/07]

Moreover, when one brings into view anecdotal evidence from a number of ethnic minority women's groups across the country that are struggling against the consequences of the government's faith and cohesion agenda, the Citizens UK approach acquires a new significance. In this context the conflict over representation has huge implications for the allocation of resources and access to the democratic process. Sandhya Sharma, a feminist activist from Manchester complained that:

We too are finding that we are struggling over and over again to fight for what small resources are available to look at women, to look at women's inclusion, to look at domestic violence against women. We are fighting that out in the new battleground of faith and cohesion... There is less access to resources and space to argue your validity... you are constantly asked to justify, to validate your very existence... increasingly the faith networks are getting involved and they are getting the money... (and) I've seen quite a few organisations, which traditionally have been secular becoming Muslim women's organisations because that's where the money is at; the money is at that place. If you look at, I was looking at various different funding sources and it is all what Pragna was talking about, faith-based approach to this, faith-based approach to education, faith-based approach to integration, this is how its gonna play out now, so as long as you are faith-based you have a shot at some funding and there is a real competition for those resources, for those spaces and those voices. Whose voices are the government listening to? Unfortunately, it's certainly not people like mine. The space and the voice is very much taken up by people from faith networks.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Speaking at 'Faith, Equality and Cohesion' on 25/11/08 a public meeting organised by Women Against Fundamentalism. The full video footage of this speech can be viewed at: <http://www.womenagainstofundamentalism.org.uk/videos/sandhya.mov>

Conclusion

This thesis was produced against a growing consensus amongst feminist and critical theorists that religious identities are suppressed and faith-based mobilisations need to be validated. I set out to produce a feminist analysis invested in a transformative process that seeks to unpick naturalised and common sense assumptions by revealing the power relations underlining the construction of discourses, policies, practices and local landscapes. Notably, by pushing a concern about religious Right mobilisations to the centre of the analysis, I have characterised religious organisations as active political agents rather than as passive, cultural or social groups. Moreover, I sought to position smaller local insights against the paradoxical dimensions of a post-9/11 meta narrative that simultaneously claims religious organisations are a resurgent feature of the democratic polity and yet also that secularists are at pains to exclude and deny religious demands. I attempted, quite literally, to activate Donna Haraway's (1991) call to 'situated knowledge' by producing a contingent contextualised analysis of religion and politics through a comparative study of two London boroughs.

The result is an empirically grounded account of the place of religious identities and organisations within local cartographies of power, particularly drawing attention to the multiple ways that transnational religious Right formations gain succour from new regimes of governance, civil society mobilisations and spaces of multiculturalist tolerance. Moreover, I decided to focus on the mundane rather than the spectacular because I wanted to emphasise the slow process with which these frameworks become accepted as common sense and rolled out as normative practice.

Multiple interventions (including those of key feminist theorists) reflect a growing consensus that religious mobilisations represent critical alterity or counter hegemony, concluding that religious demands ought to be accommodated or embraced. However, Chapter 1 of this thesis points to a great deal of recognition of religious organisations at all three levels of Jose Casanova's (1994) sense of the public sphere: the state; political parties and civil society. Religion runs right through

communitarian social organisation and governance from the early days of multiculturalism policy into New Labour's 'faith agenda' and is now both inside state policy and a dominant feature of civil society and political Opposition. In Chapter 1, I argued that this new wave of religious communitarianism is sustained by several contemporary components: the legacy of multiculturalism in politics that enables a restricted view of ethnic minority religious projects; morality as a new source of both governance and critique; and a revised discourse about deliberative democracy and a consensus politics of 'the common good'. Moreover, an emboldened role for religious groups emerged in the last 10-15 years within the moral framework of communitarianism, the moral responses to riots and 9/11, and the moral dimensions of the particularly conservative use of the concept of social capital. Philip Blond's (2010) 'politics of virtue' is not new but rather carries over discourses started under New Labour and accentuated by the current Conservative Party, in turn bringing theological dimensions and the assured place for religious institutions even more acutely to the fore.

In Chapter 1, I proposed that there has been a slide from multiculturalism to multifaithism within British public policy, by which I am not just talking about the empirical fact or reality of religious difference so much as the growing place of religion as an organising principle for British governance and civil society (qua Stuart Hall's (2000) distinction between the adjective use of 'multicultural' and the substantive governance frame of 'multiculturalism'). This thesis makes a significant contribution to emergent discussions about multifaithism, a term that has not yet acquired common parlance but that I believe describes the current context in many local areas and definitely merits the attention of feminist theory. I have drawn upon feminist and anti-racist insights on multiculturalist theory and practice in order to digest the features of this new multifaithism. Whilst taking note of Tariq Modood's observations about Christian privilege, the growth of religious identity as empirical reality and inconsistencies in the application of the public-private divide, this thesis writes against the grain of Modood's extensive offerings on multiculturalism, religion and citizenship. Indeed his pronouncements about the *politics* of multiculturalism are very useful but his work does not do what he professes needs to be done because he

tends to validate rather than critically evaluate religious claims, identities and mobilisations. In this thesis I specifically sought to use the feminist commitment to uncovering power relations in order to draw out the *politics* or contestatory dimensions of multifaithism.

In concluding, I draw upon Michael Keith's (2005) assertion that it is useful, if not necessary, to make a distinction between conditions of possibility and modalities of identification. In sharing this sentiment I acknowledge the reasons why religious identity, religious organisations and multifaithism have grown in public prominence within the two boroughs and then develop a critique of the substantive political interventions and projects that thrive as a consequence.

Conditions of Possibility

This section provides a brief summary of the numerous push factors, from above and from below, that were highlighted as reasons why religious groups and identities have grown in prominence within the two boroughs. I have broadly grouped these as: legacies and ever-present histories; critical gaps; the movement from below; and the numbers game. However, these are interdependent factors that have acted together to enable and sustain faith-based interventions.

Legacies and ever-present histories

There is a long colonial history to some of the features of religion in contemporary British governance, one that has tended to invite undemocratic religious leaderships in to relationship with the state and encouraged the closure of identities through simplified processes of representation, codification and institutionalisation. Such a framework has difficulty taking account of the syncretic practice of cultures and religions and the ways in which people are located at the intersection of multiple axes. The unfinished business of colonial and multiculturalist governance means that some elements of the 'faith agenda' were already in place by the time New Labour came to power.

Running alongside this is the Establishment position of the Church of England as well as historical settlements between the state and Catholic, Anglican and Jewish leaderships to enable publicly funded religious schools. Ranu Samantrai (2008) cited the differential socio-legal status of religions in Britain as one aspect of state technologies of ethnicity giving rise to contemporary religious claims. Chapter 6 of this thesis drew out the morality and disciplinary dimensions of state technologies and matched these with the unrelenting call to validate the black psyche. I reflected on the expressly moralistic and disciplinary arguments made in defence of the first publicly funded Sikh primary school in Britain. In particular I argued that ethnic minority religious organisations once subject to the assimilationist tendencies of Conservative Party politics now ride the flow of a Victorian morality and (Victorian) colonial governance to make their claims and access state resources. In turn, they bolster the contemporary meta-narrative of the Conservative Party's quest to deploy organised religion as a means of providing strong moral frameworks and they actively contribute to a growing British political consensus about religion, morality and the breakdown of the family.

The second aspect of this unfinished business concerns ethnic minority recruitment to the Labour Party. Both boroughs continue to be dominated by the Labour Party despite attempts at Opposition. Whilst each of the Labour Groups has unique characteristics they share tendencies related to the articulation of Labour Party development with histories of migration and settlement. Part of this articulation was reflected in the way Labour Party MPs in each borough talked about secularism, which joined together as a similar multifaithist practice, indicative of the impact on the Labour Party of a membership base comprising Christian Methodists on the one hand and the South Asian import of a multifaithist form of secularism on the other. It is noteworthy that both tendencies should meet in local London spaces and see eye to eye on the basis of a prior encounter.

However, Chapter 2 also draws on Kalbir Shukra and Sydney Jeffers' work to

emphasise that ethnic minorities within the Labour Party represent many different political interests including Left politics, secular black Left politics, black perspectivism, raced managerialism, ethnic particularism, ethnic communalism and religious identity politics. Moreover, the Labour Party actively created vote banks reliant on caste, religion and kinship networks (the basis of what Solomos and Back (1995) term 'machine politics'). During the course of this thesis, previous interests encompassed by a more unified class position were fractured along the lines of some of these vote banks, which were tapped for an expressly religious venting of accumulated grievances, and revealed divergent political leanings amongst those at one time sitting comfortably within what Solomos and Back (1995) referred to as a 'sovereign Labour Party'.

I also wondered what the actions of those that chose to remain within the Labour Party after these religiously inflected seizures might reveal, if anything, about the scope of a 'sovereign Labour Party'. Councillor Dhindsa stated very clearly that he stayed inside the Labour Party because of his commitment to a public sector. Several Newham councillors and the Ealing Southall MP voiced a specific commitment to secularism. It is also noteworthy that the interface between Labour and the new faith-based mobilisations was largely male, only two women defected, the vast majority stayed close to the Labour Party. Moreover, in both boroughs, the Labour Groups were able to rely on decades of embeddedness to ride the power struggles brought about by faith-based mobilisations and religious political parties. Some participants argued that this was quite simply because of the perceived lack of viability of alternative political parties and the persistence of a view of the Conservative Party as a pro-cuts 'Nasty Party'. The local dimension is significant here because whilst Ealing has been a two party race, the political landscape in Newham has been shaped by a united front against the Conservative Party, which made other avenues more viable, namely Christian Right politics and the Respect Party. In Ealing it was the Conservative Party rather than Liberal Democrats, Greens or Respect that made gains from religious ruptures. The Ealing Conservative Party has begun to get an audience amongst ethnic minorities in the borough largely thanks to Right wing Sikh mobilisations.

Critical Gaps

A key feature of both boroughs was a critique of party structures, state transparency and corporate accountability. Religious mobilisations were welded to these critiques and were often inextricable from questions of democratic process and participation. Research participants positioned the dynamic possibilities of religious political mobilisation and faith based provision against the authoritarian tendencies of the state and the unscrupulous market philosophy of corporations. The objectification of individuals either as numbers or as commodities was contrasted with the ability of religious groups to favour difference and accommodate individual need. Some interviewees described religiously inspired humanist and social justice concerns and claimed that their religious commitments made them more caring and attentive. There were dozens of examples of religious groups acting as a buffer against the welfare state deficit; as organisations readily exposed to the racialised limits of the welfare state, they provided charitable services to counter the impact on local people.

Not all of these claims were tied to religious demands. Whilst Ealing Labour Group was specifically subjected to accusations of religious discrimination, mobilisations in Newham were as much about critiquing the undemocratic tendencies of the local Labour Group. AK Sheikh specifically argued that his defection from Labour to Respect was not about religion at all but arose from concerns about the internal democracy of the Labour Group, particularly reflected in the whip action during the Council chamber debate on the Iraq War.

Importantly, these insights counter Weber's (1946) secularisation thesis. There was a vocal disenchantment with the possibilities of secularism. It was described as grey, dour, as lacking in life force, colour, meaning and music. The allure of dynamic religion was strong, also revealing the incredible staying power and capacity for revitalisation amongst local religious institutions.

However, some of these claims about offering an alternative can be questioned. In Chapter 4, I reflected on the multiple ways in which religious organisations are

invested in bolstering rather than challenging state discourses and systems. Chapters 3, 6 and 7 also provide examples of where religious groups have invested in capitalism, their accumulation of assets and the ways in which they exert a social pressure on people to make financial contributions to religious institutions. So in some places, religious commitment was rationalised to reproduce bureaucratic procedures or calculated in the same marketised way.

A second dimension to the question of religion as critique emerged from anti-racists' descriptions of a changing political landscape, particularly the growth of Muslim political identification. Chapter 5 engaged with their attempts to negotiate this new terrain. Here I want to note that they provided a number of reasons for the transition from an anti-racist politics premised on a secular Black unity to a growing Muslim political identity including: the professionalisation and growth of self-interest amongst social movement groups pre-occupied with service provision and survival in the context of the marketisation and decimation of the voluntary sector; the demise of a larger Left liberatory narrative; the growth of an Islamist narrative that offers explanations for global and local events; and the active consolidation of religious identities and religious leaderships by the state. These features converged to ensure that Muslim political identifications are all the more viable and have grown at a pace that might otherwise have been unimaginable. Ironically, the current Coalition government's cuts agenda has re-ignited some of the civil society vibrancy of that earlier period and also made the hegemonic flow of morality between instrumental state communitarianism and civil society conservatism that much more obvious.

The movement from below

In this thesis I have insisted that multifaithism arose from a double movement: from above through a state-led construction of communities and social welfare practice but equally from below through the success of social movements in encouraging religious political identifications and lobbying for the recognition of religious identities and claims. A number of contributions on religion and politics have highlighted the proactive transnational dimension of religious political mobilisations

of (notably S. Sayyid, Oliver Roy and dozens of others on Islam, Chetan Bhatt's work on the Hindu and Islamic Right, Jose Casanova and Luke Bretherton on Christian formations, and more recently Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Tatla in relation to Sikh groups). Importantly, these activities have impacted on local areas.

Politicians referred to the pressure of religious mobilisations but there was a distinct absence of publicly visible mobilisations lobbying for the retention of secular spaces. The Labour to Conservative defector Gurcharan Singh, for instance, specifically noted the vociferous demand for a Sikh school but that he had not been lobbied by secularists opposed to faith schools. In Newham, in spite of the local Labour Group's scepticism, religion still became an organising principle within civil society through three avenues. Anti imperialist politics such as the Stop the War Coalition relied on religious, particularly Muslim, organisations as spaces of mobilisation. More recently, civil society groups accessed central government funds tied to 'faith sector engagement' to establish at least 7 faith-based or interfaith initiatives with the Faith Sector Forum positioning itself as a key critic of the local state. Moreover, both boroughs had experienced the impact of Citizens UK chapters.

I was concerned to acknowledge the possibilities that can emerge from drawing upon religious belief for political interventions. Chapter 3, in particular, brought together points about the sociality of religious discourse, the ways in which it can be a framework for creating positive change by placing an obligation on believers to engage with the world and social issues around them. Interviewees argued that religion can encourage people to be more outward facing and also provide a kind of added value to human relations, a sense of empathy and an ethics of care. Moreover, several examples were provided where religiosity and secular humanism could flow in the same direction as a commitment to dignity, respect and social justice, towards charitable work and the collective improvement of people's lives.

Moreover, religious commitment could inhere an affective disposition thought otherwise to be blocked by the tropes of bureaucracy and market. Indeed many of the ontological assertions about living out religious commitments through social action were also referred to as feelings or rather as depth or longevity of feeling. Moreover,

the positive emotions of 'religious' interviewees potentially provided a stark contrast to longstanding anti-racist and feminist discourses seeking to validate 'negative' expressions of pain and suffering. Conversely, the affective store of religious groups claimed 'love' and 'hope' as their driving forces.

Notably there were signs of the local rolling out of the Citizens UK discourse. Citizens UK events make dynamic use of testimonies to inhere hope and create a kind of lifting up and energised feeling of solidarity. They demonstrated that the 'catchiness' of religious emotion could combine in a productive fashion with music and time management to energise people and push forward political demands. In this context, religion seemed to make available other facets as modes of organising such as the ability to inhere a sense of belonging and the aesthetic value of religious dress. Indeed, the Citizens UK mode of organising is a strong example of the enduring weight of religious signs and dress within British society inspite of accusations about secular imposition. Similarly, Chapter 5 reflected on Asad Rehman's recognition of the symbolic weight of religious leaders, which he garnered in his own faith-based approach to a public meeting about the Forest Gate raids.

Citizens UK events claimed to make use of a liturgical framework without the 'overt' imposition of belief but the second half of this Conclusion emphasises other ways in which they contributed to the sedimentation of local religious orders. Moreover, there were many examples where be-getting religion had restricted people's social worlds and encouraged forms of displaced agency, discussed below.

The numbers game

As noted above, the growth of civil society faith-based mobilisations and the simultaneous decline of expressly 'secular' mobilisations in each of the boroughs directly impacted upon electoral politics and created an imbalance in representational claims. I was surprised by the reluctance of some local politicians to challenge or publicly stand against religious mobilisations and their preference to critique these in a confidential way for fear of alienating their constituents or losing votes. The head of a Catholic school astutely remarked that elected politicians are alert to the possible

impact on their positions if they express strong views either way on faith-based provision. Even the avowedly 'secular' Newham Labour Group seemed to feel obliged to engage with 'faith speak'. The pressure of Newham's religious mobilisations, particularly the rise of the Christian Peoples Alliance, could even have led to the revival of the local branch of the Christian Socialist Movement.

Moreover, responses to questions about the likely impact on women of a growth of religion in the public sphere by and large sparked references to the scale and visibility of pious women in both boroughs with little regard for the substantive dimensions and normative implications for empowerment, representation and engagement. Electoral politics seemed to be a male-dominated game in both boroughs, with women's voices muted and certainly not at the forefront of defections. In Ealing the ones that stayed put were less likely to be referenced against religious identities, marking a separation of 'gender' and 'religion' concerns, whilst it was rumoured that critique within the Newham Labour Group comes largely from Muslim women.

Often the representational implications of these numbers manifest as a crude politics of majoritarianism fermenting around the construction of prominent buildings as corporeal guarantees of access to consultation mechanisms, public resources and the ability to dominate the representation of particular religions at a local, national, and even international, level. This problematic dimension of representational politics is reflected in the actual geography of local landscapes. Chapter 4 discussed the Neighbourhood Walks interfaith initiative to exchange knowledge and understanding on the basis of physical sites of worship which paradoxically provided space for the religious Right Vishwa Hindu Parishad group to proliferate their supremacist politics because of their longstanding and anomalous control of a local state owned community centre. Chapter 6 highlighted the position of the the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall buildings as a definitive point with regards to projections of Sikhism whilst Chapter 7 noted similarities with the East London Mosque in Tower Hamlets and the representation of Muslims and Islam. Also in Chapter 5, I noted the latent pressure within Newham from Hizb ut-Tahrir activists to follow these examples by establishing a large central religious centre in the borough. Conversely Newham

Council's support for a proposed Tablighi Jamaat mosque potentially breaks the relationship between architectural prominence and representational status; whilst Tablighi Jamaat are planning one of the largest mosques in Britain, the group itself does not encourage or seek engagement with temporal British political systems. Nevertheless, the multiplication of religious sites of worship and their scale could be compared with other gradual changes to the local architecture and particularly the disappearance of pubs, clubs and out gay bodies.

Moreover, these points relate to the reproductive capacity of the faith agenda where public visibility draws additional resources and enables access to spaces of power. The two SGSSS sites in Southall are exemplary cases of this kind. Their capacity to raise funds enabled them to purchase the land for a Khalsa Primary School which in turn gained financial and political support from the local and national state. Moreover, their annual Vaisakhi processions are public performances of their legitimacy as representatives of local people, a significant source of income, a means for consolidating political relations and for perpetuating a specifically Khalsa norm.

If 'majoritarianism' was the basis for accommodating religious claims, 'proportionality' was the basis of an argument against. It was interesting to see participants that had made a strong case for acknowledging the size of religious congregations and the strength of belief also asserting the importance of secular public institutions and wanting to ensure that these numbers would not be translated into large-scale faith based welfare provision.

Modalities of Identification

Faith-based approaches and services within local areas now encompass a stream of issues all the way through from sex and relationships education to counselling to anti imperialist mobilisations to environmental campaigning. This section attempts to bring together key points about the substantive nature of political practice and ideological projects in order to develop a much needed, but largely absent, critique of religion and local politics. A number of interrelated aspects comprise this emerging critique namely: questions of patriotism and the symbiotic relationship between

Right leaning religious formations and the (imperial) British state; the frames of reference or registers for religious claims and engagement; the fundamental question of what is overlooked and accumulated through alliances; moral hegemonic agendas premised on state and religious appeals for stronger values; the structuring, particularly gendered dimensions, of 'respectability'; a more critical eye to religious agency, again particularly gendered; and the emergence of new local systems of election where local areas are re-ordered according to religious beliefs with significant consequences for access to limited resources.

Of queen, country and multiple gods

An explosion of writings on religious political mobilisations since 9/11 have toyed with questions of loyalty, sovereignty and authority in relationships between US and European nation states and resident religious bodies and identities. Conversely, in my local areas study, I found a great many examples of mutually reinforcing nationalist projects. A number of dramatic visual performances reflected the repetitive annual, in many ways ritualised, symbiotic relationship between various religious formations and an imperial sense of Britishness. In particular, Chapter 6 described the enormous annual Vaisakhi processions in Southall, which reflect a number of nodes in the formulation of a symbiotic British / Sikh identity. Headed by the Territorial Army and ensconced in displays of the martial art Gatka, it reflects the legacy of Sikh-British complicity in the strengthening of the Khalsa stream of Sikhism, the power of Singh Sabha movements across the globe, the entrenchment of a colonial projection of Sikhs as a 'martial race' alongside the Khalsa projection of them as continuously at war. The predominance and reproduction of the Khalsa version of Sikhism is reflected in the use of the orange Nishan Sahib (Sikh flag) alongside the Union Jack. Indeed the simultaneous images of Khalistani flags and t-shirts (a fundamentalist movement calling for an independent theologically based state) alongside declarations of loyalty to the British state could reflect the potentiality for Britishness to harbour and encompass rather than push out the religious Right. Moreover, women are not excluded from these projections, they are also reproducers of the nationalist discourse. These annual Vaisakhi processions are strong examples of various pathways established through colonial governance, transferred through post-colonial

diasporic settlement and then consolidated through raced managerialism at every level including local institutions, local political parties and the local authority, to create a clearing for specific Sikh groups to exercise authority and control at an epistemological level.

Similar nationalist tendencies run through the Christian components of the Strangers into Citizens demonstrations discussed within Chapter 7. These are large-scale mobilisations calling for changes to immigration laws. Yet at these events, ethnically diverse audiences waving Union Jacks are addressed by a stage full of male religious leaders (also reflecting the Establishment position of the Church of England) and led into a sing-a-long to Rule Britannia and God Save the Queen. This is supplemented by a growing practice within faith-based schools to celebrate St George's day as well as the rise of Christian Democratic political parties in Britain calling for a strong Christian character to Britishness. Only the anti-imperialist politics of the Respect Party and a handful of Muslim groups seemed to break from this hegemony. However, even then, Asad Rehman's use of the term 'the mirror game' captures the relative positioning of someone like Mizan Raja of Islamic Circles and the Newham Councillor with the Communities Portfolio Unmesh Desai. Whilst Raja denied the problem of Islamist mobilisation in the borough, Desai had difficulty acknowledging the role of the state and political parties in creating the spaces for dissatisfaction. Neither of them critiqued the Preventing Violent Extremism programme and indeed the Islamic Circles public meeting on the allocation of PVE funds did more to reveal their relationship with central government and a desire to control the allocation of funds and projections of Islam than anything else. Interestingly it was the women at this public meeting that wanted to break out of Muslim identity politics and raise their concerns as tax payers.

So a key point made in this thesis, particularly by looking at Sikh and Christian groups, is that religious political organising does not necessarily counter or even seek to question the sovereign identity of the Queen or the legacy and legitimacy of the Union Jack. Religious mobilisations provide ample evidence of the mutually

reinforcing ethnic and religious nationalist projects within the UK. Moreover, this was in the context of attempts to revive some sense of patriotism as the register for making claims about democracy and human rights. Yet the Comment is Free responses to Newham Councillor Desai's article reflected the tendency for such talk to become assimilationist and the propensity for such agendas to be inflected with superiority claims.

It is Naomi Goldenberg's suggestion that religious organisations can be viewed as 'vestigial states' that clears the way to think more carefully about the shared pastoral and surveillance functions across the British state and religious organisations. These relationships were often embodied in the role of 'religious leaders' and centred around a desire to police territories, boundaries and behaviour. Two prime examples of the role of religious groups as vestigial states comprised: their administrative role in conducting marriages through which they are reporting illegitimacy and illegality to the UK Borders Agency; and their consultative role in the policing of local areas, which simultaneously enabled them to proliferate concerns about what they consider to be 'offensive' behaviour. These shared functions are performed so long as there is a mutually supportive sense of authority, which is why the shift from multiculturalism to multifaithism is so important.

Given the multiple local examples of the propensity for cohesion talk to turn assimilationist and be used by the local state to side step critique (exemplified by the Southall Black Sisters legal action against Ealing Council and the civil society petition against Newham Council) and also the emergence of a securitisation agenda, it was unsurprising that there was a great deal of scepticism about the regulatory function of the state. What role remains for state intervention in a context where the state agendas are subject to accusations of 'homonationalism' and 'enlightened fundamentalism'? Importantly, it was Newham councillors that repeated their commitment to secularism (and the reasons for its emergence), continued to voice a critique of the undemocratic nature of religious leaderships against the grain of New Labour funding to strengthen these, actively defended LGBT and women's rights

(notably pledging its support for the local Asian women's project working against domestic violence), and also offered redress for dissenting religious minorities, such as the Ahmadiyyas who were marginalised by pretty much every faith-based intervention in the borough.

Glocal Registers

The first half of this Conclusion has already noted the local impact of transnational mobilisations in terms of numerical and architectural prominence providing access to spaces of power. Here I want to add some new reflections to Back et al's (2009) use of the term 'glocal', to denote global impacts on local relations, alongside Chetan Bhatt's (1997) insights into the use of various equalities frames by the religious Right, as spaces for mobilisation and the furtherance of their own supremacist claims. In particular, there seemed to be three particular registers for framing the activities of religious organisations: anti-racism and parity arguments; human rights; and the multiculturalist tropes of tolerance, offence, respect and sensitivity. The attachment to anti-racist and human rights discourses is discussed below so in this subsection I will focus on the multiculturalism frame.

I believe these insights raise important questions for Wendy Brown's (2008) claims about the paternalistic and civilisational dimensions of 'tolerance'. In particular, Chapters 4, 6 and 7 provide ample evidence of the proactive use of spaces by Right leaning religious projects to further their own supremacist politics by utilising the language and mechanisms of 'tolerance' and 'respect'. This is enabled by the normative institutionalisation of decades of multiculturalist practice through which raced managerialism and culturalist or ethnicist projects were able to find public support. Whilst it is true that interfaith initiatives brokered some important relationships such as helping to overcome a long-standing enmity between Shia and Sunni mosques in Newham, cultural sensitivity had turned to religious sensitivity which in turn led to civic exercises. These exercises were intended to inform but also to equip people so as not to offend, insult or overstep boundaries. Moreover, AK Sheikh's examples of his input into police consultation sessions included insisting on

the need to tackle prostitution not because of concerns about the empowerment of women but rather because of its propensity for 'causing offence' to ethnic minority elders. This sense of cleaning up the streets also reverberated through Citizens UK campaigns – notably Whitechapel Watch and Bin the Rats – demonstrating undercurrents of a coming together of concerns about 'offence' with rather parochial interests in preservation.

The discussion of inter-faith alliances within Chapter 4 shows that these are akin to Parekh's 'community of communities' in which the principle of co-existence enables relationships on the basis of crude systems of representation and degrees of autonomy wherein values and practices are established as norms without ethical evaluation and enable the consolidation of intra relations of power. It is through seemingly mundane relations that one can see the Hindu Right living and thriving within local spaces whilst the repetitive exclusion or marginalisation of Ahmadiyya Muslims assumed the status of a common understanding across religious leaders and their organisations, even amongst the most liberal-left religious groups. Furthermore, this sense of 'community of communities' was not limited to state funded interfaith initiatives but also comprised the basis of Citizens UK membership and is regularly performed at their events. In this case, participation in the alliance was encouraged through an assurance that certain issues would remain off limits.

There was not space in this thesis to cover the overwhelming number of interfaith initiatives referred to during the research but it is interesting to recall that one forum chose to appoint someone they regarded as visibly neutral, as a means of avoiding anticipated problems with bringing religious organisations in contact with each other. Paradoxically, such an ethos supports the tenets of a view of secular public culture as one where privatising religious beliefs could enable rather than prevent engagement. However, it also brought to the fore by the presumed neutrality of whiteness.

Finally, I want to note that a sense of 'respectful engagement' came to structure relations both at the level of groups and also intersubjective interactions. At the heart were gendered prescriptions. Whilst it is true that there were a great number of

women at the religious institutions and events that I visited, little was said about what was actually involved in engaging women through religious groups or even the problems for women of interacting with religious groups. To me these problems seemed to involve normative segregation (highlighted by the experience of one woman obliged to address male constituents through a wall) and dress codes based on the injunctions of modesty (different degrees of expectations around covering up). I personally felt under pressure and under dressed in these spaces and found little evidence of the civilisational/gendered social engineering that has been part of the critique of PVE.

Morality

Communitarianism, as opposed to the collective solidarities located within the liberatory politics of 1970s Britain, carries a certain social conservatism. The multiculturalist push for a 'community of communities' maps easily onto a multifaithist defence of religion and faith-based services as providing strong moral frameworks, something that Gurcharan Singh summarised in his statement that 'Sikhs have their moral code and Muslims have theirs'. Moreover, multifaithism maps onto recent interventions on the importance of associationalism (notably by theology graduates such as Luke Bretherton, Philip Blond and Adam Dinham but also by socialist Maurice Glasman), which emphasise the role of religious institutions in providing relationships and offering permanence. Much of this work is also informed through contact with Citizens UK where morality is referred to in two different ways: as a claim that religious groups/beliefs can reignite a moral compass and concerns with social justice issues; and as problem areas, or 'wedge issues' outside of the purview of the alliance including discussions about god, sexuality and reproductive rights. Neil Jameson described the latter as matters of personal preference.

Some of the associationalist defenders of faith-based mobilisations also enforce the merits of marriage and families as part of the importance of relationships over individualism. The claim that society has broken down and religions have an important role to play in fixing it potentially connects forces across Left and Right. Mizan Raja's affinity with the Conservative Party's claims about a break down in

society were more than matched by the assertions of the Southall Labour councillor Swarn Singh Kang whose argument for Sikh schools almost entirely hinged on getting control of young people and getting them away from the problems associated with the failing families accommodated by regular state comprehensives. Kang was a strong example of an anxiety about the loss of tradition and religious or cultural knowledge being bound up with an anxiety of losing young people and women and a defence of the ability of faith schools' selection procedures to separate the wheat from the chaff. Far more subtle arguments were made by Catholic schools that also invoked the need to revive strong values as their premise but tactically taught sex and relationships education as per national curriculum requirements alongside a normative insistence on the Catholic commitment to heterosexuality, to chastity before marriage and to Pope Benedict XIV Joseph Ratzinger who is known for his Right-leaning interpretations of Catholic obligations and defence of natural laws. Moreover, whilst associationalists and civic republicans blamed liberalism for the prevalence of individual self interest, in the shadows lay an attack on feminism. The view that women have accumulated too much power repeats through faith circles, exemplified in Glasman's (2010) analogy between the Labour Party and the family unit but also very clear in Mizan Raja's pronouncements about 'the problems with Muslim women'.

I have argued within this thesis that it is precisely because religious groups are regaled as moral antidotes to the problems with state accountability and market exploitation that we are seeing a rise and rise in conservatism. Alan Craig's energy for Saving Queens Market and his David versus Goliath like stand against the Newham Casino could be seen as strong anti-capitalist activism. However, these were equally matched by allegations about teenagers getting pregnant to secure housing and an anti-abortionist multifaith picket outside the British Pregnancy Advisory Service in Stratford.

Craig positioned his search for strong values against the 'values free managerialism' of the state and yet also accused the state of bi-partisan support for business interests and opposition to Christianity. Those engaged with the Christian Peoples Alliance

could be easily distinguished from members of the Christian Socialist Movement by the former's lack of support for the Labour Party's equality agenda. This is the reason that CPA members were never inside the Labour Party. This was a different story for ethnic minority politicians for whom the Labour Party had been a 'natural' home for many decades (and continue to be for the Right leaning councillor Swarn Singh Kang). Yet even those in Newham that defected to become Respect Party councillors did little to actually raise concerns about the shifting ideological ground of the Labour Party beyond a pre-election concern with Iraq. Inside council, they remained silent other than to raise a motion against the Nikab ban in France.

Agency

A great number of interviewees noted the capacity of religious organisations to inhere social responsibility and encourage political action, but what kind of agency was being invoked? The emphasis on depth of feeling was also what attached individuals to a higher authority and this attachment could both enable, as in the dozens of believers motivated to look out for others, or lead to destruction, as in the suicide bombers that hit Aldgate station exactly one day after my first interview with Neil Jameson at the Citizens UK premises near there. The latter is precisely the sort of agency that Chetan Bhatt (1997) problematises as acts of displacement. The particular danger of religiously inspired displaced agency was also evident in Pastor Odulele's testimony in his admission of guilt on two counts of sexual assault; he depicted this as a human struggle with the forces of evil rather than as an act of power over someone more vulnerable.

Neither Odulele's group nor the 7/7 bombers were attached to the Citizens UK chapters and this appears to support Citizens' projection of fundamentalism as maverick behaviour, the actions of lost individuals, without connections, without roots, existing outside of association. Something very similar was argued by Mizan Raja in his description of Roshnara Choudhry's stabbing of Stephen Timms MP. Importantly, Islamic Circles and Citizens UK shared a common discursive base line – the projection of society as broken, of the family and key institutions as in decline (notably the public function of religious institutions), and the need for activism to

bring people back into relationships.

Many interviewees appeared to be relying upon or pointing to flawed 'man made' laws on the one hand and pure divinity as actually existing oppositional categories. Yet it seemed difficult to understand how the desires or injunctions of the divine could be rendered other than through fallible humans and human systems especially when very few claimed to adhere to a literal interpretation of any text. Not all of the religious organisations referred to in each of the boroughs had any interest in changing the situation for others. Rather for some, religious belief was expressly directed towards gaining a secure place in the afterlife. This is where Citizens UK were praised for drawing believers away from the 'deep ontologies' of religious identity politics and rather towards engagement with generic community demands. Yet Chapter 3 raised questions about the façade of participatory democracy in action, the use of repetition and corporate identity and the pressure of form over content, which can efface real critique and democratic debate. As performances they can be exhilarating experiences and clearly the numbers at these mobilisations tap into the political logic of majoritarianism noted above, but the semblance of vitality is usurped by a form that Maurice Bloch describes as 'the effacement of propositional content' and in turn increases the capacity for social control.

As already noted above under the subsection on 'Morality', there was a strong gender dimension to the question of agency. Notably there was a tendency to emphasise women's proximity to nature, to nurture, to emotion and to god. Even for the self-defined liberal catholic, Reverend Canon Ann Easter, who actively challenged the gendered dress and civic engagement codes noted above and defended same sex relationships, her theorisation of women and religion bore some parallels with contemporary fundamentalist attempts to sever the ties between religion and culture and project more essentialised characterisations of women and men. Other faith-based gender identities were more directly pushing differentiated roles such as the female Hindu representative at the Faith Forum conference who asserted that separate roles are a reflection of what god intended as well as Sara Jawad Malik's use of Laura Doyle's personal development model and quotes from the quran to train

Muslim women struggling with difficult marriages to learn to surrender to their husbands, to recognise them as heads of the family, to praise them and move away from confrontation.

Proximity

Above I have noted that the new context of multifaithist practice picks up on multiculturalist principles of 'respect' to structure relations between groups and between individuals according to the intersubjective and psychosocial injunctions of 'respectability'. This subsection turns to the points made in Chapters 5 and 7 to consider the implications of standing alongside others in political alliances and what that affords fundamentalist organisations. The question of proximity has been a key issue – it is the hammer of critique and, as specifically explored in chapters 5,6 and 7, it is a source of legitimacy and aggregated benefits.

There were multiple examples of the localised manifestations of a range of transnational religious projects including the activities of Ahmadiyyas, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Hizb Ut-Tahrir, Khalistanis, members of the Punjabi based Singh Sabha movement, branches of African Evangelical churches, and of course the enormous global reach of the Catholic Church. Notably, the vast majority of Muslim groups referred to by participants were Right wing. Importantly, the ethnic minority organisations acquired qudos from their diasporic connections and yet many civil society and state actors were willing to overlook what these transnational links could mean for the protection of rights. The Citizens UK assertion that it is only interested in what the East London Mosque is doing for local people is typical of that response.

The question of alliances and what alliances tell us is fundamental now - how and when are under resourced civil liberties, human rights, anti racist and feminist organisations able to provide legitimacy, capacity, resources and power? The War on Terror reinforced both the power of the state and some anti racists' focus on the surveillance dimensions of the state. Their engagement with the field arose from a

sense that local politics is 'forged' and they wanted to influence the construction of an emerging political field that would otherwise be dominated by Islamists.

The response to these developments was not unified but rather ranged from critical distance to complete acquiescence. Interestingly there were still traces of the anti racist register in the regular comparisons between positions taken vis a vis Islamists and positions vis a vis the British National Party (BNP). Ansar Ahmed Ullah likened the Jamaat-e-Islami to the BNP and took a 'no platform' approach to public events involving them or other Islamists. Suresh Grover and Unmesh Desai 's parallels were rather more about the importance of drawing the membership away whilst simultaneously challenging the views of the leadership. Self-defining as a 'progressive Muslim', Asad Rehman saw himself as carrying an ethical responsibility to avoid self-censorship and influence Muslim spaces whatever they comprised but he also reflected on the difficulties he had encountered and confessed that, in the final instance, the capacity of Islamist projects overshadowed the depleted attempts and resources of Left and anti-racist activists. In addition to all of these, a young man in Newham refused to work with Ahmadiyyas, a group persecuted by the supremacist politics of Islamists, by likening their beliefs to the abhorrent views of the BNP.

Gita Sahgal's points about the relocation of fundamentalist groups within human rights and civil liberties spaces and their ability to shift secular discourse to gain legitimacy for their own supremacist projects further problematises Rehman's attempts to bring a human rights language to bear on Muslim identity politics. Citizens UK equally argued that they were drawing religious groups out of identity politics towards generic local regeneration issues and that the emphasis on alliance working circumvented the involvement of fundamentalist organisations. Yet Chapter 7 attempted to demonstrate that Jamaat-e-Islami groupings had gained strength and access to resources *through* association and the establishment of reciprocal relationships with a range of civil society organisations.

Re-ordering local areas into new systems of 'election'

This thesis moves towards the conclusion that new systems, practices, orders, of 'election' are being established and consolidated in local areas. It is from Chapter 4

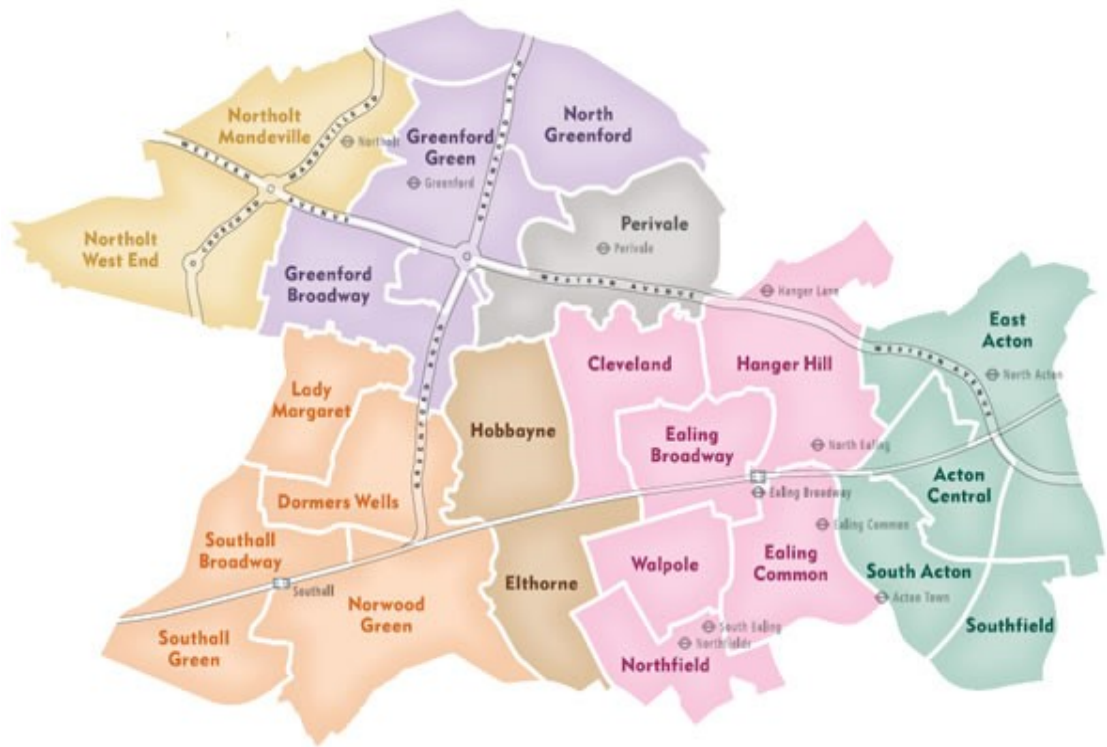
onwards that I seek to develop the notion of election, as the cornerstone of the new multifaithism and its virtuous extension of the multiculturalist logic to transform relations of power previously structured through 'race', culture and ethnicity into ones effected and consolidated through the proliferation and normative acceptance of religious claims ranging from what causes offence to what it means to be Sikh to terms like 'defensive jihad'. This is the reality of the politics of virtue, where public spaces including architectural landscapes and local relations between people and the state are slowly, incrementally, re-ordered according to dominant categorisations of what constitutes belief. The implications have been tracked in terms of the Ahmadiyyas' experience in Newham, the proliferation of the Khalsa norm in Southall and the bolstering of the Jamaat-e-Islami base in Tower Hamlets.

The implications include the ability of some ethnic minorities to put their children into faith-based schools and escape the more difficult aspects of poverty or local change in a way that parallels the 1960s to 1980s phenomena of 'white flight' but does not require anyone to move address. Moreover, in Southall one Sikh organisation (the SGSSS) out of twelve in the local area has the ear of local and national politicians and increasingly harnesses public resources. Their numerical, financial and architectural capacity itself has the reproductive effect of enabling them to access more resources and increasingly set the terms of engaging 'Sikhs' or 'Sikhism' and push out (or gradually de-authenticate) a plethora of other Sikhs doxies including those, such as the Nirankaris who have incurred violence for pushing against the grain of Khalsa attempts to seal the boundaries of the religion by declaring Gobind the last living guru. Importantly, both the East London Mosque and the Sri Guru Singh Sabha claims to move beyond caste and sectarianism, to offer a version of their respective religions that is more inclusive than the self-organised ethnically or caste determined gurdwaras and mosques in their local areas. Yet this turns out to be a counterfactual position when one looks into their trajectories, their international ties, their membership and leadership. Both bodies are moving ever closer to a cradle to the grave sense of welfare provision, building association with their respective projects and increasingly with real material consequences for the ability of those that do not subscribe to their definitions to be able to access limited community based public services.

Conclusion: Going Forward

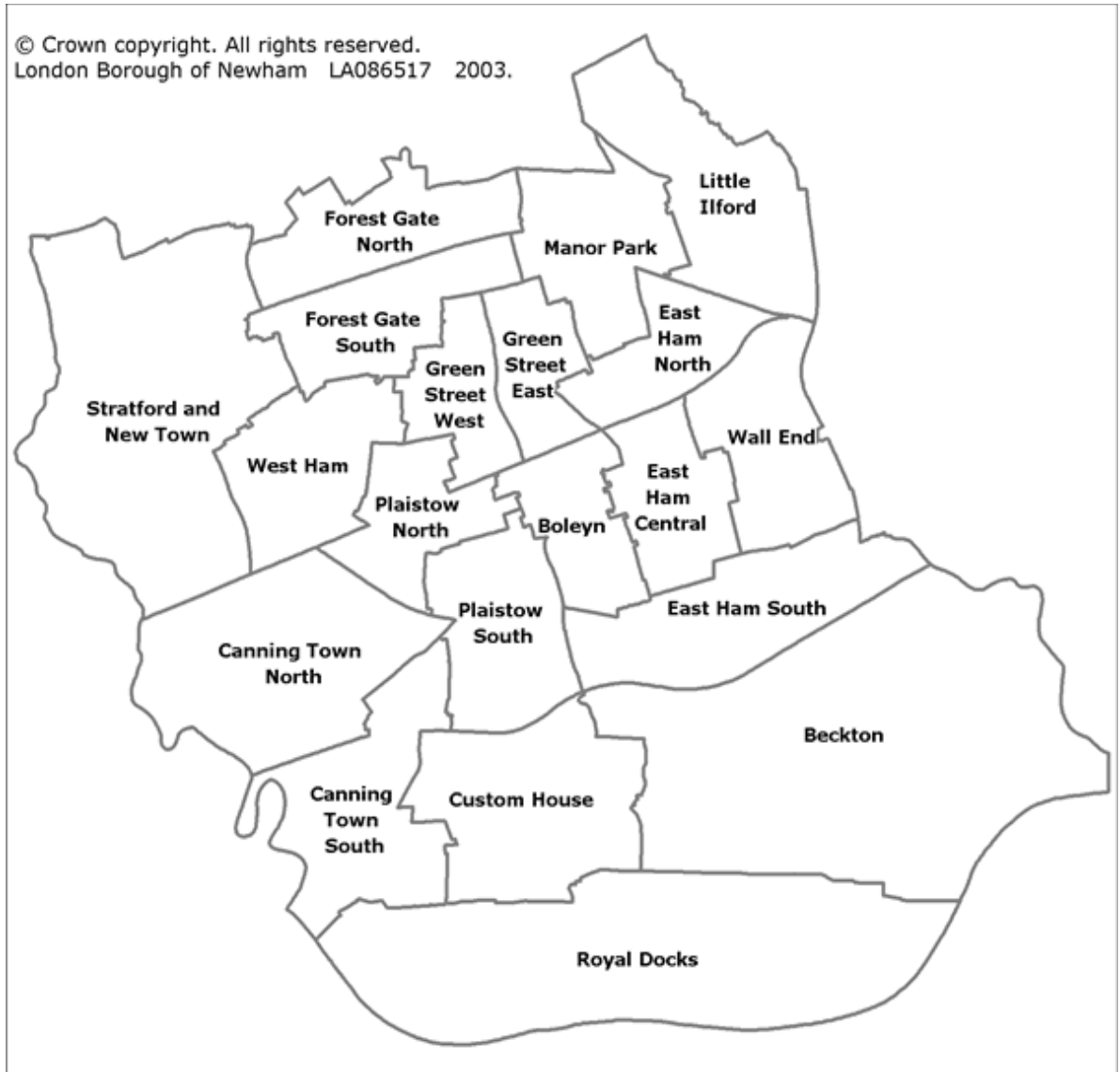
I want to end by noting the scope for future research and the critical questions that are left hanging. During the course of disseminating some of the findings, I discovered that they chime with experiences within local areas in other parts of the country, experiences that have been particularly accentuated by a resurgence in Christian mobilisations within a context of rampant public sector cuts. As such, I believe this thesis offers a good basis from which to bring a more critical intersectional eye to other localities. Moreover, critical questions are left hanging that could be pursued in future research. What future is there for secularism in a context where religious mobilisations are increasingly part of the tapestry of political engagement and more visible than overtly secular ones, indeed where the term 'secularism' is used in an instrumental way by multifaithists proliferating the faith agenda or authoritatively by a local state pushing against a vibrant civil society? What are the real possibilities for living out intersectional theoretical frameworks through the praxis of indivisibility of rights?

Appendix A: Map of the London Borough of Ealing



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Appendix B: Map of the London borough of Newham



Appendix C: Details of Fieldwork

Table 1: Interviews

Number	Name	Position/Group	Date of Interview(s)	Length	Borough	Type/State or Civil Society ¹⁷⁵	M/F
1	Neil Jameson	Executive Director, Citizens UK	7/06/05	1 hour 30 min	Both	Civil/Faith	M
2	Catherine Howarth	Ex-Lead Organiser, West London Citizens	In two parts: 18/08/06 + 22/08/07	38 min + 49 min	Ealing	Civil/Faith	F
3	Julie Camacho	Lead Organiser, West London Citizens	2/06/10	1 hour 14 min	Ealing	Civil/Faith	F

¹⁷⁵ These categories were used very loosely. I take note of the problems with making clean distinctions between the 'religious' and the 'secular' as well as what constitutes 'state' and 'civil society' when a number of interviewees moved easily across these spaces and may have been working for a 'secular' organisation but engaged in faith based initiatives or may be a vicar but define as a secularist or may be both a member of a local civil society organisation and also be an elected politician reflecting on the work of the local state. Rather these tables reflect either the preferred self-description of the interviewee, their speaking position as opposed to their individual identity, the main sentiment expressed during the interview and/or acted as a marker for me to ensure that I sought a balanced number of interviews from different spaces and perspectives.

4	Asad Rehman	Chair, Newham Monitoring Project (NMP)	9/08/07	1 hour 40 min	Newham	Civil/Secular	M
5	Kevin Blowe	Activist, Newham Monitoring Project + CIU, Aston Mansfield Trust	In two parts: 9/08/07 + 25/04/08	1 hour 40 min + 2 hours 21 min	Newham	Civil/Secular	M
6	Suresh Grover	Director, The Monitoring Group (TMG)	In two parts: 15/08/07 + 14/02/08	1 hour 44 min + 3 hours 25 min	Ealing	Civil/Secular	M
7	Ansar Ahmed Ullah	Member, International Forum for a Secular Bangladesh or Nirmul Committee	3/10/07	1 hour 17 min	Key respondent	Civil/Secular	M
8	Pavan Dhaliwal	Head of Policy, 1990 Trust	3/12/07	2 hours 21 min	Key respondent	Civil/Secular	F
9	Wilf Sullivan	Race Equality Officer, Trades Union Congress (TUC)	25/01/08	2 hours 6 min	Key respondent	Civil/Secular	M

10	Anonymous	Trade Union Officer, London	29/08/07	1 hour 21 min	Key respondent	Civil/Secular	M
11	Pragna Patel	Director, Southall Black Sisters (SBS)	15/10/07	1 hour 23 min	Ealing	Civil/Secular	F
12	Anonymous	'Worker at an ethnic minority women's group in Newham'	20/10/09	1 hour 5 min	Newham	Civil/Secular	F
13	Sarah Ruiz	Director, Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium (NVSC)	14/05/09 + 12/11/09	1hour 38 min + 1 hour 44 min	Newham	Civil/Faith	F
14	Sarbjit Johal	Representative, Londec + Member, South Asia Solidarity Group (SASG) + Member, Asian Women Unite	19/05/08	1 hour 37 min	Ealing	Civil/Secular	F
15	Surjit Singh Kumar	Manging Director, Panjab Radio	13/08/07	59 min	Ealing	Civil/Faith	M

16	Didar Singh Randhawa	Ex President, Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (SGSSS)	In two parts: 11/05/09 + 18/05/09	1 hour 43 min + 38 min	Ealing	Civil/Faith	M
17	Balwant Singh Gill	Founder member, Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (SGSSS)	21/05/09	1 hour 2 min	Ealing	Civil/Faith	M
18	Anonymous	Head teacher, Catholic School	18/09/09 + 2/10/09	53 min + 1 hour 54 min	Ealing	Civil/Faith	M
19	Paul Halliwell	Head teacher, St Bonaventure's Catholic School	28/09/10	1 hour 30 min	Newham	Civil/Faith	M
20	Janpal Basran	Manager, Southall Community Alliance	20/09/10	2 hours 22 min	Ealing	Civil/Secular	M
21	Revd Canon Anne Easter	Chief Executive Officer, The Renewal Programme	4/11/10	1 hour 32 min	Newham	Civil/Faith	F
22	Revd Michael Bolley	Vicar, Holy Trinity Church	14/07/11	1 hour 57 min	Ealing	Civil/Faith	M

23	Dilbagh Chana	Ex President, Ramgharia gurdwara	14/06/11	3 hours 30 min	Ealing	Civil/Faith	M
24	Alan Partridge	Manager, Harold Road Centre	3/06/11	2hours 25 min	Newham	Civil/Faith	M
25	Revd Barnabas Matloob	Faithful Friends	19/11/10	1 hour 37 min	Newham	Civil/Faith	M
26	Martin Pinder	BME Community Development Officer, Newham New Deal Partnership	18/05/11	1 hour 40 min	Newham	Civil/Secular	M
27	Revd Dr Colin Marchant	Retired	In two parts: 26/05/11 + 21/06/11	1 hour 22 min + 1 hour 40 min	Newham	Civil/Faith	M
28	Mizan Raja	Islamic Circles + Muslim Youth Network	7/12/09	3 hours 54 min	Newham	Civil/Faith	M

29	Julia Acott + Jo Sell	Director + Education and Training Manager, Alternatives Trust	30/06/11	3 hours 27 min	Newham	Civil/Faith	F
30	Suzanne Fernandes	Ex Christian Party electoral candidate Now Labour Party Member of Elim Church	16/09/10	1 hour 33 min	Ealing	Civil/Faith	F
31	Anonymous	Council Officer	13/10/09	30 min recorded 30 min hand written	Newham	State	M
32	Anonymous	Development Worker	16/09/09	1 hour 50 min	Newham	State/Secular	M
33	Anonymous	Councillor	25/09/09	2 hours 51 min	Newham	State	F
34	Swarn Singh Kang	Councillor	28/09/09	2 hours	Ealing	State	M
35	Clive Furness	Councillor	16/09/09	2 hours 20 min	Newham	State/faith	M
36	AK Sheikh	Ex Councillor, Trustee of Green Street mosque, Lifelong Secretary of the Alliance of Newham Muslim Associations	8/10/09	49 min	Newham	State/Faith	M

37	Virendra Sharma	MP for Ealing Southall	18/10/09	3 hours 54 min	Ealing	State	M
38	Gurcharan Singh	Councillor	9/10/09	58 min	Ealing	State	M
39	Unmesh Desai	Councillor	8/10/09	2 hours 2 min	Newham	State	M
40	Lakmini Shah	Councillor	8/10/09	1 hour	Newham	State	F
41	Alan Craig	Councillor	22/10/09	2 hours 14 min	Newham	State	M
42	Revd Quintin Peppiatt	Councillor	20/10/09	1 hour 28 min	Newham	State/Faith	M
43	Joy Laguda	Councillor	2/12/09	1 hour 7 min	Newham	State	F
44	Anonymous	Councillor	2/12/09	38 min	Newham	State	M
45	Stephen Timms	MP for East Ham	11/12/09	51 min	Newham	State	M
46	Anita Kapoor	Councillor	18/07/10	2 hours 40 min	Ealing	State	F
47	Kamaljit Dhindsa	Councillor	27/07/10	1 hour 46 min	Ealing	State	M

Table 2: Ethnography

Event	Date	Description
Introductory meeting with Citizens UK	8th August 2006	Meeting with Catherine Howarth in response to request for interview
Public Meeting: 'Bin the Rats'	11th September 2006 Evening Venue: Dominion Centre, The Green, Southall	Organised by West London Citizens holding Ealing Council to account on cleaning and hygiene in Southall
West London Citizens First Anniversary Assembly	Date: 4th October 2006 Evening Venue: Acton Town Hall	A review of their membership and what they achieved over the year
London Citizens' Leadership Training	Friday 13th and Saturday 14th July 2007 Venue: 16 Dawson Place, Notting Hill, London W2 4TJ	Participant observation of a two day training for potential 'leaders'
West London Citizens Second Anniversary Assembly	Date: Thursday 25th October 2007 Time: arrive by 7.15pm to start 7.30pm until 9pm	Annual review of membership and work

	Venue: Hammersmith Assembly Hall, King Street, London W6 9JU	
TELCO 11th assembly	14th November 2007	At the round chapel, hackney Start 7.15pm / end?
Public meeting: Creating a Climate of Fear: Counter-Terrorism and Punishment without Trial	14th March 008 6.30-9pm London Muslim Centre, Whitechapel Road.	Organised by Campaign Against Criminalising Communities and the Centre for the Study of Terrorism. Co-sponsored by London Muslim Centre, Islamic Forum of Europe, Cage Prisoners and the Newham Monitoring Project
Vaisakhi Procession	Sunday 6th April 2008 Southall	One day starting with ritual at Havelock Rd gurdwara ending with prayers at Park Ave gurdwara
Vaisakhi Procession	Sunday 27th April 2008 Newham	One day starting at Roseberry Ave gurdwara in Manor Park and ending Plashet Grove gurdwara in Plaistow
Gilly Mundy Memorial Debate: 'Racism and the state'?	23rd April 2008 Brunei Gallery, SOAS	Organised by Kevin Blowe and others involved with NMP and RAN
SBS case / R (Kaur & Shah) v London Borough of Ealing	Thursday 17th and Friday 18th July 2008 At the Royal Courts of Justice	SBS judicial review hearing of Ealing Council decision to cut their funding
TELCO 12th Anniversary Assembly	Wednesday 12th November 2008	Annual review of their membership and work plus guest speakers

	<p>Time: 7.15pm to 9.15pm</p> <p>Venue: York Hall, Old Ford Road, London E2 9PL</p>	
Public Meeting: Faith, Equality and Cohesion: Are they compatible?	<p>Tuesday 25th November 2008</p> <p>House of Commons</p>	Organised by Women Against Fundamentalism and Southall Black Sisters
Vaisakhi Procession	<p>Sunday 12th April 2009</p> <p>10.30am to 2pm</p> <p>Southall</p>	One day starting with ritual at Havelock Rd gurdwara ending with prayers at Park Ave gurdwara
Foundation Stone laying ceremony at Khalsa Primary School	<p>Sunday 26th April 2009</p>	<p>10am to 4pm</p> <p>Norwood Hall</p> <p>Norwood Green Road</p> <p>Southall</p>
Strangers into Citizens May Day Rally	<p>Monday 4th May 2009</p> <p>12pm to 3pm</p> <p>Trafalgar Square</p>	Organised by Citizens UK
1984 Never Forget demonstration	<p>Sunday 7th June 2009</p> <p>Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square</p>	Marking 25 years since anti Sikh riots in India
Public Meeting:	<p>28th November 2009</p> <p>3-6pm</p>	Organised by Women Against Fundamentalism

Struggle not submission 20 Years of Women Against Fundamentalism	Room 3A, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY	
Islamic Circles session for women: 'The Surrendered Muslimah: Marriage & Etiquettes Workshop'	Saturday 5th December 2009 Time: 10am - 5pm Venue: Froud Centre, Romford Road, Manor Park, London, E12 5JF	A one day workshop organised by Islamic Circles and delivered by Sister Sara Malik, Surrendered Wife Trainer (UK)
West London Citizens Ealing Local Accountability Assembly	Thursday 22nd April 2010 At Our Lady of the Visitation Parish Greenford Road Greenford	Elections hustings and presentation of West London Citizens demands
Strangers into Citizens Rally	Monday 4th May 2010 Trafalgar Square	Organised by Citizens UK
A day exploring new African/South American evangelical (mobile) services and churches in Newham	Sunday 15th August 2010	Starting at 9am with Visit to Glory House Church service, key African evangelical church, followed by walk along Barking Road from Tabernacle Street to East Ham High Street, rough count of religious sites of worship along the way. Then drive around south Newham and stop off at Christ's Embassy service in Silvertown
Islamic Circles public meeting:	Thursday 4th November 2010,	Pre meeting with Mizan Raja

'Question Time: PVE in Newham - £2 million missing & unaccounted for'	Froud Centre, 1 Toronto Avenue, off Romford Road, London, E12 5JF	Followed by public meeting from 7pm to 8.30pm plus post discussion with activists
Public meeting: 'Eastern European Worship in Newham'	Date: Tuesday 10th May 2011 Venue: The Hub, Canning Town	5.45pm until 7.30pm Public meeting organised by Newham New Deal Partnership Attended with Prity Patel at Newham Monitoring Project
Muslim Youth Network public meeting: 'Muslim Women and the Struggle for Justice'	Thursday 21st July 2011 Time: 6pm - 8pm Venue: Toynbee Hall, 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6LS	Research dissemination by Laura Zahra Macdonald organised by Newham based group Muslim Youth Network linked to Islamic Circles

Appendix D: Sample Topic Guide

Date:

Time:

Venue:

Anonymity or Happy to be identified:

Introduction:

- Comparing London boroughs Newham and Ealing through a series of in depth interviews
- Investigating the role of religion in the public sphere and more specifically looking at the kinds of arguments that are made for faith based organising and faith based services;
- Particularly concerned with the implications of a growth in faith based organising and service provision for ethnic minority women;
- The aim of this interview:
 - To understand how you as a long standing (elected representative/activist/service provider) in the area view religious identities and religious mobilisation
 - To explore your views about whether religious groups should be involved in shaping social policy and legislation and / or whether they should be involved in providing public services such as education, housing and health services
 - To explore any information you may have with regards to the experiences of or views about the specific implications for ethnic minority women
- Recording, transcription, write up and anonymity – happy to be identified (as individual or as spokesperson of group) or preference for anonymity in which case decide how can refer to him/her in the write

up

- Test equipment / sound

Background:

- Could you start by very briefly identifying your current job, your political and work history, your involvement in London or nationally? What sorts of issues and groups have you been involved in over time? What do you do right now?
- Who are the people that you work with or for? (I.e. constituents? colleagues? casework?)

Religious identity:

- Do you think that religious identity is an issue? In what way? And since when?
- Has anything changed in the last 20 years in terms of the place of religious identity?
- How does this impact upon your work? Please can you provide examples? How have you attempted to respond to these incidents or features?
- How do you personally prefer to deal with it, if this is different to the response of agencies you are involved with?
- What are the outstanding tensions or difficulties that are not being addressed and why do you think this is the case?

Religious Groups:

- Do you work with religious groups in this borough, regionally or nationally?

- Can you provide examples? Discuss these...
- Would you make any distinction between religious groups that you would be willing to work with and those that you would not be willing to work with?

Service provision:

- This study is particularly concerned with the involvement of religion, religious identity and religious groups in making decisions about and providing public services. What is your feeling about this?
- Do you think that the role of religious groups in providing education and youth/ or housing/ or health/ or other welfare/social services/ or community services differs from their role in any other public service like education and youth/housing/health/welfare/social services/community services?
- What do you think should be the basis of service provision?
- Do you think religion is as important, more important, or less important than class in terms of basis of service provision or community mobilisation? What about in terms of 'race', ethnicity and gender?

Implications for ethnic minority women:

Do you happen to know what percentage of your constituents/users are ethnic minority women?

What sorts of issues do they present?

Do you or have you campaign(ed) against sexism or heterosexism, the rights of ethnic minority women in any way? Details if have. If not, ask why?

Have you supported events or campaigns of women's groups? If so, how and why and when did you do this? If not, ask why this is.

How do you see religious identity in respect of ethnic minority women?

What, in your view, are the implications for ethnic minority women of religious

groups being involved in the development of social policy and the provision of services?

Do you think women have a different or the same relationship with religion as men?

Do you think ethnic minority women have the same or different relationship with religion as white women?

Imagined futures:

- If you could imagine the future, what would you say your politics was striving towards?
- How do you think relations between individuals should be? Between groups? Within groups/communities?

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