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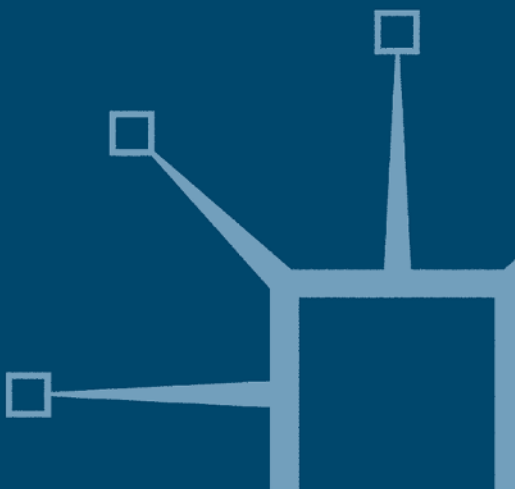
Political Engagement amongst Ethnic Minority Young People

Making a Difference

Therese O'Toole and Richard Gale



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Making a Difference

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For Greta and Michael, Mum and Dad

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Politically (In)different? Political Engagement amongst Ethnic Minority Young People

When the political engagement of ethnic minority young people has featured in public debates in the UK, it has typically been connected with concerns about disengagement, disaffection or extremism. For instance, in the anxious debates about youth political apathy in the UK in recent years (Hay 2007), connected to the low levels of electoral participation among 18–24 year olds in elections since 2001 (Marsh et al. 2007), it is suggested that ethnic minority young people are even less likely to turn out to vote compared to young people in general or older ethnic minority groups (Purdam et al. 2002; Electoral Commission 2005), and that ethnic minority young people are less civically engaged (Janmaat 2008).

Such concerns about ethnic minority young people's political engagement sit within wider histories of crisis narratives on ethnic minority young people in the UK (Bhattacharyya and Gabriel 2004; Gunter 2010). In the 1970s, Hall et al. (1978) highlighted highly racialised media discourses on black youth and law and order centred on the 'moral panic' around 'mugging', which was constructed essentially as a black crime and, particularly, as a pathology of black youth. Such tendencies were analysed in Solomos' (1988) study of state interventions in the lives of black youth in the 1980s, which he argued were fixated on crime, the putative failure of black youth to assimilate to the education system and labour market, and urban disorders that positioned black youth as the 'enemy within'. Writing some years later, Back (2002) suggested that debates on ethnic minority youth have been preoccupied with the themes of 'lawless masculinities', yob culture, concerns about the 'aftershock of immigration' reflected in the view of young people as 'caught between cultures' in tension with their parents' and mainstream British cultures (Anwar 1998), or the pathologies of the inner city (Back 2002: 439).

In more recent times, such narratives have increasingly converged on the issue of religious, and particularly Muslim, youth identities. As Alexander (2004) pointed out, there are strong parallels between the crisis narratives on black youth of the 1970s and 1980s (and see Gunter 2010) and contemporary debates on Muslim youth, expressed in familiar themes of generational conflicts, educational under-attainment (Gillborn and Mirza 2000), criminality and disaffection (Lewis 2007), although now overlaid with concerns about political extremism (Home Office 2005), and the failure of community leaders to exercise control over young Muslims or to integrate them into local communities and democratic structures (Cantle 2001). In particular, the disturbances of 2001 in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham and the bombings of 7th July 2005 in London served to intensify debate over the disengagement of young Muslims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage from mainstream political and civic life (Casciani 2004). In the aftermath of the 2001 disturbances, governmental reports and media commentators suggested that particular groups of ethnic minority young people had become increasingly politically disaffected. Indeed, the Local Government Association's response to the reports on the 2001 disturbances concurred that the 'disengagement of young people from local democratic processes is clear to see...' (2002: 23). Whilst the Cantle Report (2001) on the factors contributing to the northern disturbances focused largely on ethnicity rather than religion as a key division within the three areas where the disturbances took place (and in this respect was in line with the terms of reference of the Parekh Report the year before), following the 9/11 attacks in the US,[1] these events were read *post hoc* as a conflict between young Muslims and the police, and increasingly focused on Muslim, as opposed to 'Asian', communities' 'self-segregation' (Phillips 2006). The motif of 'failed integration' of British Muslims that emerged in the post-2001 period intensified following the London bombings of 2005 (Bagguley and Hussain 2008), carried out as they were by young British Muslims – a fact that featured prominently in the ensuing debates on the failures of British multiculturalism and the consequences of political disaffection among young Muslims.

Shortly after the 7th July attacks, in August 2005, the Preventing Extremism Together Working Groups were set up by the Home Office to generate proposals 'to help prevent extremism' and 'reduce disaffection and radicalisation within Muslim communities across Britain' (Home Office 2005: 97). Their report suggested that '[p]articipation by young Muslims in civic and political activity is lower than the national average' and attributed this to their lack of confidence in mainstream

Muslim organisations and UK political and civic institutions and low levels of political efficacy (Home Office 2005: 14). Subsequently, young people's participation in local democratic structures featured in the Labour Government's 'Community Cohesion' and 'Preventing Violent Extremism' (PVE) agendas, leading to the institution of various youth forums and consultations at national and local levels. For instance, in 2008, the government established the national Young Muslims Advisory Group to advise government ministers, whilst its PVE strategy, that was launched in 2007, targeted funding at local projects aimed at engaging with young Muslims in order to promote community cohesion and combat violent extremism.

Comparable concerns about ethic minority and Muslim young people have been voiced in other European contexts. In France, these were prompted by the urban disorders that occurred in the suburbs of Paris in 2005 (Dikeç 2004; Duprez 2006), in which the ethnic and religious identities of young people involved in the disorders were the focus of discussion by commentators. As Mandaville (2009: 493) pointed out, however, religious referents were remarkably absent in the discourse of the participants themselves. Whilst the specific connotations of citizenship and group-belonging varied in the national debates that ensued from these events, in both the UK and France, attention focused on the political disaffection and social exclusion of ethnic minority and Muslim young people as well as on the models of national identity and integration to be pursued in policy responses. As in the UK, the French state established consultative bodies to engage with its Muslim population, such as the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM) in 2003 (Bowen 2007), despite its formal commitment to *laïcité*, which has given rise to measures outlawing the wearing of the Muslim veil and other religious symbols in public.

Elsewhere across Europe, themes of failed integration of ethnic minority or Muslim young people have also featured in analyses of urban conflicts. Andersson (2010) argued that narratives of blame that criminalised ethnic minorities and Muslims and positioned them as holding cultural values incommensurate with national (secular) cultures were evident in Denmark following disturbances in 2008 in Nørrebro, Copenhagen, as well as in Norway in analyses of the demonstrations in Oslo in 2009 against Israeli actions in Gaza.

These developments in the UK, France, Denmark, Norway and elsewhere, are indicative of a generalised discursive shift from earlier concerns with the politics of 'race' and ethnicity to the politics of religious, and specifically Muslim, identities. This increased focus on Muslim

identities within the public sphere, we argue, needs to be explored in relation to its various guises: as an object of governmental action, as 'a highly polarised and stigmatic' identity (Mandaville 2009: 493) and as a mode of identity giving form and substance to patterns of political engagement (Brah 1996; Gale and O'Toole 2009; Modood 2009a, 2009b; Meer 2010). Nevertheless, it is also one of the contentions of this book that the presently high levels of interest in Muslim identities as a dimension of political engagement should not obscure the continued relevance of 'race' and ethnicity as tropes of political action. As such, this volume reports our efforts to investigate the highly varied facets of identity and group experience that shape (and are in some senses shaped by) political involvement.

Claire Alexander (2004: 536) reminds us that crisis narratives on ethnic minority and Muslim young people are not confined to government or media discourses but are also a recurring motif of academic discourses that have characterised 'racialised youth identities' as 'failing identities'. Such discourses tend to pay rather little attention to young people's own perspectives, whilst the preoccupation with political disengagement and disaffection overlooks the ways in which ethnic minority and Muslim young people *do* politically engage. Between the focus on political disengagement on the one hand, and violent political extremism on the other, we argue there is a need to engage with the range of modes of political engagement among ethnic minority and Muslim young people. This volume explores the, often creative, ways in which ethnic minority young people *do* engage in political action as well as the issues that animate their political engagement.

Exploring the political disengagement thesis

Given the extent of public and media attention paid to issues of political disaffection or disengagement among ethnic minority and Muslim young people, it is surprising how few studies have directly explored their political experiences and engagement. Thus, there are relatively few survey-based studies of political and electoral participation that disaggregate by both ethnicity and age. Similarly, although anxieties about young Muslims' political disengagement or radicalisation have to some degree overtaken discourses on ethnic minority young people, there are few survey studies that disaggregate patterns of political engagement by age and religion. As such, then, there has been rather little by way of robust data on turnouts, voting preferences, forms of political engagement or interest among either ethnic minority or Muslim young people.

There are a few exceptions, such as the recent Ethnic Minority British Election Study (EMBES) of electoral engagement among ethnic and religious minorities in the 2010 General Election,[2] which we discuss below.

As we noted above, it is often thought that ethnic minority young people are even less likely to vote than young people or ethnic minority groups generally. Given how low youth voter turnouts have been in the UK in recent times (in common with many other established liberal democracies), this suggests worryingly low levels of engagement with the electoral process and its outcomes among young ethnic minorities. The turnout among 18- to 24-year-olds in the most recent (2010) UK General Election was 44%, compared to an overall turnout of 65%. This was nevertheless a reasonably significant recovery from previous turnouts, with youth turnout in the 2001 General Election falling to a postwar low of 39% (compared to an overall turnout of 59%) and dropping even further to 37% in the 2005 General Election (compared to 61% overall). A report by the Electoral Commission (2002: 50) suggested that these trends were even more pronounced among certain groups of ethnic minority youth, whilst a later MORI (2005: 8) report on ethnic minority participation in the 2005 UK General Election suggested that the 'disconnection or alienation of youth, if this is the reason for low turnout, appears to have spread further among BMEs [sic] than among White People'. This view is challenged by early findings from the more recent EMBES analysis of electoral engagement among ethnic minorities in the 2010 General Election, which found that whilst age is a statistically significant factor determining turnout across all ethnic groups, the effect of age is actually *weaker* among ethnic minorities than it is for 'White British' (Heath et al. 2011: 262).

Studies of patterns of electoral participation among ethnic minorities, which rarely disaggregate by age and ethnicity, tend to suggest lower levels of both voter turnout and voter registration among ethnic minorities (Purdam et al. 2002; MORI 2005; Cutts et al. 2007). At the General Election in 2001, the UK Electoral Commission (2003) estimated that the turnout among all black and minority ethnic voters was only 47% compared to a turnout of 59% overall, and this figure was replicated in the 2005 General Election, remaining at 47% while overall turnout increased slightly to 61% (Electoral Commission 2005). Data on ethnic minority turnouts in the 2010 General Election collected by the EMBES team suggest very little difference in claimed turnouts between the 'White British', who had a claimed turnout of 78%, and all ethnic minority groups, whose claimed turnout was 77% (both figures for claimed turnouts are higher than the actual turnout in 2010 of 65% – which is consistent with

findings across election studies of higher levels of claimed compared to actual turnouts).

Echoing analyses of ethnicity in other domains, such as education and employment, however, there is considerable variation across ethnic minority groups in levels of electoral engagement, with turnout among 'Asian' voters typically as high as, or higher than, average turnouts, whilst turnouts among 'black African', 'black Caribbean' and 'mixed' groups tend to be lower (Purdam et al. 2002; Cutts et al. 2007). In the 1997 General Election, a booster sample survey of black and minority ethnic voters, conducted alongside the main British Election Study (BES), suggested a higher self-reported turnout rate among 'Indian' (82%) than 'white' (79%) voters, with much lower turnout rates among 'black African' (64%) and 'black Caribbean' (68%) voters (cited Purdam et al. 2002: 13). Cutts et al.'s (2007) analysis of South Asian voters, using the 'Nam Pehchan' system of name recognition of marked electoral registers to identify participation in the 2001 General Election, found that turnout was as high as, or slightly higher than, the overall rate, with particularly high turnouts among Hindus. In the 2005 General Election again, MORI data found that claimed turnout was higher among 'Asian' groups than among 'black' groups – with claimed turnouts of 67% among 'Indian', 70% among 'Pakistani' and 76% among 'Bangladeshi' groups, compared to 61% among 'African', 54% among 'Caribbean' and just 40% among 'mixed race' groups (MORI 2005: 10). Heath et al. (2011) suggest that analyses based on claimed turnouts can be misleading – even when accounting for the gap typically found between claimed and actual turnouts – since over-claiming of turnouts can vary across ethnic groups. Their own data on turnouts for the 2010 General Election suggested that once claimed turnouts had been validated (by checking against the electoral registers for ballots that had actually been issued), a pattern of higher levels of over-claiming turnout among Asian groups could be discerned, with rather little over-claiming among black groups – perhaps then reducing somewhat the differences between these groups in relation to turnouts. Nevertheless, their own data also reveal a pattern of higher validated turnout rates among 'Indian', 'Pakistani' and 'Bangladeshi' groups – all of whom had a validated turnout of 78%, compared to 'Black Caribbean' and 'Black African' groups, who had slightly lower validated turnout rates of 75% and 73% respectively (2011: 261). Whether Heath et al.'s figures indicate a trend towards a closing of the gap between ethnic minority turnout rates, or a methodological refinement, it is likely that those analyses of voting patterns that rely on an undifferentiated catch-all category

of 'ethnic minority', 'black and minority ethnic (BME)' or 'non-white' elide more than they reveal.

Whether they are based on claimed, or validated, turnout data, it is often thought that the figures on ethnic minority electoral participation underestimate total turnouts, given lower levels of electoral registration among some ethnic minority groups (Anwar 2001; Heath et al. 2011). A MORI poll of 2001, for instance, indicated that around 27% of ethnic minority non-voters were not registered to vote compared to 15% of non-voters overall. It suggested rates of non-registration probably varied across ethnic groups and were likely to be particularly high among black groups (Purdam et al. 2002). The EMBES team has also collected data on registration rates, and their preliminary findings also suggest some significant variations between ethnic groups, with 'Black African' groups in particular self-reporting significantly lower levels of electoral registration (Fisher et al. 2011).

Given the variation across minority ethnic groups in relation to turnouts and registration, it seems probable then that there are some significant differences across groups of ethnic minority younger people – although since studies infrequently disaggregate by age and ethnicity, we have little by way of robust data to assess whether there are any clear patterns of (differentiated) disengagement. Similarly, despite the contentions of the Cantle (2001) and Preventing Extremism Together (PET) Working Groups (2005) reports concerning political disengagement among young Asians or young Muslims, we have relatively little data that confirm low levels of engagement with mainstream politics.

Survey data on ethnic minority young people's political engagement that do exist suggest a complicated picture of engagement with formal mainstream politics. For example, whilst a 2005 MORI report on ethnic minority electoral engagement found lower turnouts among ethnic minority younger people as well as lower levels of interest in politics and levels of registration (echoing patterns among younger people generally), it reported *higher* levels of active involvement in election campaigns among 18- to 24-year-olds than among older groups (this related to activities *other* than reading election manifestos). The report attributed this interesting result either to young people's susceptibility to peer group pressure to become involved or 'to hindsight (young people following the news and prepared to take an interest but feeling in retrospect that the election was not interesting after all)' (2005: 31–2). Beyond explanations based on conformity or the misplaced expectations of young people, this finding sits better perhaps with the contention made in many literatures on political participation that

among the young there are new political subjectivities emerging that are characterised by a preference for forms of direct, hands-on political engagement rather than for voting or other forms of institutional affiliation or membership – a pattern that is reflected in our own data, as we discuss later in this book.

It should be noted that low levels of electoral engagement or party membership are not in themselves evidence of political disengagement: as several studies of youth political participation have asserted, voter abstention is not in itself an indicator of political apathy (Hay 2007; Marsh et al. 2007).[3] Indeed, research on young people's and ethnic minorities' politics points to the significance of activism outside the terrain of electoral and party politics (Bousetta 2001; Marsh et al. 2007; Stolle et al. 2008). As Fahmy (2004: no page) notes:

> [E]mphasis upon formal participation through the ballot box can obscure the extent of broader forms of civic engagement by ethnic minority groups as expressed, for example, through community involvement, volunteering, political protest, as well as more diffuse forms of cultural contestation.

The UK government's Citizenship Survey data on forms of civic and voluntary participation across ethnic groups lend some support to this observation. So, whilst election surveys regularly find that black groups are less likely to vote or be registered to vote than other ethnic groups, data from the 2009–2010 Citizenship Survey show that they are as, or more, likely to be engaged in informal and formal volunteering: with 30% of 'Caribbean' and 31% of 'African' groups involved in frequent (at least once a month) informal volunteering compared to 30% of 'White', 23% of 'Indian' and 'Pakistani' and 20% of 'Bangladeshi' groups (DCLG 2010). Comparing rates of frequent (at least once a month) formal volunteering, 25% of 'Caribbean' and 24% of 'African' groups were frequent formal volunteers compared to 26% of 'White', 16% of 'Indian' and 'Bangladeshi' and 15% of 'Pakistani' groups (DCLG 2010). We reflect further on the implications of these trends in Chapter 2, particularly in relation to the literature discussing the significance of forms of political action outside formal mainstream politics among black groups – such as those located in 'alternative' or 'black public spheres' (Gilroy 1987; Black Public Sphere Collective 1995; Fraser 1997; Shukra et al. 2004).

The lack of extensive data on ethnic minority young people's political engagement is not confined to quantitative studies of political participation, in that the qualitative literature on youth political (non)

participation also contains little focussed research on the political engagement and participation of ethnic minority youth. Although there are many excellent qualitative studies on black and Asian young people's social, economic and cultural experiences (Solomos 1988; Alexander 1996; Back 1996), few have looked specifically at their attitudes towards politics and their experiences of political participation or activism. Aside from Eade and Garbin's (2002; 2006) work on political mobilisation among young Bangladeshis in London's East End, there has been little consideration of whether there are distinctive forms of political action emerging among ethnic minority young people in the present period. The recent *Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation* (PIDOP) programme of research led by the University of Surrey[4] explored political engagement among selected groups of ethnic minority young people in the UK, within a wider programme of comparative European research. This study has generated many useful insights into Bangladeshi and Congolese young people's political and civic engagement, and compared to English young people, although it has not generated data on patterns of political and civic engagement across ethnic minority young people in the UK more broadly.

Generally, the issues of youth participation on the one hand and minority ethnic participation on the other have developed as largely distinct areas of concern. Substantively, then, we know relatively little, empirically or conceptually, about ethnic minority young people's political engagement.

Inevitably, given the interest in especially young Muslim's political orientations, framed by fears of violent political radicalism, there have been in recent times, a number of qualitative studies of Muslim young people's political perspectives, exploring factors influencing alienation and engagement (Gest 2010) and the impact of the 'media-security nexus' on young Muslims' sense of their citizenship (O'Loughlin and Gillespie 2012). Nevertheless, the picture of how young Muslims relate to mainstream politics, and the range of forms of activism in which they engage, remains incomplete.

This volume is focused on exploring the various ways ethnic minority and Muslim young people politically engage, paying attention to the modes and repertoires of political action and the issues and experiences that animate their activism. These issues, we argue, are particularly significant given the shifts in identity politics that have underpinned political mobilisations among ethnic minority groups over the last few decades. The challenges to black identity politics that took place in the 1980s shifted attention to questions of ethnicity, culture, religion and the

politics of difference (Modood 2009a; Meer 2010), whilst this politics has been challenged by the critique of multiculturalism as well as by challenges to bounded ethnic and cultural group identities posed by theories of 'new ethnicities' (Hall 2000) and hybrid identities. As Vertovec (2007) and Hall (2000) have argued, much of British postwar policy around 'diversity' has been framed in terms of specific minority ethnic group experiences (and centrally, those of African Caribbean and South Asian groups). And yet, evolving identities and the ongoing settlement of groups of widely divergent heritages and migration trajectories have meant that such policies have rarely (if ever) kept pace with changing sociological and political realities. This is also true of the study of the impact of this diversity on contemporary political mobilisations among ethnic minority groups. Whilst there are theoretical debates about the extent to which emphasis on complex, hybrid identities displaces engagement with material issues of structural inequalities among racialised groups (Anthias 2001), there are relatively few empirical studies that trace the impact of shifting or complex identities on contemporary forms of political action among minority ethnic groups.

These developments are potentially particularly pertinent for younger generations whose political biographies have been forming in a period when the political terrain in relation to both black identity and multicultural politics has been transformed. Some questions that arise then relate to whether the identity politics movements of the 1970s and 1980s are relevant to young people? How have the shifting debates on multiculturalism, citizenship, national identity, race, ethnicity and religion affected young people's politics? What has been the impact of processes of globalisation, changing modes of governance, and events such as 9/11 and the 2005 London attacks on ethnic minority young people's politics?

Aims of this book

This book sets out to address these gaps in the understanding of contemporary modes of political engagement among ethnic minority young people by presenting findings from qualitative research that was carried out over a period between 2004 and 2007 with ethnic minority young political activists and participants in Birmingham and Bradford, UK. Our research explored modes and repertoires of activism, routes into and experiences of political activism, the political issues that concerned young people and their views of political institutions and processes, global politics and local spaces. In this book, we wish to argue that the study of political engagement among ethnic minority young people

needs to be situated in relation to four overlapping fields of social and political transformation.

Firstly, we highlight the significance of new repertoires or 'grammars' of political action through which contemporary forms of mobilisation are being articulated – reflected in reflexive, everyday and direct (DIY) forms of political action. Secondly, we highlight the impact of the emergence of more participatory modes of governance that have pluralised the sites of political participation, focusing on how these have set out to connect with, regulate or intervene in the lives of ethnic minority and Muslim young people. Thirdly, we focus on the development of new understandings of complex ethnic identities, and the emergence of religion as a focus of governmental action and political discourse, to analyse how these intersect with forms of political mobilisation among young people. Finally, we point to the significance of shifting scales of political and social action enabled by globalised networks and communications systems. Our data reveal highly 'glocal' concerns among young activists, which seem to us to be more than simply a refashioning of existing transnational and diasporic connections but indicative of a more profound shift in how local spaces are conceived in relation to awareness of global political issues, and this has been enabled through access to international media outlets and active engagement in internet-based publics. These four developments are considered theoretically in Chapter 2 and empirically throughout our subsequent chapters discussing the data from our research.

Research design

As many youth studies researchers (Eden and Roker 2000) have argued, crisis narratives about youth political apathy tend to displace attention from forms of political participation in which young people *do* engage. Our study set out to address this issue by working with young participants and activists, exploring their modes, targets and repertoires of political action.

We operated with a broad view of political participation that extended to 'conventional', 'unconventional' (Barnes and Kaase 1979) and 'postconventional' (ECPR 2004) forms. The distinction between 'conventional' and 'unconventional' participation is one that has been common in the political science literature on political participation, with 'conventional' political participation referring to engagement in mainstream politics – including electoral engagement – whilst 'unconventional' participation includes demonstrations, protests and illegal

acts of political resistance. More recently, the concept of 'postconventional' participation has been added to this typology, which refers to more personalised, everyday, lifestyle forms of action such as political shopping (consumer boycotts and 'buycotts'), vegetarianism, culture jamming and e-activism (ECPR 2004).

To this, we added a concept of participation drawn from sociological and cultural studies literature, expressed as 'alternative public sphere' political activity (Gilroy 1987; Black Public Sphere Collective 1995; Shukra et al 2004), which refers to involvement in community groups, self-help and grass-roots movements that lie outside the domain of mainstream politics – and in which, it is argued, minority groups have historically politically organised in response to the exclusions that have operated in the mainstream political domain (Fraser 1997).

Drawing on this broadened conception of political participation, and concerned with different levels of engagement from participation to activism, we worked with groups of young people engaged in institutional, youth, community, neighbourhood, gender and protest politics in Birmingham and Bradford, including the following:

- two groups of Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs) from the Bradford Keighley Youth Parliament (BKYP) and the Birmingham Young People's Parliament (YPP);
- a women's group in Birmingham, comprising significantly women of Pakistani, Yemeni and Indian heritage, established to provide women with a 'space of their own' and to challenge community and local state responses to women's concerns;
- an organisation in Bradford providing a range of educational, social and recreational provision for predominantly Muslim young women in a 'women-only' environment;
- a youth group based in Birmingham, focused on addressing experiences of African Caribbean young men and women, organising to inform 'the public and government agencies on gang culture' and to challenge 'the boundaries of local and governmental action'. Following the 2005 disturbances in Lozells in Birmingham, the group has begun to work with young Bangladeshis to address common issues facing young people in the city;
- a youth group in Bradford engaged in youth, community, self-help and neighbourhood renewal projects; working primarily with Pakistani young men, the group more recently set out to include in its activities young Slovenian men newly migrated to the local area;

- four local youth groups in Birmingham and Bradford focused on increasing educational resources and opportunities working with Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali and white young people;
- a Bradford-based youth group, working with Pakistani, African Caribbean and white young people to 'encourage positive identities' and 'celebrate young people's achievements';
- a Birmingham-based anti-war, 'Muslim justice movement', organised and led by young Muslim men.

We carried out 12 focus groups (six in each city) and 50 individual in-depth interviews, involving a total of 76 respondents (39 in Birmingham and 37 in Bradford). Our respondents were aged 16 to 25, with slightly more men than women in the sample. The self-ascribed ethnicity of respondents included 'Pakistani', 'Kashmiri', 'Mirpuri', 'Yemeni', 'Afro-Caribbean', 'Black British', 'Somali', 'Indian', 'Black African' and 'mixed race'. We discuss the political implications of these self-ascriptions further in Chapter 6.

The focus groups consisted of a group discussion with four-12 individuals, focusing on the experiences, activities, membership and reflections of the groups in which we encountered them, and their perspectives on political institutions, processes and issues. These were followed by individual in-depth interviews with the focus group members. A key aspect of these interviews was discussion of people's personal political biographies, which explored how and why individuals became politically active, the range of activities in which they participated, their views of their local areas, the issues that concerned them and how they saw their future political interests and participation. Our rationale for including a 'political biographical' perspective was driven by our concern to understand not just the dynamics of a range of groups and their collective experiences but to consider also members' paths into those groups and the range of repertoires of action in which they engaged, including 'everyday' and 'subpolitical' action (Beck 1997). These focus groups and individual interviews were supplemented by analysis of literature and websites produced by the groups with whom we worked and interviews with youth workers and local authority Youth Services personnel in the two cities.

As we discuss in more depth in Chapter 3, the selection of Birmingham and Bradford as the fieldwork sites of the research has some important implications. Birmingham and Bradford have significant, young ethnic minority populations, and somewhat different demographic profiles, economic development and histories of political mobilisation. Ethnic

minority groups comprised 29.6% of the population in Birmingham, and 21.7% in Bradford in 2001, with ethnic minority young people constituting 38% of the 16–24 cohort in Birmingham and 34% in Bradford (Table ST101, Census 2001). Both cities were formerly industrial centres that have witnessed major deindustrialisation and are currently engaged in strategies for regeneration: whilst Birmingham has been reinventing itself as a 'global city' with burgeoning financial, service and cultural sectors, Bradford's local economy has experienced less growth. In both cities, there are marked patterns of geographical concentrations of ethnic groups, giving rise to some distinctive patterns of political mobilisation and local community politics. In both cities, ethnic minority young people have assumed a political visibility as a consequence of disturbances (occurring in 2001 in Bradford and in 2005 in the Lozells area in Birmingham), concerns about community cohesion, educational attainment, gang culture and violent political extremism. Nevertheless, the groups with whom we were in contact expressed concerns regarding the mechanisms for addressing the experiences of ethnic minority young people within local democratic structures. These contextual issues certainly had an impact on the issues and policy agendas that pertained in each city as well as on young people's engagement in their local areas.

Chapter schema

In Chapter 2, we consider existing research on ethnic minority political participation. We begin by outlining some key themes from the existing literature on the intersections between race/ethnicity and politics, before going on to examine the significance of: shifting conceptions of the political and new modes and repertoires of political action; emerging forms of participatory governance; the emergence of reflexively constituted ethnic and religious identities; and shifting global, national and local scales of political action.

In Chapter 3, we set out the methodological implications of our theoretical perspective, arguing for the need for a qualitative exploration of the forms of participation in which ethnic minority young people engage. The chapter sets out how broadly conceived notions of 'participation', 'politics' and 'the political' are operationalised within the study's research design – particularly in relation to the sampling and interview methods and design. It explains the study's concern with understanding the significance of place in relation to young people's politics and justifies the selection of Birmingham and Bradford as sites for the project's fieldwork.

In Chapter 4, we turn to ethnic minority young people's modes and repertoires of political action. We examine the significance of 'new grammars of action' for how activists relate to mainstream politics, and their modes and repertoires of political action – whether these are focused at community, local, national or global levels – and how they relate to conventional, unconventional and postconventional repertoires of political action (ECPR 2004).

In Chapter 5, we examine the ways in which ethnic minority young people encounter and/or engage with the state, through an exploration of the growth in participatory governance initiatives and inclusion projects at local and national levels, and especially those that target ethnic minority young people. We frame our analysis of these within the literature on the emergence of 'participative governance' (Newman 2005) as a model that seeks to establish co-governance relationships between governors and citizens. Key questions that we explore through examination of our empirical data are as follows: does inclusion within participatory governance structures create opportunities for *meaningful* political participation for ethnic minority young citizens or are they simply co-opted into such structures? Are ethnic minority young participants able to forge autonomous political agendas within such structures or express political identities that are not assimilable to those ascribed by the state? We also ask, what is the impact of ethnic minority young people's participation on the structures of governance themselves?

In Chapter 6, we focus on how concepts of 'race', ethnicity, culture and religion frame ethnic minority young people's political consciousness and activism. Key issues that are analysed here relate to the impact of political spaces and structures constituted around notions of 'race', ethnicity or religion on young people's identities and senses of themselves as political actors. Through a critical engagement with the literature on 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1992) and hybridity (Back 1996), we investigate how young people reflexively constitute their own identities in political terms, and how these relate to more institutionalised categories of identity. In this context, we also expand on the theme of young Muslim mobilisation, exploring the responses of young Muslims to the development of social policy instruments that explicitly target Muslims, notably in the post-11th September 2001 period.

These issues re-emerge in Chapter 7, through a study of the intersections between ethnicity, religion, gender and the political. In particular, our study of these intersections focuses on the gendered spaces in which young people develop and engage politically, the impact of gendered role models on young people's political consciousness and the creation

and transfer of gendered cultural capital in shaping young people's political activism.

Chapter 8 examines young people's relationships with their local spaces, paying particular attention to how such spaces shape young people's identities and their sense of access to, visibility in, and exclusion from, these spaces. In particular, we consider the impact of the contexts of Birmingham and Bradford on these relationships and the role of the local state in both cities in shaping the political terrain on which ethnic minority young people politically engage. A key aim of the chapter is to situate our analysis of young people's relationship to their local spaces in the context of patterns of global and local ('glocal') change that are presently reconfiguring neighbourhoods in the cities of many postindustrial societies. The chapter then moves on to examine the ways in which ethnic minority young people mobilise at the local, grass-roots scale in ways that overlap with forms of globalised sensibility (expressed in terms of belonging to transnational diasporas and the Muslim *umma* and in concerns with issues of global social justice), which translate into localised opposition to foreign policy goals and suspicion of the perceived political biases of mainstream media. The chapter concludes by considering some of the ways in which processes of globally driven institutional change intertwine with ethnic minority young people's global-local political imaginaries.

Significance

In a context where multiculturalism and the governance of diversity have become hotly debated, linked to questions of national identity and integration, ethnic minority and Muslim young people have come under intense scrutiny. This has been manifested in recurring anxieties about disaffection on the one hand and extremism on the other. Despite the intensity of these debates, we suggest that there is actually relatively little robust data on the patterns of political engagement across ethnic minority and Muslim young people to substantiate these concerns. Moreover, we argue within these debates, there has been rather little recognition of the forms of action in which ethnic minority and Muslim young people do engage. It is the contention of this book that between disaffection and political violence, there are a range of forms of political participation, which have received insufficient attention. As such, this volume aims to address this gap conceptually and empirically to go beyond crisis narratives to explore the ways in which ethnic minority young people politically engage and are making a difference.

2
Changing Political Participation

Introduction

In the last chapter, we pointed to gaps in the literature on political participation and electoral engagement in relation to ethnic minority young people. We referred to the often cited view that ethnic minority young people are less likely to be engaged in electoral politics than other young people or ethnic minority groups generally. We suggested, however, that the data on this are rather inconclusive – particularly in relation to the intersections between age and ethnicity and religion in analyses of electoral turnouts. We also noted that running alongside such perceptions, there has been a series of highly pathologising crisis narratives on ethnic minority young people focused on criminalisation, educational attainment, urban disorders, failed integration, generational conflicts or more recently political radicalisation. In this chapter, we argue that there is a need for more direct engagement with the political perspectives of ethnic minority young people themselves, that our view of political participation should extend beyond electoral turnouts, and look wider than conventional, or violent extremist, forms of politics to take account of the range of forms of activism in which young people engage and the issues and concerns that animate their political activism. We argue that these issues stand in particular need of empirical investigation.

We begin by contextualising our understanding of ethnic minority young people's politics through an examination of the literatures on ethnic minority political participation at national and local levels. The local level has been particularly significant as a site of ethnic minority political mobilisations and where activism, representation and influence have been greatest – and this has informed our own study of young

people's activism. We then consider studies of ethnic minority young people's political activism – many of which have focused on local youth mobilisations during the 1970s and 1980s. There have been relatively few studies of more recent political mobilisations among ethnic minority young people or direct engagement with their political perspectives, aside from the work of Eade and Garbin (2002) on young Bangladeshis, the PIDOP study (Zani and Barrett 2012) and more recent studies of young Muslims' political engagement (Gale and O'Toole 2009; Gest 2010; O'Toole and Gale 2010; O'Loughlin and Gillespie 2012).

In addressing this gap in the literature, we set out four key issues that inform our analysis of, and intervention in debates about, ethnic minority young people's political engagement. Firstly, we argue for the need to contextualise ethnic minority young people's participation within the broader literatures on shifting patterns of citizens' political engagement in the contemporary period. These suggest that the nature of political participation is changing (Norris 2002) and that social transformations in the contemporary period have given rise to new forms of politics (Beck 1997; Giddens 1994) and 'new grammars of action' (McDonald 2006) that are characterised by a turn towards more everyday (Bang 2003), fluid, personal, direct and expressive political engagement. We take these insights, and consider their implications for political engagement among ethnic minority young people, before setting out our perspective on the need for a theoretical and empirical analysis of the intersections between everyday politics and mainstream political institutions in the lives and political imaginaries of ethnic minority young people.

Secondly, we consider the importance of governance and policy frameworks in shaping mobilisation – particularly in relation to the role of local government and the impact of policy discourses on citizenship, diversity and equalities. We suggest that ethnic minority young people have increasingly been the object of governance initiatives as a consequence of three shifts. The first concerns the shift towards more participatory forms of governance that seek to harness citizens' participation in local governance and the delivery of public goods and services; the second relates to the role that young ethnic minorities play in the construction of urban regeneration and global city narratives; and the third concerns the shift from multiculturalist to community cohesion-focused approaches to ethnic diversity that place particular emphasis on the management and participation of young people to promote integration and combat conflict and political extremism. Whilst these shifts often express a rhetoric of participation and inclusion, they are not always or necessarily oriented towards the substantive democratic participation of ethnic minority

young people. Nevertheless, our study is concerned with the agency of young participants involved in these governance initiatives and the impact that they may have on local democratic structures and policies.

Thirdly, we consider the implications of debates on changing identity politics, complex and hybrid identities and new ethnicities (Hall 2000; Back 1996), suggesting that whilst such social changes are significant for the relevance of collectivist forms of mobilisation based on identity politics, group identities do continue to inform young people's political engagement. These issues emerge alongside the increasing significance of religious identities among some young people (Jacobson 1997; Bouzar 2001; Mushaben 2008) and the ways in which these shape their political engagement (Eade and Garbin 2002; Meer 2010). Such developments cannot be seen apart, however, from the discursive shifts from ethnicity to religion in public debates and government policies relating to young people and especially young Muslims. These issues are also frequently refracted through gendered discourses on race, ethnicity and religion, and these present different political issues for young men and women – particularly in relation to external perceptions of their political agency or propensity towards political disaffection or radicalisation.

Finally, our analysis engages with the literature on the shifting scales of participation. Recent research suggests that globalisation and the growth of information technologies have led to changes in the modes, repertoires and targets of political action (Appadurai 1996; Castells 2004; McDonald 2006), facilitating links between global and local issues, concerns and action. Fundamental to this has been the significance of the local in the ways in which global issues, organisations and movements are expressed – captured in the notion of the 'glocal' (Robertson 1994; Eade and Garbin 2002). We consider how global concerns connect with local contexts in shaping political action in ways that appear to bypass national politics, and also go beyond transnational and diasporic connections that have characterised many ethnic minority mobilisations.

Ethnic minority participation in national politics

As noted in Chapter 1, there are patterns of lower levels of electoral engagement in the UK (and elsewhere) generally but particularly among young people and some ethnic minority groups, but there is little by way of robust data on turnouts among ethnic minority young people. We have also seen that there are significant differences across ethnic minority groups that disrupt simple narratives of electoral disaffection: for example there is some evidence that Indian voters are *more* likely to turn

out to vote than other ethnic groups (Anwar 2001; Cutts et al. 2007). Whether the available data do or do not suggest lower electoral engagement among young ethnic minorities, we argued that low voter turnouts should not be read as evidence of political apathy. Instead, many argue that low electoral engagement among young people and ethnic minority groups reveals their disillusionment with political and representative institutions (Saggar 1998; Anwar 2001; Bousetta 2001; Marsh et al. 2007).

Continued under-representation in mainstream political institutions is one factor that is commonly cited to explain lower levels of electoral engagement among ethnic minority groups. This view is supported by findings of a 2003 survey of black Britons in Greater London and the West Midlands commissioned by the Electoral Commission and Operation Black Vote, which attempted to understand the factors that might encourage ethnic minorities both to register and cast a vote. The most significant factor cited by their respondents was better representation of black people in political institutions (Electoral Commission 2003). Whilst representation of ethnic minority groups in the House of Commons is higher now than it has ever been (Ali and O'Cinneide 2002), it is still proportionately very low: prior to the General Election in 2010 there were only 14 ethnic minority MPs out of a total number of 650 (that is, 2.2%).[1] Following the 2010 General Election, the number of representatives increased significantly to 27, and we saw the election of Britain's first women Muslim MPs as well as a significant increase in the number of Conservative ethnic minority MPs. Although these results were characterised as an historic breakthrough for ethnic minority political representation, it still remains relatively low: if the numbers of ethnic minority MPs were merely proportionate to the general population, then the level should be closer to 91 ethnic minority MPs in the House (based on the 2011 census figure for ethnic minority groups in England and Wales).

Alongside issues of representation, other factors commonly cited for electoral disengagement among certain ethnic minority groups include the failure of political parties to engage ethnic minority voters on the issues that concern them (Saggar and Heath 1999), or 'institutional racism' in Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton's sense (1969), whereby issues affecting black people do not make it onto the political agenda, and the tendency of parties to engage in debates on issues relating to ethnicity and race in highly exclusionary or assimilationist ways (Bulpitt 1986; Layton-Henry and Rich 1986; Gilroy 1987).

A Harvard-Manchester investigation into ethnic minority representation in the UK cited the highly centralised nature of British political

parties as a key barrier to the emergence of black politicians at the national level (BBC News 2009; Clark et al. 2010), although the internal candidate selection practices of the parties in relation to winnable seats must also form a central element of this analysis (and see Le Lohé 1998). Whilst there are a number of studies analysing patterns of representation and participation of ethnic minority groups in national politics (Saggar 1998), the selection of candidates and the conduct of elections in relation to race issues (Saggar and Heath 1999; Saggar and Geddes 2000), much of the focus within the literature on ethnic minority political participation in the UK has been at the level of local politics.

Local politics

Many studies have pointed to the significance of local urban contexts for ethnic minority mobilisations in electoral politics, and this reflects both the patterns of residential ethnic concentrations that developed in the postwar period, as well as the fact that opportunities for participation were available at the local level that were not available at the national level. Le Lohé (1998) suggested that the spatial concentrations of ethnic minorities and the smaller electorates that characterise local elections enabled sufficient critical electoral mass to support the selection and election of ethnic minority candidates. It is also at the local level where movements articulating antiracist objectives, race equality, community issues and demands for cultural recognition tended to arise (Ball and Solomos 1990).

One consequence of the localised nature of ethnic minority politics and representation has been the development of a highly variegated picture of ethnic minority representation and activism across British towns and cities. A number of studies have emerged analysing these local patterns of representation and mobilisation, paying attention to the election of local councillors, emergence of ethnic associations and campaigns and salience of particular political issues in different localities (Adolino 1998). In many ways then the study of ethnic minority mobilisations has been concerned with local contexts, and the nature of the urban, in shaping ethnic minority politics (Rex and Tomlinson 1979). Indeed, it has often been argued that race and politics are impossible to extract from their local, and specifically *urban*, contexts (Gilroy 1987; Cross and Keith 1993; Solomos and Back 1995).

Such studies of local politics have been conducted in both Birmingham and Bradford, as sites of significant ethnic minority settlement, distinctive patterns of ethnic minority mobilisations and where issues relating

to race, equality and political change have been salient. Writing in the 1990s, Solomos and Back stated that it 'is no exaggeration to say that throughout the post-1945 period Birmingham has played a key role in political debates about race relations issues' (1995: 43). Similarly, Bradfordian politics have had an impact on ethnic minority politics elsewhere, although Alam and Husband (2006: 3) note that the campaigns for provision of halal meat and the Honeyford and Rushdie affairs during the 1980s, as well as the urban disorders of 1995 and 2001, tended to cast 'Bradford [as] the location of a series of political issues around faith and ethnicity that became the focus of national moral panics', particularly in relation to British Pakistani communities.

John Rex et al.'s early (1967 and 1979) studies of migrant settlement in Birmingham in the 1960s and 1970s were seminal in setting out the distinctive local contexts to ethnic minority politics and in theorising the significance of the urban in shaping these. Rex and Tomlinson's (1979) study of Handsworth particularly paid attention to political mobilisations among ethnic minority groups and their entry into, and exclusions from, political organisations during the period of the 1970s. During the 1970s, they noted a range of groups and political tendencies developing outside of mainstream and class-based political organisations in Birmingham, such as self-help, ethnic, religious, identity, workers' and revolutionary groups (and included black housing associations, supplementary schools and legal advice centres). They also identified some key differences in modes of political organisation across ethnic groups, suggesting that forms of political organisation among South Asians tended to be based on ethnic and kinship ties mobilising around community leaders, in contrast with more revolutionary tendencies among West Indian groups (many of which were aligned to Black Power or pan-Africanist philosophies). Rex and Tomlinson saw the growth of these autonomous ethnic minority political organisations as arising in large part from the failure of mainstream political organisations to incorporate the concerns or interests of newly settled new Commonwealth migrants in the city – a pattern that has in many respects been an enduring one.

In contrast, Solomos and Back's (1995) study of black identity politics in Birmingham up to the early 1990s highlighted the significance of party structures, particularly within the Labour party, in opening up, as well as inhibiting, political activism among black groups. Solomos and Back's use of the term 'black' in this study was in its politically inclusive sense to encompass all non-white groups – a usage that became highly contested from the late-1980s onwards (Modood 1994; Alexander 2002).

Their study suggested that the Labour party became closely associated with black activists and voters as a consequence of its success in including black representatives and through its pioneering role in the formulation and implementation of race equality policies as the party of local government. Nevertheless, they noted significant tensions between Labour's focus on the politics of class on the one hand, and on the other, the dynamics of race in shaping political mobilisations among black activists, who were often concerned with creating political spaces for the articulation of a race-focused politics that was autonomous from class-based political ideologies and movements. Their study of local politics in Birmingham focused not just on the institutional and party contexts in which ethnic minority mobilisations took place but also on the role of black activists, making clear that much of the transformation in Birmingham's politics came about as a consequence of black political organisation and activism, notably in challenging the Labour party's 'race-blind' tendencies and the Council's neglect of black inner-city constituencies. This insight in our view is significant for our own study of young activists, whose activism, perspectives and impact are infrequently the focus of study. Their study signalled, but did not explore, the diversity of political organisations and trajectories across black groups and the significance of ethnicity (as opposed to race) to much political organisation.

The role of ethnicity in underpinning forms of mobilisation was a focus of Garbaye's (2005) study of local representative politics in Birmingham up to the early 2000s. His study also pointed to the role of the local state and party political structures in creating opportunities for ethnic minority representation. Garbaye described political representation in Birmingham City Council as a 'modus vivendi' based on alliances between the dominant Labour group and ethnic minority leaders and activists who were active in grassroots politics from the late 1970s onward. This alliance permitted the relative inclusion of ethnic groups in the political process through patronage, co-optation and concessions to their interests, 'in exchange for electoral support, or absence of electoral challenge, and cooperation in maintaining law and order' (2005: 31). Garbaye suggested that this modus vivendi began to show strain from the early 2000s as a consequence of more assertive and ethnically-based mobilisations, with candidates and activists much less dependent on Labour to achieve representation, particularly in areas of ethnic minority settlement. Such trends also sat alongside a fragmentation of black identity politics and rise of more ethnically driven political mobilisations – a pattern that was repeated elsewhere in the UK (Modood 2005). Indeed, the late 1990s in Birmingham saw the rise of

the People's Justice Party, which appealed to (largely Mirpuri heritage) Pakistani voters, by campaigning on Kashmiri and domestic political issues relevant to Pakistani groups in the city (for example in relation to schooling), challenging Labour's position in areas such as Sparkbrook, Small Heath and Aston.[2] This pattern of more assertive and independent ethnic minority mobilisations was later to yield benefits for the Respect Party, which made significant advances in certain parts of the city; thanks to the active mobilisation of Muslim voters and activists and particularly women Muslim activists (Yaqoob 2008). Thus, in the General Election of 2005, Labour was seriously challenged in a safe seat with a large local Pakistani Muslim population in the Sparkbrook and Small Heath parliamentary constituency, where the Respect candidate, Salma Yaqoob, made major inroads into Labour's share of the vote – achieving 10,498 votes (27.5%) to Labour's Roger Godsiff's 13,787 votes (Godsiff's share of the vote was 36.1%, down from 57.3% in 2001, a drop well in excess of the nation-wide swing in 2005 away from Labour of about 11%). Salma Yaqoob was later elected Respect local councillor for the Sparkbrook ward in the 2006 Local Council Elections.[3]

Although Garbaye's study pointed to growing activism of ethnic minorities in some inner-city wards, and their increasing independence from the Labour party (particularly among Pakistani groups), it is clear that there are still limitations to the effective representation on the Council of ethnic minorities and their interests in the city. In 2001, the Birmingham Stephen Lawrence Commission's (2001) report highlighted the persistent under-representation of black and minority ethnic groups in the public life of Birmingham. By 2012, under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat administration, there was only one ethnic minority Councillor sitting in the Council Cabinet.[4]

There have been significant studies of ethnic minority political mobilisations at the level of local politics in Bradford too, particularly as a consequence of the impact of Pakistani politicians on local Labour party politics and Council representation, the generational issues highlighted not only by the growth of the Asian Youth Movement in the 1970s/1980s but also significantly due to two key issues that put Bradford in the spotlight in the 1980s: the controversy surrounding Ray Honeyford's comments on schooling in Bradford, and the responses of Muslim groups in Bradford to the publication of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. The latter issue in particular was highly significant for ethnic minority mobilisations and race politics in the UK more broadly, not least because it highlighted tensions between antiracist and political black identity movements on the one hand, and cultural differentialist,

ethnically based mobilisations on the other (Modood 2005). The affair focused attention on Muslim mobilisations in Bradford, notably because of the public book-burning that took place there (McGhee 2008). However, Samad (1996) makes clear that there were distinctive factors at work in Bradford during that period which made the publication of *The Satanic Verses* significant for Muslims in Bradford in ways it was not for Muslims elsewhere, such as in Tower Hamlets. The first of these was the political influence in Bradford of first-generation Pakistani leaders who had emerged via kinship connections and through religious institutions, in contrast with Tower Hamlets where younger, second generation Bangladeshis were more influential and had emerged through community programmes sponsored by central government (Section 11) funding. The second factor related to the relationship between religious leaders and political institutions in Bradford, where Bradford Council had institutionalised religious leaderships (for example, in supporting the creation of the Bradford Council of Mosques) in a bid to control disaffected young Muslims, consequently entrenching religious influence in the city. In Tower Hamlets, by contrast, Bangladeshi leadership was overwhelmingly secular. The final factor concerned the dissatisfaction in Bradford with local political responses to the highly inflammatory remarks made by Ray Honeyford concerning concentrations of Muslim pupils in Bradford's schools, which made questions of religious identity particularly sensitive at that time and among young people in the city. This again contrasted with Tower Hamlets, where youth organisations were focused on fighting funding cuts that affected young Bangladeshis in the borough (Samad 1996). All three factors combined to politicise religious identities in Bradford at that time, but according to Samad, rather than being a symptom of Muslim identity politics *per se*, this should be seen as reflecting the 'internal dynamics of Bradfordian politics' (Samad 1996: 95).

Nevertheless, the reverberations of the Rushdie affair posed significant challenges to the anti racist movement more broadly, which struggled to reconcile its support for minority grievances on the one hand, with a commitment to free speech on the other (Modood 2005). Such tensions have also been in evidence in more recent debates on women's right to wear hijab, jilbab or niqab – with antiracists and the broader left in the UK and elsewhere – notably France (Bassel and Emejulu 2010) – uncertain whether to support women's right to veil on antiracist grounds, or to oppose it on secular and feminist grounds.

In many ways, Bradford has been seen as distinctive as a consequence of the concentration of the Pakistani population in the city relative

to other minority ethnic groups – a factor that Jeffers (1991) cited to explain why there was no history of agitations for a Black Section in the local Labour party in Bradford in the 1980s as there had been elsewhere, including Birmingham. Whilst studies of Birmingham have paid attention to the spatial concentrations of ethnic minorities in the city – the dynamics of, and discourses around, segregation have been a particular concern of studies of Bradford. Bradford's large South Asian population has tended to be clustered in the poorer inner-city areas (Phillips 2001), and these patterns of settlement have been identified as an issue both for labour mobility and social conflict (Alam and Husband 2006). This factor was linked to the disturbances in July 2001, although the activities of the British National Party (BNP), and complaints about police failure to provide protection to Asian communities, were also cited (Hussain and Bagguley 2005). The Ouseley Report (2001) on the circumstances of the 2001 disturbances, *Community Pride Not Prejudice*, noted that whilst Bradford's heritage and cultural diversity were widely valued by its respondents, it suggested that there were 'deep-seated problems' in the city, reflected in, and caused by, geographical separation and social divisions between ethnic groups, weak and self-serving community leadership, poor communication, the prevalence of Islamophobia within schools, a lack of diversity in the workplace and poor facilities for young people in the city (2001: 9–10). In the wake of the urban disorders of 2001 and the resultant 'Bradford Race Review', there were many local governmental initiatives to promote inter-group relationships, underpinned by the notion of 'community cohesion'.

The studies outlined above draw attention to the significance of local contexts for ethnic minority politics, and a survey of other locally-focused studies on areas such as Leicester (Singh 2003), the east end of London (Eade 1991; Eade and Garbin 2002) and Leeds (Farrar 2002) show how mobilisations have been shaped by their local, urban contexts. But whilst there have been significant gains made in terms of representation and organisation in a number of localities, it is also clear that there have been barriers to ethnic minority participation at the local level too (Solomos and Back 1995; Purdam 2001).

Community politics

It is often argued that much mobilisation among ethnic minority groups takes place outside of the sphere of national or local representative politics altogether. A number of theorists have drawn attention to the racially exclusionary character of the state and the mainstream public

sphere (Gilroy 1987; Goldberg 2002; Solomos et al. 2005). In addition, 'politics of difference' theorists (Young 1990; Taylor 1994; Tully 1994; Parekh 2000) have argued against the supposed cultural impartiality of the public sphere, asserting that unrecognised cultural hegemony in the public sphere has served to politically exclude and marginalise minority ethnic and cultural groups.

A number of writers have suggested that the failure of political institutions to effectively include ethnic minorities has led to groups organising in and articulating 'alternative', 'black' or 'subaltern' public spheres at local and community levels (Gilroy 1987; Werbner 1991; Black Public Sphere Collective 1995; Fraser 1997; Solomos et al. 2005). The growth from the 1970s and 1980s onwards of black-led urban social movements with an orientation towards grass-roots organisation and political self-management, according to Gilroy (1987), was propelled by a simultaneous withdrawal from the mainstream public sphere, which was perceived as unrepresentative and exclusionary. For these groups, he argued that:

> being political now requires complete disassociation from the corporate structures of formal politics which are in need of drastic re-politicisation. Authentic politics is thought to recommence with this withdrawal. (1987: 228)

Citing Castells, Gilroy suggested that black groups increasingly organised in local community organisations because 'when people find themselves unable to control the world, they simply shrink the world to the size of their community' (1987: 232). Gilroy argued that these alternative public spheres carried the potential for black groups to imagine an alternative moral and political community, whilst others suggest that the black public sphere operates as a 'critical social imaginary' that challenges 'the exclusionary violence of much public space in the West' (Dudrah 2002: 337).

The picture of significant ethnic minority mobilisations outside of electoral politics is supported by contemporary evidence of high levels of volunteering and local community activism among ethnic minority groups, in contrast with their lower levels of electoral participation. As we noted in Chapter 1, this is supported by Citizenship Survey data showing higher levels of volunteering among black groups (DCLG 2010). Similarly, data on electoral and civic participation across ethnic groups from Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley's (2004) survey of citizenship show that whilst black groups are less likely to vote than whites, they are

more likely to be civically engaged in what they term 'micro-politics', which relates to activities aimed at influencing local service provision. As discussed above, Rex and Tomlinson's (1979) analysis of community politics in Handsworth was pessimistic about the capacity of existing mainstream political organisations such as parties and trade unions to address the interests and concerns of ethnic minorities in the city, and identified a growing trend towards more participation in autonomous local organisations. Such trends towards community organisation seem to have been sustained in Birmingham. Community groups within the city have grown up in relation to a range of issues and welfare domains, such as black housing associations (Sala Pala 2006), supplementary schooling, cultural associations, activism within black-led churches (Johnson 1991), mosques and community mobilisations for the building of mosques (Gale 2005; 2008) and other faith-based organisations. In 2004, it was estimated that there were between 5 and 600 formally structured black and minority ethnic community organisations in Birmingham (BRAP 2004). Similarly, in Bradford, mosque-based mobilisations and community involvement in regeneration initiatives have been key to the city's political development (McLoughlin 2005).

Werbner's (1991) study of local black community organisations highlighted their diversity. Following Castells' model of urban social movements, she characterised these as black social movements with three characteristic concerns: improved collective consumption; cultural identity and autonomy; and increased local and neighbourhood power. Within the range of black social movements with these characteristics, she suggested very different conceptions of community were expressed, including those based on:

- 'imagined communities' – where ethnic minority communities were constructed by either the state or leaders claiming to represent them as culturally bounded 'communities' (1991: 21);
- 'interpretive communities' which attempted to transcend ethnic differences to create a cultural basis for unified political action, such as Pan-African movements (which may have been culturally separatist) (1991: 23);
- 'communities of suffering' which focussed on common experiences of racism and tended to subsume ethnic differences and reject ethnically targeted state policies (1991: 28);
- and finally, 'moral communities' based on mutual welfare and internal giving, orientated towards 'collective provision for communal needs' (1991; 30).

Werbner (1991: 33) argued that the latter were particularly vulnerable to problems of co-optation by the state because of their dependency on state funding streams to engage in community welfare projects, yet:

> state largesse has almost entirely negative implications: it undermines 'natural' leadership formations, substituting them for systems of patronage. It creates dependency. It is open to manipulation by unscrupulous brokers. It divides and rules. It is, as such, an instrument of internal colonialism. (1991: 33)

More optimistically, she suggested it may also create a radical, black salariat that is paid by the state, but which cannot be bribed into silence. These characteristics were highly relevant for the groups that we encountered in our study – particularly because of the intensified emphasis placed by local authorities in partnering with local community groups to deliver social, regeneration and welfare goods. The dilemmas facing 'moral communities' that Werbner cited were certainly present for many of the groups with whom we worked, although they often adopted a range of strategies to countermand co-optation and dependency, as we discuss in Chapter 5.

These studies of black and ethnic minority community mobilisations present a highly differentiated picture of political activity that has developed somewhat autonomously from local and national representative politics – whether based on a 'political black' identity politics, or ethnic, cultural or religious mobilisations. Thus, it is important to consider the range of democratic practices among ethnic minority groups, particularly in the ways that groups have historically engaged in alternative public spheres and modes of participation, often as a consequence of structural obstacles to inclusion in mainstream politics.

Whilst community organisation has been very significant for ethnic minority political action, it is not the case that community mobilisations have been wholly detached from the institutions of local representative politics. Solomos and Back (1995) were critical of accounts of black politics that valorised community mobilisations to the exclusion of black activism within mainstream representative politics. Indeed activism within alternative public sphere politics has in some cases acted as a pathway into representative politics (rather than necessarily constituting a withdrawal from mainstream politics as Gilroy asserts). Thus, many ethnic minority activists who succeeded in being elected to Birmingham City Council during the period of rapid expansion in the numbers of ethnic minority representatives in the 1980s came via community organisations (Solomos and Back 1995; Garbaye 2005).

Furthermore, in Birmingham since the late 1980s, the nature of political representation shifted from reliance on internal alliances within the structures of the Labour party towards more institutionalised consultation between the Council and local ethnic minority community groups, with the emergence of the Standing Consultative Forum (SCF) in 1988. By 1993, the SCF comprised nine sub-umbrella groups that included over 300 ethnic minority community organisations, aimed at creating links between local government and ethnic minority communities across the city (Garbaye 2005; Smith and Stephenson 2005). But, as some commentators observed (BRAP 2004: 7–8), this model of group representation encountered significant difficulties, in part because of its tendency to see ethnic groups as homogenous entities (Smith and Stephenson 2005: 332), and because several ethnic minority groups, women and young people were not included or sufficiently represented within the SCF. The SCF was eventually disbanded in 1999.

In Bradford, such links have been made between the state and local communities, often with an emphasis on engagement with religious organisations, as in the case of the Bradford Council of Mosques, which was established in 1981 on the initiative of the City Council (Lewis 1994; McLoughlin 2005).

The relationship between self-organised community groups and representative political institutions has also been highlighted in Shukra et al.'s (2004) study of black community organisation, which examined the links that exist between the 'alternative public sphere' of ethnic minority community organisations and the 'mainstream public sphere' of representative political institutions, through what they conceptualised as bridging 'transitional public sphere' organisations. These are organisations such as the National Civil Rights Movement (NCRM), Operation Black Vote (OBV) and the National Assembly Against Racism (NAAR) that act as bridges between these public spheres of activism. What characterises these movements according to Shukra et al. is that:

- they are composed of national coalitions, networks or alliances that are formally independent of mainstream public institutions';
- they are 'situated mainly in the third sector';
- they seek to represent, advocate or campaign for movement interests, operating at a strategic level and are explicitly 'political';
- they are umbrella groups whose primary contact is not with the public directly, but with institutions, movements, organizations, professionals or politicians;
- they are typically concerned with a range of issues, and are usually organized beyond a single ethnic group. (2004: 39)

Thus, they pointed to mechanisms by which community organisations may potentially be linked with wider/mainstream political institutions.

Whether in autonomous community organisations, local state-civil society partnerships or representative political institutions, politics at the local level has been highly significant for ethnic minority mobilisations. As suggested, this is in part not only a consequence of patterns of residential concentration of ethnic minorities in the UK in urban centres but is also related to the role of local governments in defining and pursuing issues of representation, diversity and equality, at times putting them at odds with central government. This was particularly noticeable in the period of the 1980s, which was characterised by highly polarised relations between local and central governments. These frequently played out in ideological conflicts over the pursuit of race equality and anti racist policies by Labour-led local authorities which clashed with the more assimilationist stance taken by the New Right Conservative government at the centre. Since then the role and scope of the local state to define issues relating race equality and ethnic diversity changed under the New Labour government, the implications of which we discuss in the section on governance below.

Although modes of urban local governance have changed in recent times, the local contexts to ethnic minority participation remain highly significant and these have important methodological implications as we discuss in Chapter 3, where we elaborate on our rationale for situating our study of young people's politics in Birmingham and Bradford and the implications of these local contexts for our study of their political activism.

Ethnic minority youth politics

Young people's activism has formed the focus of some studies of local and community ethnic minority politics, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, such as Ramamurthy's (2006) study of the Asian Youth Movement in Bradford in the 1970s and 1980s, Westwood's (1991) study of 'Red Star' in Leicester in the 1980s and Pryce's (1990) study of African Caribbean black youth involvement in the Notting Hill Gate Carnival as a form of political resistance during the 1970s. The focus on youth also came to the fore in studies of urban disorders in the 1980s. Since then, there have been rather few studies of ethnic minority young people's politics, aside from Kum-Kum Bhavnani's (1991) study of black young people's political perspectives in the late 1980s, and Eade's and Garbin's (1994, 2006) studies of Bangladeshi youth in the 1990s and early 2000s and the PIDOP study of Bangladeshi and Congolese

young people. As noted in the previous chapter, there is an emerging focus on Muslim young people's political engagement, arising from, or in critical response to, concerns about their political disaffection or political extremism (Hopkins 2007; Gale and O'Toole 2009; Gest 2010; O'Loughlin and 2012). As we also noted, by and large, public discourses on young people have tended to be framed by an array of highly anxious discourses that have shifted from ethnicity to religion, and we argued that discourses of 'ethnic minority youth in crisis' do not necessarily address the active roles that ethnic minority young people play in local and community politics – and these are discussed in greater length in Chapter 4 on young people's political biographies.

Our research then engages with young people's perspectives on the issues that affect them, mainstream institutions, the organisations and movements they affiliate to and the repertoires they use to pursue their political objectives. In so doing, we contextualise these issues in relation to broader debates on political action and ethnic and cultural identities in the contemporary period, globalisation and changing practices of governance. We discuss the implications of these debates in the sections below.

New patterns of political action

In relation to broader debates about political action in the contemporary period, there are signs of changing patterns of participation across established democracies, which shift our focus from both mainstream representative and local community politics. Alongside the crisis narratives on falling levels of participation in formal mainstream politics since the 1990s, there has been a growing political science and sociological literature suggesting that contemporary modes, repertoires and targets of political action are changing rather than political action simply diminishing (Giddens 2002; Norris 2002; Zukin et al. 2006). Norris (2002), for example, argues that political participation is changing in terms of its targets (to a wider range of institutions beyond the nation state), agencies (where declining party, trade union or formal interest group membership should be viewed in relation to the rise of social movements, more fluid networked political organisations and single-issue campaigns) and repertoires (to include everyday lifestyle choices or political consumption). More recently, there has been increasing interest in the role of new technologies in facilitating or even transforming political action (Bennett 2003). Seen from this viewpoint, declining participation in key institutions of representative democracy is not evidence of political apathy *per se* (Giddens 2002; Zukin et al.

2006) but potentially indicative of wider social and political changes that have been occurring in the contemporary period.

These wider social and political changes that are prompting engagement outside of formal representative politics include processes such as the dispersal of decision-making as a consequence of the decentring of governance (Bang 2003) leading to a pluralisation, and localisation, of the sites of citizens' engagement; the effects of globalisation (Castells 2004) in creating new transnational and global political structures that are increasingly the targets of citizens' action, and the rise of 'postmaterialist values' (Inglehart 1997; Dalton 2004) engendering a concern with identities and social practices as objectives of action, alongside the growth of social movements providing the spaces for the public articulation of demands and interests in relation to these (Melucci and Avritzer 2000). The implications of such changes for the ways in which citizens politically engage have been characterised as a turn to more direct, 'DIY', 'everyday' (Bang 2003) and reflexive (Beck 1996; Giddens 2002) forms of political action.

According to Giddens, citizens' political engagement is increasingly founded on a 'life politics' of reflexive engagement with the world, based on a politics of identity and choice (1994: 91), involving everyday challenges to established rules, practices, norms and decisions – made possible in a context where these are no longer governed by tradition (Giddens 1994 and 2002), as he argues: 'Life politics, and the disputes and struggles connected with it, are about how we should live in a world where everything that used to be natural (or traditional) now has in some sense to be chosen, or decided about' (1994: 90–91). He argues that one reason why party politics tied to debates between left and right have become unappealing is because they do not address these 'new fields of action'.

Similarly, Bang argues that for contemporary citizens the 'political is increasingly personal and self-reflexive' (2005: 163), manifested in everyday forms of political engagement that eschew formal institutional politics in preference for a politics of direct, self-actualising, DIY action. Such engagement characterises Bang's concept of 'everyday-maker' political participants, who tend to be neither strongly engaged with nor opposed to the political system, preferring to expend their energies in building reflexive political communities to engage in local, concrete, *ad hoc* political projects rather than long-term, formally organised, ideologically inflected political programmes (2004: 28).

This resonates with Beck's thesis on the reinvention of politics, in which he argues that the decline in interest in formal politics is not

evidence of a lack of political engagement: such conclusions are based on looking for politics 'in the wrong places' (1997: 99). He argues that in fact many of the most important decisions affecting individuals' lives are not made by politicians but in dispersed scientific and corporate sectors – where the state plays merely an ineffective, ex *post facto* regulator role. Thus, he describes representative institutions of the nation-state as '*zombie institutions* which have been dead for a long time but are unable to die'! (1997: 140). The declining significance of party politics stems from the recognition by citizens of this. He suggests that new forms of politics are arising (sometimes behind the facades of orthodox institutions) that are not concerned with the aims of political parties, but with citizens' capacity for self-organisation, which he refers to as 'subpolitics'. Subpolitics denotes everyday often small-scale and individual activities and choices of people as well as the informal politics of social movements. In other words, subpolitics refers to the ways in which politics is shaped by individual and collective actors from outside or below the formal political system engaging in direct, *ad hoc* participation in political decisions, that bypass the institutions of representative opinion-formation (that is, political parties or parliaments). As Beck puts it, sub-politics means 'the shaping of society from below' (Beck 1996: 18).

This focus on direct, everyday and reflexive forms of political engagement underpins Wieviorka's (2005) and McDonald's (2006) accounts of the political subjectivities expressed within contemporary social movements, which these authors suggest differ to those that underpinned 'new social movements'. McDonald suggests that recent years have given rise to new, more personal and interpersonal, networked grammars of political action within contemporary global movements, which are distinct from earlier 'civic-industrial grammars of action' expressed through hierarchical, vertically integrated, highly mediated and collectivist forms of organisation. This resonates with Wieviorka's characterisation of direct, although *ad hoc*, action found within contemporary social movements, where:

> Each individual wishes to be able to choose his or her struggle, involvement and collective identity; but people also wish to manage their participation in action in their own way, at their own rhythm and be able to stop if they so desire. (2005: 11)

Thus, contemporary movements are much less ideological than previously, tend to be founded on an ethos of action rather than programmes or sloganeering (Bang 2003; McDonald 2006: 99) and express

a commitment 'to living differently now, as opposed to programmatic or linear attempts to shape the future' (McDonald 2006: 64). Furthermore, many argue that the oppositional character that was seen as a defining feature of new social movements needs to be re-evaluated in a changed governance context that increasingly stresses partnering between the state and civil society groups (Bang 2003; Barnes et al. 2006). Consequently social movement as well as conventional political, activism, it is argued, are being reconfigured in the current period.

Whilst we include everyday and sub-political action in the focus of our study, it is important to see the ways in which these are shaped by their political contexts. As Giddens (1994: 91) acknowledges 'Life politics is not, or not only, a politics of the personal': it relates to the structural changes that are occurring in a detraditionalising world. Lem's (2010) study of political action among Chinese in France uses Bourdieu's concept of field and habitus to understand the inter-relations between everyday personal subjective political dispositions and the highly racialising political contexts which shaped their responses to discourses on French citizenship and social conflict. Similarly, Solomos et al.'s (2005) study of ethnic minority activism connects political concerns to everyday and professional practices in which ethnic minority groups engage, which are rarely considered by conventional studies of political participation. For example, they found that '[l]awyers, musicians, third sector activists, housing workers or architects might work 'outside' conventional frames of political participation but alter their activity or working practices for political reasons. This might apply to their casework, their charging, their prioritisation, their refusal of alternative career opportunities' (2005: 16; and see Phillips 2007 and Vroemen 2003). These choices, however, need to be understood within the context of activists' perceptions of the practices of the exclusionary institutions in which they work, which form the impetus for their politicised everyday working practices.

Our own study then engages with these 'new grammars of action', and their implications for the organisational, subjective and ideological dimensions of political action, whilst being concerned with how the structures in which ethnic minority young people engage shape the contours and possibilities of their political engagements. We explore these forms of action in Chapter 4.

Changing governance

Our review above of studies of ethnic minority politics drew attention to the role of the local state in responding to mobilisations and

community politics and formulating strategies relating to diversity and inequalities. Solomos and Back's (1995) study of Birmingham up to the early 1990s signalled that changes in the organisation of local government were likely to have a significant impact on ethnic minority representation and race equality. In particular, they argued that many of the gains made at the local level during the 1980s were being rolled back as a consequence of Conservative Governments' reforms of local government, diminishing the role of the local state. The centralisation that occurred in the 1980s took a different turn in the 1990s, starting with the Major government, but intensifying following the election of New Labour, with the local state changing its status from that of service provider to service enabler, with an increasingly significant role for third sector, voluntary and community organisations in a 'mixed economy' of welfare provision. Rather than the role of the local state diminishing, it has shifted its role to one of 'steering' as opposed to 'command and control'. For many local government and political geography researchers (Brenner 2004), this trend has resulted in a 'rescaling of the state', with the local state emerging as a key agent of economic restructuring and urban regeneration, although the delivery of centrally determined objectives remains still a significant aspect of Local Authorities' activity.

Such rescaling has taken place within the context of a more generalised shift from government to governance (Pierre 2000), that is, a move away from top-down, centralised and bureaucratic elite-dominated forms of governing towards more decentred, networked and participatory forms of governance (Bang 2003; Newman 2005; Wagenaar 2006). In Britain, from the late 1990s under New Labour, there were numerous initiatives to promote citizens' participation in devolved governance structures, especially at the local scale, such as the Labour's government's 'Civil Renewal', 'Neighbourhood Renewal' and 'Active Citizenship' strategies. Imrie and Raco (2003) suggest that New Labour's emphasis on citizen involvement in (especially local) governance marked a significant shift compared to policies of previous administrations in eschewing both state- and market-centred approaches to local policy and urban governance. Instead, New Labour advocated a re-scaling of governance in which decision-making was devolved down to communities across the fields of urban regeneration, social policy, education and health in order to shift 'policy delivery away from central government departments and to allow local flexibility in policy implementation' (Imrie and Raco 2003: 17). Many saw this as an expression of New Labour's Third Way ideology in its reliance on third sector involvement in the provision of a mixed economy of public welfare (Giddens 1994; Imrie

and Raco 2003). Amin (2005), furthermore, suggests that New Labour's focus on third-sector and community participation in governance and localism sat within a broader perspective on economic regeneration and social-welfare distribution that was also underpinned by a concern with community cohesion and a reliance on Putnam-inspired theories of social capital.

Whilst New Labour's approach to participatory governance may have been marked by its particular normative and ideological commitments, the turn towards engaging citizens in governance is clearly visible in other democratic states and has similarities with what a number of theorists have identified as patterns of network or co-governance (Sørensen and Torfing 2003; Bang 2004; Wagenaar 2006). Increased complexity in late modern societies is often cited as driving states to engage in co-governance with civil society actors in order to perform governmental functions (Wagenaar 2006) to address policy problems whose causes and consequences are multiply and complexly related. Bang argues that: 'high modern society has grown so complex, dynamic and differentiated that no expert system can any longer rule itself solely by exercising hierarchical and bureaucratic control over people' (2003: 244).

This understanding has informed shifts in governance towards the formation of partnerships between political authorities and the citizenry in order to deliver effective decision-making. Bang (2003) sees in these shifts a new kind of political authority 'in the shape of a highly politicised and culturally oriented new management and administration' which he terms 'culture governance'. Bang describes culture governance as being characterised by 'strategic communication oriented towards attaining influence and success by involving and partnering with individuals and groups in the political community' (2003: 241).

According to Newman (2005), under New Labour 'participative governance' initiatives were frequently deployed to achieve such objectives as enhancing policy effectiveness, addressing crises of legitimacy within political institutions and achieving social integration or 'community cohesion'. As such, trends towards consultation and partnership with civil society actors were particularly concerned with the inclusion of disadvantaged and excluded groups, whilst communities also came to play a particular role within this government imaginary – with implications for the ways in which New Labour set out to govern ethnic and cultural diversity. Within such narratives, the engagement of ethnic minority young people was a particular concern related to fears that they were politically disengaged and socially un-integrated (Cantle 2001). Consequently, policy-makers identified young people's active citizenship

and inclusion in democratic processes as key factors in addressing these political concerns. These were pursued through broader initiatives aimed at increasing young people's political and civic engagement (Tisdall and Davis 2004) such as: the promotion of political literacy through the introduction of Citizenship Education within the secondary school curriculum; the establishment of the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP), local youth parliaments, (ward-level) youth forums and youth-focused 'neighbourhood renewal' projects; and an emphasis on youth consultation within local democratic processes. There were also initiatives associated with the government's Community Cohesion and PVE agendas aimed particularly at engaging young Muslims (McGhee 2008).

In the context of Birmingham and Bradford, the dense networks of groups of ethnic minority voluntary and community activists became increasingly significant in the eyes of the state, as recipients of targeted funding streams and members of local partnerships and consultative forums. In Chapter 5, we discuss the ways in which ethnic minority young people have featured as participants in contemporary forms of local participatory governance, and we address the question of the extent to which such participation can be seen as constituting meaningful democratic inclusion.

A second key theme of governance practices relates to the emergence of 'global city' imaginaries (Henry et al. 2002) within local governance urban regeneration strategies, which imagine cities as nodal points in the global economy, with the local state acting as an agent of economic restructuring by seeking to connect the local to the global economy (perhaps enhancing the scope of cities to operate autonomously from central government). This was a key feature of Birmingham's urban regeneration strategy (Henry et al. 2002), which valorised Birmingham's multicultural diversity and drew on its many ethnic minorities as assets for the city's capacity to generate international trade, finance and cultural links (Parkinson 2007). Within such narratives, the youthfulness of ethnic minority populations was highlighted – both in terms of its demographic implications as well as in terms of presentational association with cultural dynamism (Parkinson 2007). In so doing, however, there were questions about the (lack of) recognition of ethnic inequalities within these restructuring initiatives. Birmingham, for instance, remains a highly unequal city, with many of its inequalities spatially concentrated in areas of ethnic minority settlement in the city. These issues of spatial governance are explored in Chapter 8.

A third theme of contemporary governance relates to the move away from multiculturalist approaches to diversity and equality to community

cohesion approaches particularly following the publication of the Cantle Report in the aftermath of the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001. This agenda emerged out of a perceived crisis of the multicultural settlement in many local areas, generating a critical stance on the part of governors with regard to what were perceived as separatist ethnically-focused governance strategies of multiculturalism, in favour of an approach that focused on locally-oriented identities and the integration of communities through the Community Cohesion agenda (McGhee 2008). As we discuss in Chapter 5, this approach was particularly at the fore of governance not only in Bradford, but also found expression in Birmingham, in community cohesion policies that were focused on the integration of young people within local civic structures.

Changing identity politics

Recent theoretical work on changing understandings of race and ethnicity is significant for our research on contemporary forms of political mobilisation – particularly as young people have featured a great deal in emerging literature on the emergence of hybrid identities and new ethnicities (Alexander 2002; Back 2002). Whilst there has been a great deal of writing on the impact of emerging gender, ethnic and sexuality politics in undermining both class and black identity politics (Modood 1994; Mercer 2000), and the rise of ethnic and cultural movements in fragmenting antiracist and black political movements (Stone 1998; Alexander 2002), there is relatively little empirical research on how these developments shape contemporary ethnic minority political mobilisations generally, or how they might (re)shape younger people's politics specifically.

As noted above, Solomos and Back (1995) referred to the significance of changing identities for political action, pointing to the fact that more black representatives were emerging in Birmingham, but there was no common outlook or ideology among them because shifting ethnic identities undercut the basis for a continued political commitment to black identity (as well as undermining the primacy of class as a basis for unified political action). They noted a lack of empirical research on the political implications of these new identities, although they did not provide a great deal of empirical evidence in their own study on this. In Chapters 4 and 6, we consider the significance of ethnicity, race and religion in shaping activists' grammars of political action.

Many (Modood 2000; Nazroo and Karlsen 2003) argue that despite the growing literature on hybrid identities and new ethnicities, group

identities have *not* dissolved. Modood (2000) argues that the claims of hybridity theorists that there are no fixed selves – but multiple, shifting and constant processes of deconstructing and reconstructing the self – are simply counter-intuitive. In fact, we often think of our identities by reference to *group* cultural identities, which are unitary and continuous, without being static or unchanging. Citing survey data, Modood suggests that whilst multiple and hybrid identities are emerging, there is also strong evidence of enduring group cultural and ethnic identification among minority ethnic groups. Modood concludes that the arguments that cultural theorists make for a decentring and reconfiguring of ethnic identities in late modern societies are not based on evidence that this is *routinely* how people think of their identities.

Other observers are uneasy with the shift in studies of race and ethnicity from a concern with the material and structural inequalities faced by racialised groups towards a concern with difference and shifting and complex identities – particularly in relation to the depoliticising consequences of this shift. Anthias (2001), for example, is critical of the lack of attention to racialised inequalities and exclusions within theories of hybrid identities, arguing that:

> the concerns of hybridity are essentially those of culture and consciousness, rather than social inequality and exclusion [consequently, the] materialist, as opposed to culturalist, bases of racist subordinations, inequalities and exclusions have been marginalised through the new hegemony of this postmodern discourse within the social sciences. (2001: 638)

In our view, the ethnic categories that underpinned mobilisations of the 1970s and 1980s have altered. Whilst mixing, diversity and cultural hybridities are evident among young people living in multicultural cities, we should not overlook the fact that in many areas, ethnic segregation continues to be a feature of urban life. This is particularly relevant to the areas in which we worked. In Birmingham, there is a high degree of spatial concentration of minority ethnic groups – who are most likely to live in the seven most deprived of the city's 41 wards. In Bradford, as noted above, the territorialisation of ethnicities and inequalities has been a key political issue in the city.

The political subjectivities among the activists in our study were intimately connected with questions of identity, but the forms these took suggest that identity politics for young people has become somewhat different to the forms that characterised earlier ethnic minority

mobilisations, particularly in the significance of the local and global and with the emergence of religious, as distinct from ethnic, identities and the significance of intersecting identities based on ethnicity, religion and gender – as we discuss in Chapter 7. Our research concurs with the emerging research on the identities of young Muslims across Europe which points to the decoupling of ethnic and religious identities among many young Muslims, with religious identities forming a more focal reference for identity and political engagement (Jacobson 1997; Bouzar 2001; Eade and Garbin 2006; Mushaben 2008; Gale and O'Toole 2009; O'Toole and Gale 2011). The political significance of ethnic and religious identities should, however, be seen in light of the policy contexts that shape interactions with the state, equalities and integration regimes and the normative discourses about ethnic, cultural and religious difference that these express. We explore these issues in Chapter 6.

Global–local politics

This understanding of identity, when connected to analysis of the impacts of globalisation, transnationalism, and the emergence of the 'network society' points to significant transformations in the political expressions of ethnicity, culture and faith in the contemporary period. A feature of much of the literature on contemporary forms of political and social action has been concerned with the impact of globalisation, and the information-communication technologies that underpin globalisation, in transforming the modes (Wieviorka 2005; McDonald 2006), targets and repertoires (Norris 2002; Bennett 2003) of political action. Fundamental to this has been the significance of the local in the ways in which global issues, organisations and movements are expressed – captured in the notion of the 'glocal' (Robertson 1994).

It is often argued that contemporary forms of action are increasingly concerned with glocal issues, facilitated by new technologies (Castells 2004) and that these have fundamentally altered the character of political and social movements (Wieviorka 2005; McDonald 2006). Eade and Garbin's (2002) study of young Bangladeshis' political activism makes clear that global connections are shaped by local contexts and our data show that activists in our sample continually made such connections. The global concerns among our activists, however, were built not simply through transnational links between localities, homelands and diasporas but were manifested through a more profound engagement with global politics and campaigns. In this sense, our data reinforce arguments made by McDonald (2006) and others that globalisation has

opened up novel modes of action, which both draw upon and extend globalised forms of communication and networking and are different not only in scale but also in *kind* from earlier modes of action. An important aspect of this development is the scope for networking and consciousness-raising afforded by globalised communication systems. For McDonald, globalisation (albeit in highly uneven ways) creates a space of flows, facilitated by network logics that engage with personal experiences linking individuals across space (although not uniformly) (2006: 32), and he argues that such changes in apprehensions of space potentially create very different ways of engaging politically. These developments underpinned the global orientations of the activists with whom we worked, which went beyond the national, transnational or diasporic connections that have characterised many ethnic minority mobilisations. We explore these issues in Chapter 8.

Conclusion

The aim of this volume to broaden conceptually the understanding of ethnic minority young people's engagement is framed by four interventions connected to social and political changes that have been underway over the last few decades: firstly, we seek to connect our study to broader literatures on shifting patterns of political participation which suggest that citizen engagement in politics is not so much declining as changing. Secondly, we address the implications of the pluralisation of the sites of governance as a consequence of the emerging significance of forms of decentred and participatory governance. Thirdly, we engage with the implications of shifting identities particularly in relation to the political significance of race, ethnicity and religion and their putative fragmentation. Finally, we pay attention to the different scales of political action in the context of, and enabled by, globalised communication systems. We suggest that the study of patterns of political participation among ethnic minority groups has been, both conceptually and empirically, insufficiently connected with these developments. In the ensuing chapters, we relate the relevance of these developments to our data on ethnic minority young people's politics. Before doing so, we outline in the next chapter their methodological implications.

3
Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

In the preceding two chapters, we set out an extensive characterisation of public debates on the political and civic participation of ethnic minority young people. In evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies of the political engagement of black and minority ethnic groups, we noted both the absence of a youth dimension to much of the research on ethnic minorities' political participation and the failure of studies of ethnic minority youth to pay heed to forms of political engagement in the contemporary period. In this respect, we argue that there is a mismatch between the extent of public concern over ethnic minority young people's political and civic engagement on the one hand, and the paucity of data sufficient to uphold these concerns empirically on the other. These critical observations form the point of departure of our research, both conceptually and in terms of our research design. In this chapter, we outline how we designed our research to enable us to move beyond the confines of existing literature and debate. In particular, we specify the methodological implications of the theoretical perspective developed in Chapter 2, arguing for the need for research engagement across a range of spheres of participation, and for a qualitative approach that would allow deeper exploration of the forms of participation in which ethnic minority young people engage. Specifically, we provide an account of how we designed our study to be sufficiently flexible to explore a number of related themes, including young people's views of and engagement with political institutions, their personal political biographies, the political issues that concerned them and their conceptions of how the local spaces and settings of their lives were implicated in political patterns and processes. This chapter sets out how broadly conceived notions of 'participation', 'politics' and

'the political' were operationalised within the study – particularly in relation to the sampling approach and the use of focus groups and interviews as the primary methods of generating our data. Here, we also explain the study's concern with understanding the significance of place in relation to young people's politics and account for the selection of Birmingham and Bradford as sites for the project's fieldwork. The theme of how sites and spaces may be constitutive of ethnic minority young people's politics introduced here is taken up more fully in Chapter 8.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the Section 'Research design', we outline our research design, setting out the research questions pursued in the project and how these emerged against the background of conceptual and data limitations evident in existing studies of youth, ethnicity and political participation; the details of our commitment to qualitative methodology and the sampling approach adopted; and the ethical and interpretive issues that emerged throughout the various stages of the research. In the Section 'The role of place and space', we give necessary background information on Birmingham and Bradford as the field study sites of the research, focusing on the key spatial and demographic considerations underpinning our work in the two areas. Finally, in the Section on 'The sample', we provide a detailed description of our sample, in terms of the range of groups included, and our respondents' self-ascribed ethnicity, age, gender and occupation.

Research design

Research questions: the breadth of 'the political'

As we discussed in Chapter 2, one consequence of the tendency to view young people as objects of political concern rather than as political subjects in their own right has been the neglect of the varied ways in which young people are politically active, often beyond the political mainstream. Correspondingly, there has been little attention paid to the routes and pathways young people – including those of ethnic minority heritage – have pursued into different forms of participation and the issues and concerns that have motivated them in doing so. In light of these observations, from the outset our research took a broad view of participation, encompassing attitudes and engagement expressed at a variety of levels, including community engagement, local area-based activity, national politics, international politics and single-issue campaign involvement. As we discussed in Chapter 2, our concern with including a focus on political engagement across these levels arose from our observations on the diverse range of democratic practices that have

been noted by studies of ethnic minority political mobilisations. In particular, these have drawn attention to the significance of local and community politics as sites of activism. In addition, we noted the significance of more fluid, non-institutional political engagement among citizens more generally, and young people in particular, that have focused attention on the rise of single issue campaigns. Thus, it was necessary to sample across a range of types of groups to capture these diverse forms of activism. As we suggested in Chapter 2, there has also been a developing interest in studies of political participation in forms of everyday and lifestyle activism that are typically pursued outside of the settings of groups and institutions, and our research sought to explore these in the context of individual interviews where we explored activists' political engagements within and outside of the groups in which we encountered them. As we discuss in some detail in Chapter 4, it is crucial to note that engagement in activities corresponding to these various spheres and repertoires was not necessarily discrete or isolated – in fact, many of our participants were active in several of them simultaneously.

Our attempt to broaden, conceptually and empirically, our approach to understanding 'the political' was a critical response to often narrow definitions of political participation (and see Marsh et al. 2007). As we noted in Chapter 1, the field of politics is often equated to mainstream institutional engagement and particularly to electoral participation. In terms of young people's political engagement, whilst electoral data show that young people tend to have lower turnout rates than older cohorts, analyses have been too hasty in assuming that lower turnouts reflect 'political apathy'. Setting out to interrogate this assumption entailed widening the range of participatory fields to enable us to capture how ethnic minority young people are politically active, both within and beyond the political mainstream. This entailed the formulation of a series of questions which guided us throughout each stage of the research, which addressed the following concerns:

1. In which spheres and in which particular ways are ethnic minority young people politically engaged?
2. What motivates ethnic minority young people to participate and how do they view their experiences of participation?
3. What are their views of mainstream political institutions and processes?
4. What political issues concern them?
5. What are their views of their local areas?
6. How do they view initiatives to democratically engage ethnic minority young people?

In addition to these exploratory questions were analytical ones concerning how our respondents' engagement in particular spheres of participation connected with their political perspectives, and in turn, how these perspectives were shaped by their biographies and experiences. Related to this, our research was in part guided by the working hypothesis that much of the engagement of ethnic minority young people in alternative spheres of participation may well reflect disaffection with and suspicion of mainstream political institutions. The failure of existing studies to address this we argue, constitutes an oversight with conceptual, methodological and normative implications which our research set out to redress.

Qualitative methodology

On account of the data considerations discussed in Chapter 1, and specifically, the lack of datasets on political participation that might enable disaggregation by youth and ethnicity, the research on which this book is based was concerned with the generation of primary empirical research. However, given the often limited conceptualisation of participation and focus on non-participation in the various crisis narratives that were discussed in Chapter 1, our methodology was devised to explore a broadened view of participation and 'the political', and the ways in which these are construed by young people themselves. These concerns drew us to adopt a qualitative methodology that would allow us to explore political action and engagement and the meanings ascribed to them. In this way our aim was, following the central tenet of Clifford Geertz's *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), to develop a 'thick description' of ethnic minority young people's political engagement. To facilitate this, we adopted a two-stage strategy involving initial use of focus groups followed by individual, semi-structured interviews with focus group participants.

Sampling approach

In order to construct a sample of research participants from across a broad range of types and spheres of political engagement we undertook an initial mapping exercise in Birmingham and Bradford, focusing on different participatory groups comprised of or working with ethnic minority young people. This mapping exercise was initially desk-based, involving web-research and a telephone survey with a range of groups, in which we asked questions about the groups' focus, activities, membership and funding. This gave us an overview of a range of participatory groups in the two cities, as well as contacts to follow up with people we could invite to participate in focus groups and interviews. We also contacted

some groups and organisations who were not primarily concerned with political activism, in order to get a diverse view of ethnic minority young people's political interest and engagement (i.e. to include those we knew to be active and politically interested as well as those who might not be necessarily). The results of this exercise indicated several issues needing to be taken into account in our sampling, including a large range and variety of (often state-sponsored) youth participatory initiatives, differences in the relationship between youth participatory projects and the local Council, and different opportunities and constraints operating upon youth groups dependent on particular types of funding streams.

To take account of these issues, we developed a heuristic classification of the various participatory groups, to include the different types of activities that young people are engaged in, the differing relationships between groups of activists and the state and the impact of funding on activities. We classified groups according to whether they were:

- autonomous from, or established by, the State;
- financially independent of the State or receiving State funding;
- an identity, interest or ideologically based organisation;
- focused on community, local, city, national or international political concerns;
- youth focused/led group or cross-generational;
- operating in the mainstream, alternative or transitional public sphere.

Table 3.6 below sets out the selection and profiles of groups according to this classification.

Focus groups

Once initial contact had been made with selected groups and access negotiations had been undertaken, the next stage of the fieldwork was to convene a focus group. Focus groups are an increasingly important data collection technique in the social sciences because of the opportunities they afford to capture respondents' views as social and discursive interactions between respondents within a social context, rather than simply between the respondent and the interviewer (Kitzinger 1995; Bryman 2004). In terms of the concerns that guided our research, focus groups were important in conceptual and empirical terms since one of our objectives was to assess the contextual group dynamics on patterns and experiences of participation. This was most important in instances where organisational role-modelling and 'political' socialisation were integral aspects of the work of particular groups, an issue we develop

in some detail in Chapter 7. The focus group discussions enabled us to explore the dynamics between young people *in situ*, and in the majority of cases, this contextualisation of the research process extended to the sites at which our respondents ordinarily met in the course of their activities. For completeness, we also undertook research with activists whose political activities were configured in terms of network engagement and hence multi-sited. This theme is addressed in more depth in Chapter 8. The focus groups usually took the form of a group discussion with between 4 and 12 people about the group's activities, membership, experiences and reflections. This was followed by an exploration of the group members' perspectives on mainstream political institutions and processes, their perceptions of the local state, and wider political issues. The discussion of political issues was facilitated by the distribution of 'issue-cards', whereby groups were shown a series of cards identifying a range of political topics and concerns and asked to discuss these, specifying issues they considered to be most important. The issues pre-identified by the researchers included health, crime, education, personal safety/security, taxation, Europe, employment, the Iraq War, the environment, policing, immigration, local spaces and 'having a say'. To avoid constraining this aspect of the discussion to researcher-led topics, group participants were also given blank cards with which they could identify issues that they considered important but which had not been included in our initial list. We discuss salient instances in which respondents availed themselves of this opportunity in subsequent chapters. The focus of this exercise was less on the issues cards *per se* than on the discussions that took place around them.

In the interest of comparability, we used standardised question modules and 'issue cards' in each of the focus groups. However, we took an iterative approach to the group discussions with participants, in recognition of the differences in the nature, if not necessarily extent, of political interest and activism between the participant and activist groups amongst our respondents. Explicitly political interests were not necessarily intrinsic to some of the participant groups' identities or activities. Nevertheless, as an aspect of our general concern to correct for the narrowness of existing research on political identity formation and engagement, it was an important part of our research to explore the perspectives of participants as well as more intensively engaged political activists. With these considerations, we adjusted the format of the focus groups in such a way as to initiate politically-oriented discussion. Specifically, we adopted an inductive approach that built outwards from discussion of the activities of the group (whether they were social, recreational, educational, and so

on), and then used images of the local areas/city to stimulate discussion of respondents' experiences of neighbourhood and local spaces and service provision. From here, focus groups went on to a discussion framed around the same 'issue-cards' used with the activist respondents.

Follow-up individual interviews

The focus groups were followed up by individual in-depth interviews with the focus group participants. Undertaking individual interviews after the focus groups served a number of practical and substantive purposes. In practical terms, it meant that the research rapport and trust that in most cases had been established through the focus groups provided a strong basis on which to build in the subsequent interview discussions. The need to renegotiate relations of trust at the outset of the interviews did not of course evaporate, but the fact that these relations could be reinvigorated rather than developed afresh facilitated the introduction and flow of the individual-level questions. Whilst we again used standardised modules of questions in the individual interviews, we also tailored the individual interview schedule in each case by referring back to topics raised in the group discussion, both by the focus group as a whole, and where relevant, by the respective individual member of the group. This, coupled with the continuation of researcher–interviewer rapport, meant that the individual interviews were able to be much more exploratory and probing than would otherwise have been the case if we had either relied on interviews alone or not interlinked the focus groups and follow-up interviews so closely. The principle aim of these interviews, then, was to single out sets of more personal reflections on the respondents' participation and political interest – in relation to their experiences within the group in which we encountered them, in other groups, and non-group-based political repertoires in order to permit exploration of everyday, 'subpolitical' forms of action that we outlined in Chapter 2. In particular, we wanted to know how and why people became activists or participants (where appropriate), the range of activities in which they participated, their views of their local areas, the range of issues that concerned them and how they saw their political interests and participation developing in future. Additionally, in the case of activists, we were able to hone in on a set of biographical themes, including their initial motivations for political involvement, the extent of their overlapping engagement in other spheres of political activity and their anticipated political trajectories. The combination of focus groups and interviews allowed us to examine interactions between

individual and group level experiences of participation. We recognise, however, that this strategy, whilst appealing for the reasons outlined here, is not without its drawbacks, and these we discuss in the analysis section below.

Ethical and analytical considerations

On account of the objective of our research to overcome the discursive silences surrounding the political subjectivities of ethnic minority young people, it is important that we set out here how we approached giving these subjectivities voice, and in turn, how we established and negotiated our own positionality as researchers throughout the various stages of the project. Over the course of the project, interviews and focus groups were undertaken by three academic researchers over the age of 30 and from a variety of backgrounds, including a female of white Irish heritage and two males, one of white English and another of British Asian Sikh heritage. This meant that whilst our relatively greater age and positions of empowerment as members of the academic establishment were a constant source of difference in all research settings, there were a variety of dimensions of social identity and corresponding sources of social similarity and difference at play in the relationships forged with respondents, which needed to be sensitively and reflexively considered as the research unfolded.

The relationship forged between researchers and respondents as they engage in shaping and interpreting the social meanings that constitute qualitative research data is the subject of an extensive methodological literature, and within this, the specific issues that tend to emerge in research encounters taking place across various categories of 'difference' constitutes an important focus (Gunaratnam 2003). Following the pioneering work of feminist researchers in the 1980s and 1990s, the literature in this area has achieved a broad consensus that scientific objectivity and detachment in research are illusory and unattainable goals, and that there is a need for sensitive negotiations to take place where particular axes of difference come into play during research processes (Oakley 1981). However, there is a wide disparity, as well as considerable contradiction, in the views espoused concerning how such negotiations are best approached. A particular focus of controversy in this context, and one debated with especial fiat in the context of research on religion, has been the 'insider/outsider' issue, denoting whether researchers share backgrounds, beliefs or commitments in common with their research respondents (Headland et al. 1990; Arweck and Stringer 2002; Ferber 2006).

One strategy for addressing the 'insider/outsider' question which initially found favour in feminist research, and which has been adopted by many researchers in the 'race' and ethnicity field, is that of seeking to match the identities of researcher and respondent according to the identity categories of interest to the research (Papadopoulos and Lees 2002). This approach functions on the assertion that close correspondence between the identities of interviewers and respondents – for example, in terms of gender, ethnicity or class – helps reduce the power differential between researcher and researched, and allows the researcher to have 'fore-understanding' of the issues respondents may face (Papadopoulos and Lees 2002). However, as Gunaratnam notes (2003: 82–86), matching practices are hampered by a number of problems, which may compound rather than overcome the political and ethical complexities of undertaking research on themes relating to social identity and difference. As Gunaratnam points out (2003: 81), such practices risk contributing to the reification of the categories that are chosen to form the basis of 'matching', since in being singled out for special treatment, the inherent relationship of these categories to other facets of the identities of research respondents may become distorted or submerged during the research encounter, and hence in the subsequent analysis. As Islam's (1999) reflections on her experience of being positioned as an insider researcher highlight, the distinction between insider and outsider is often an unstable one, given the multiple positionings that can come into play not just from one interview to another but over the course of a single research encounter (and see Tang 2002).

In our research, we acknowledged these issues as part of a reflexive approach to interviewing which placed overall stress on establishing one-to-one rapport and terms of trust with our research participants, whilst considering shared and different characteristics carefully over the course of the research encounters. In certain situations, gender matching practices were adopted where we judged this to be the most effective way of establishing a relaxed and supportive environment for interviews to take place, and in particular, whereby interviews with Muslim women were sometimes, although not exclusively, undertaken by the female member of the team. This strategy was offered particularly for groups who expressed a concern with the possibilities for women-only spaces as enabling of women's public, social or educational participation. Whilst this offer was appreciated by some respondents, it was regarded as unnecessary by others. The Saheli group, for instance, as we discuss in Chapter 7, placed a strong

emphasis on empowering young, often Muslim, women to act in the public domain, and their members tended to approach involvement in the research as an extension of their participatory activities – such that interviews with a male researcher were readily agreed to, and the data generated in these encounters were not more muted or less revelatory than those conducted by the female researcher. This matching strategy was applied contextually rather than comprehensively and was by definition incomplete: the female member of the research team is white and non-Muslim, for example. The interval between the focus group and subsequent individual interviews offered us an invaluable opportunity to reflect on the inter-subjective dynamics as well as substantive themes that emerged in the focus group, and to prepare our approach to individual interviewing. Our use of matching then was not premised on the *a priori* assumption that seeking to reduce social distance along selected dimensions of 'difference' necessarily transcends the politics of researching across difference or ensures greater data quality or validity.

In most instances we did not apply any matching strategy in interviews. Moreover, the focus groups, which in each case constituted our first fieldwork encounter with a given group of respondents, were always conducted by two members of the research team, meaning that in this aspect of the research, there were always a variety of gender and inter-ethnic relationships coming into play, both between the research team and the respondents, and not infrequently among the respondents themselves. Our approach was premised on developing rapport and trust with respondents, with a view to establishing discursive and ethical, rather than ascriptive or cultural, commonality. Important to this, was establishing transparency about our research objectives and our corresponding normative commitment to understanding respondents' political views and engagements on their own terms. This frequently entailed lengthy though generative discussions at the opening of focus groups, in which respondents would interrogate the research team about the project's aims and objectives.

Perhaps the most notable example of how these opening discussions would take shape was the focus group with the BKYP (discussed in detail in Chapter 5), in which the MYPs wished to ascertain whether our desire to undertake research with them was a direct response to the sensationalism surrounding the urban disorders that had taken place some years before. This, then, was a situation in which prevailing constructions of ethnic minority young people as objects rather than subjects of political debates and processes became an inherent part of the politics of the

research itself. Our response to this concern entailed clarifying with the group that our research aims had the critical purpose of soliciting their views regarding the efficacy of state-driven political procedures focusing on young people. Consequently, the focus group and subsequent individual interviews were lively and insightful, premised upon a shared ethical understanding that we and the participants were able to establish at the start of the process.

Additionally, and significantly, many respondents approached the research encounters as opportunities to communicate their political perspectives and experiences to wider audiences, thus in many ways, their participation in the study was consonant with their activism. The public facing nature of the groups also informed our decision (in consultation with the groups) to name them in our discussion of the findings, given the significance of the specificities of the groups' characteristics and aims and the localities in which they were active. We nevertheless offered, and agreed with our respondents, to maintain anonymity for individuals within the groups in all our reporting.

The role of place and space

From the outset, the project set out to adopt a multi-sited approach to fieldwork, on account of the empirical and analytical advantages such an approach offers. As we have seen in Chapter 2, there is a significant body of literature that reveals the historical importance of the local scale for the political engagement of ethnic minorities (Ben-Tovim 1986; Solomos and Ball 1990; Gilroy 1991). Working in two locations offered us the opportunity to extend the insights of this earlier research, in that comparative case-study work allowed specific local issues and dynamics to emerge, revealing how localities both enable and constrain the political participation of ethnic minority young people. As a result, the book compares findings from across the two cities throughout in order to reflect on the significance of specific themes and issues salient to local contexts. Some examples include the comparison of the cities' youth parliaments in Chapter 5, which reveals the divergent models of governmental youth engagement programmes that these structures represent; the analysis of gender-focused organisations in Chapter 7 is developed through tracing out the analogies and contrasts between organisations situated in the two locations, and the discussion in Chapter 8 is framed explicitly around the concepts of location, place and scale as constitutive elements of ethnic minority young people's politics. It is important to flag that we were conducting our research at a time when community

cohesion, localism and urban regeneration strategies were high on the agendas of local authorities. Whilst concerns about young Muslims were evident, the development and implementation of the government's counter-terrorism Prevent agenda was not yet in place in the two cities – although during the course of our fieldwork, the events of 7/7 occurred, with the consequence that young people in both cities were concerned about the potential impact of these events for local political priorities and media representations of Muslims and Islam, and in some cases, these events prompted particular political responses among young people. The Prevent agenda was launched in 2007–2008, and was implemented in Birmingham through a range of Pathfinder projects – but Bradford Council initially refused to accept Prevent funding because it regarded its implementation in the city as incompatible with its focus on achieving 'community cohesion' (O'Toole et al 2013) – an agenda whose significance we discuss further in Chapter 5.

A key consideration for us in our selection of Birmingham and Bradford was that these cities offered clear points of similarity and difference in terms of their demographic, political and economic profiles, which enabled exploration of the significance of local issues and a contextualised understanding of young people's participation. In particular, there are differences in historical trajectories followed by the two cities in terms of their experiences of economic change and restructuring. Both cities have extensive industrial pasts, with which the experiences of ethnic minority groups are closely intertwined. However, in recent decades, following the large-scale collapse of heavy industry, the two cities have diverged in significant ways. Whilst Birmingham has witnessed an extensive reorientation of its economic base towards service sector production, Bradford continues to experience comparative economic marginalisation. Whilst the dynamics of economic change are not directly explored in the research, they clearly underlie important differences in the experiences and opportunities of ethnic minority young people.

Of more immediate significance for our research though is the fact that, whilst they differ considerably in their respective sizes, these two cities share key demographic characteristics in common, in the sense that overall, ethnic minority groups in each area make up significant proportions of the local population. As shown in Table 3.1, the 2001 Census revealed that black and minority ethnic groups constituted 29.6% of a population of slightly less than 1 million in Birmingham, and 21.7% of a population of approximately half a million in Bradford. In both cases, as is also shown in Table 3.1, these proportions were significantly greater than in the overall population of England, of which minority

Table 3.1 Ethnic groups as proportions of the population: Birmingham, Bradford and England

Ethnic group	Birmingham		Bradford		England	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
White	687,420	70.4	366,038	78.3	44,679,361	90.9
Mixed	27,915	2.9	6,996	1.5	643,373	1.3
Indian	55,692	5.7	12,479	2.7	1,028,546	2.1
Pakistani	104,027	10.6	67,977	14.5	706,539	1.4
Bangladeshi	20,889	2.1	4,953	1.1	275,394	0.6
Other Asian	10,111	1.0	2,971	0.6	237,810	0.5
Black Caribbean	47,819	4.9	3,062	0.7	561,246	1.1
Black African	6,195	0.6	987	0.2	475,938	1.0
Black Other	5,796	0.6	321	0.1	95,324	0.2
Chinese	5,111	0.5	885	0.2	220,681	0.4
Other Ethnic Gp	6,126	0.6	1,035	0.2	214,619	0.4
All BME groups	289,681	29.6	101,666	21.7	4,459,470	9.1
Totals	977,101	100	467,704	100	49,138,831	100

Source: 2001 Census (Table KS006).

groups together comprised slightly more than 9% in 2001. Within these city totals, there are some important variations in the relative presence of different groups. The most important of these is that Birmingham is home to a large Black Caribbean population, who made up nearly 5% of the overall population, whilst in Bradford, people of Black Caribbean heritage made up less than 1% of the population in 2001. Nevertheless, it is also the case that both cities are comparable in terms of their representation of people of different British Asian heritages: both cities, for example, have sizeable Pakistani and Indian communities. More recent 2011 Census data indicate some continuities and changes to these patterns, such as an expansion in the Pakistani populations, alongside increased ethnic diversity, in both cities. Nevertheless, we highlight the salient characteristics of ethnicity in the cities based on the 2001 Census data, given our fieldwork was conducted over the period 2004–2007.

Whilst the design of the project was primarily framed in terms of the intersections of youth and ethnicity, on account of the generally increasing salience of religion as a facet of minority group identity in the UK and elsewhere, the issue of how religious group membership and identification animated political engagement came to occupy a prominent position within the research. This theme is addressed in detail in Chapters 6 and 8, but we note here that the significance of religion is closely linked to our decision to work in Birmingham and Bradford and the characteristics of the minority groups we encountered

Table 3.2 Religious affiliation by ethnic group in Birmingham

Ethnic group	Religion										
	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Any other religion	No religion	Religion not stated	Total	*Base*
White	75.2	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.2	15.1	8.4	100	*687406*
British	74.9	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.2	15.7	8.4	100	*641345*
Irish	88.8	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	3.2	7.6	100	*31467*
Other White	61.0	0.3	0.1	1.4	10.8	0.2	0.5	15.1	10.6	100	*14594*
Mixed	51.7	0.3	0.4	0.2	10.1	0.5	0.4	23.9	12.5	100	*27946*
White and Black Caribbean	61.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.4	24.0	12.9	100	*15644*
White and Black African	51.8	0.2	0.3	0.4	11.9	0.0	0.3	22.1	12.9	100	*1446*
White and Asian	34.3	0.4	1.3	0.2	27.4	1.5	0.3	24.2	10.4	100	*6307*
Other Mixed	42.1	0.7	0.6	0.5	16.9	0.6	0.7	24.0	14.0	100	*4549*
Asian	1.2	0.2	9.9	0.0	67.4	14.7	0.2	0.6	5.7	100	*190687*
Indian	3.0	0.4	32.7	0.0	8.9	47.9	0.6	1.4	5.0	100	*55749*
Pakistani	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	93.7	0.1	0.0	0.2	5.8	100	*104017*
Bangladeshi	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	92.7	0.0	0.0	0.3	6.4	100	*20835*
Other Asian	4.1	1.4	6.4	0.1	67.1	12.5	0.4	1.8	6.3	100	*10086*
Black/Black British	69.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	4.0	0.1	0.8	11.2	14.4	100	*59832*
Black Caribbean	72.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.8	11.6	14.8	100	*47831*
Black African	54.2	0.1	0.2	0.0	29.6	0.3	0.8	4.5	10.1	100	*6207*
Other Black	63.7	0.1	0.1	0.0	4.1	0.1	1.0	15.3	15.6	100	*5794*
Chinese/other ethnic group	22.0	15.2	0.4	0.1	23.5	0.3	0.6	28.3	9.5	100	*11215*
Chinese	16.5	18.3	0.1	0.0	0.6	0.1	0.8	52.6	11.1	100	*5106*
Other ethnic group	26.6	12.7	0.6	0.2	42.6	0.6	0.4	8.0	8.2	100	*6109*
Base	*577783*	*2977*	*19358*	*2342*	*140033*	*28593*	*2500*	*121541*	*81959*		*977086*

Source: 2001 Census (Table ST104).

in each setting. The populations of both Birmingham and Bradford are religiously diverse, and most importantly, both cities have a sizeable Muslim presence, being second and third to London respectively in terms of their shares of the British Muslim population (Gale and Hopkins, 2009: 8).

The link between ethnicity and religion as revealed by the 2001 Census is clearly shown for the two cities in Tables 3.2 and 3.3. We noted above that in both Birmingham and Bradford, people of British Asian heritage constitute large sectors of the local population. As shown in Tables 3.2 and 3.3, we see that a significant proportion of those who identified themselves as being of 'Asian' heritage in the Census also identified as Muslims: 67.4% of Asians in Birmingham and 80.6% in Bradford were Muslims.

A further factor common to both cities, which is important to the focus of this study, is the youthfulness of the minority ethnic groups in each area relative to the wider population. Thus, members of these groups constitute much larger proportions of the population aged between 16 and 24 (the target age group for the research) than of the population as a whole. As shown in Table 3.4, in Birmingham at the time of the 2001 Census, whilst minority ethnic groups constituted 29.6% of the total population, their combined share of the 16- to 24-year-old cohort was 38%. Similarly, in Bradford, whilst minority ethnic groups made up 21.7% of the population as a whole, their share of the 16- to 24-year-old cohort was 34%. This demographic factor is of considerable substantive importance, in that it clearly indicates that the ways in which institutions in both cities respond to issues relating to young people on the one hand and to ethnic minorities on the other are likely to become more significant in the future.

A further point of similarity between the two cities concerns the pattern of concentration of the principle minority ethnic groups in inner urban wards. It is important not to exaggerate the extent of these concentration patterns or to mischaracterise their meaning. Against the popular perception that Britain has been 'sleepwalking to segregation' in recent years (Phillips 2005), detailed analyses based on census counts and internal migration data have shown irrefutably that in both cities, segregation for all population groups fell between 1991 and 2001 (see Simpson 2004 for Bradford and Gale 2013 for Birmingham). Nevertheless, it continues to be the case that segregation levels, particularly of the Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups, have remained consistently high. Even more conspicuously, the concentration patterns of minority ethnic groups strongly coincide with the geography of socio-economic deprivation in each district. As revealed in Table 3.5, with the

Table 3.3 Religious affiliation by ethnic group in Bradford

Ethnic group	Religion										
	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Any other religion	No religion	Religion not stated	Total	*Base*
White	74.9	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.2	16.2	7.9	100	*366043*
British	74.9	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.2	16.4	7.9	100	*355684*
Irish	84.2	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.7	6.2	8.2	100	*3480*
Other White	71.6	0.2	0.0	0.6	6.3	0.1	0.6	11.8	8.7	100	*6879*
Mixed	43.5	0.3	0.5	0.2	20.7	0.5	0.4	21.1	12.8	100	*6938*
White and Black Caribbean	62.1	0.3	0.1	0.0	2.9	0.0	0.3	23.1	11.1	100	*2611*
White and Black African	51.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7	0.0	0.7	15.4	15.4	100	*448*
White and Asian	26.9	0.3	0.8	0.1	36.5	0.8	0.4	21.5	12.8	100	*2927*
Other Mixed	39.4	0.3	0.8	1.5	22.9	1.3	0.3	17.5	16.0	100	*952*
Asian	0.4	0.1	4.9	0.0	80.6	5.2	0.1	0.3	8.4	100	*88400*
Indian	1.4	0.1	33.5	0.0	23.1	35.2	0.3	1.1	5.3	100	*12504*
Pakistani	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	90.7	0.0	0.0	0.2	8.9	100	*67994*
Bangladeshi	0.1	0.3	0.9	0.1	89.4	0.1	0.0	0.2	9.1	100	*4970*
Other Asian	2.6	0.5	3.3	0.0	78.3	5.9	0.2	1.5	7.6	100	*2932*
Black/Black British	71.3	0.3	0.4	0.1	5.0	0.1	0.8	8.3	13.7	100	*4340*
Black Caribbean	73.6	0.3	0.3	0.2	1.0	0.1	0.9	9.7	13.9	100	*3040*
Black African	69.6	0.0	0.3	0.0	14.7	0.3	0.3	3.7	11.0	100	*971*
Other Black	55.3	0.9	0.9	0.0	13.4	0.0	0.9	8.8	19.8	100	*329*
Chinese/other ethnic group	21.6	8.0	0.2	0.2	27.4	0.7	0.8	31.9	9.2	100	*1957*
Chinese	19.0	10.9	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.9	59.4	8.4	100	*896*
Other ethnic group	23.8	5.5	0.3	0.3	49.4	1.3	0.7	8.8	10.0	100	*1061*
Base	*281236*	*539*	*4461*	*358*	*75188*	*4752*	*997*	*62226*	*37921*		*467678*

Source: 2001 Census (Table ST104).

Table 3.4 Black and minority ethnic groups as proportions of 16- to 24-year-old and total populations in Birmingham and Bradford

City	BME groups as proportion of total population		BME groups as proportion of 16- to 24-year-old cohort	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Birmingham	289,681	29.6	51,049	38.5
Bradford	101,666	21.7	19,826	34.0

Source: 2001 Census (Table ST101).

exception of the Chinese population in Birmingham, the proportions of minority ethnic groups in both cities who are concentrated in areas within the highest quintile of socio-economic deprivation considerably exceed the proportion of the majority white population who live in such areas. Most notably, approximately 90% of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in both Birmingham and Bradford live in areas experiencing the highest levels of deprivation. Importantly, these patterns of ethnic group concentration and their linkage to relative material hardship were an important conditioning factor in the activism of the young people who participated in our research, as we discuss in the ensuing chapters.

Aside from these demographic considerations, a variety of other factors make Birmingham and Bradford key sites in which to examine ethnic minority young people's political participation. As mentioned earlier, a combination of social and institutional processes have given increasing prominence to local (and particularly urban) contexts in political processes and decision-making, giving additional importance to questions over how local spatial and political issues interrelate in different areas. It is clear, for instance, that whilst the local authorities in Birmingham and Bradford both aimed to celebrate the ethnic diversity of their local populations, they also have distinctive trajectories in terms of the strategies they developed for engaging with ethnic minority groups in their areas. In Birmingham, from the mid-1980s, much of the focus was on developing different models of 'group representation', with individual representatives being required to represent the interests of entire 'communities' (O'Toole et al 2013). As some commentators observed (BRAP 2004: 7–8), this model encountered significant difficulties, not least because different sectors of ethnic minority groups – particularly women and young people – were excluded from effective participation in local decision-making and that has been a focus for many engagement initiatives in the city. In Bradford, in the wake of the riots of 2001 and the

Table 3.5 Ethnic group concentrations in Birmingham and Bradford by ward-level deprivation

City	**Ethnic group**										
Birmingham											
Deprivation quintile	White	Mixed ethnic	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Other Asian	Black Caribbean	Black African	Other Black	Chinese	Other ethnic group
1 (lowest)	4.0	1.0	1.1	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.8	0.7
2	8.3	2.8	2.2	0.3	0.3	1.3	1.4	2.0	1.1	4.6	1.9
3	2.6	1.9	3.1	0.5	0.7	1.2	3.4	1.5	3.7	2.5	1.2
4	33.7	24.2	21.6	9.2	5.7	20.7	15.1	25.4	14.8	45.5	26.0
5 (highest)	51.4	70.2	72.0	89.8	93.3	76.3	79.7	70.5	80.2	46.7	70.2
Total	*100*	*100.1*	*100*	*100*	*100.1*	*100*	*99.9*	*100*	*100*	*100.1*	*100*
Bradford											
Deprivation Quintile	White	Mixed ethnic	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Other Asian	Black Caribbean	Black African	Other Black	Chinese	Other ethnic group
1 (lowest)	8.0	2.7	0.8	0.1	0.3	0.9	0.8	2.1	1.9	4.7	2.1
2	16.6	6.0	2.1	0.5	0.3	2.2	2.7	3.0	2.8	8.0	4.4
3	18.9	13.7	14.6	4.4	4.4	8.2	12.2	8.7	10.3	13.4	12.9
4	21.5	18.6	12.8	4.9	3.6	9.6	15.5	12.6	21.5	12.7	11.2
5 (highest)	35.0	59.0	69.7	90.1	91.3	79.1	68.7	73.6	63.6	61.1	69.4
Total	*100*	*100*	*100*	*100*	*99.9*	*100*	*99.9*	*100*	*100.1*	*99.9*	*100*

Source: 2001 Census (Table ST104 and Carstairs scores).

resulting 'Bradford Race Review', there were local governmental initiatives to promote inter-group relationships, oriented around the notion of 'community cohesion'. Inherent to these initiatives was an emphasis upon youth, and the funding of area-based projects that aimed to engage young people in urban regeneration. In both cities, then, there were locally specific political and institutional contexts that formed an important part of the terrain on which ethnic minority young people politically engaged.

In summary, notwithstanding some salient differences between Birmingham and Bradford, there are significant issues relating to ethnic diversity and race equality in both cities, although one concern of the research was to interrogate differences in the way these are viewed in the two locations. As we discuss in detail in Chapter 5, the 'community cohesion' approach was relatively more prominent in Bradford than in Birmingham, following the conclusions of the reports by Ouseley (2001), Cantle (2001) and Denham (2002) into the disturbances of the summer of 2001. In contrast, Birmingham is often portrayed as a thriving multicultural city, but in ways that many in Birmingham – including many of our respondents – concede has been problematic.

The sample

Having outlined our approach to research design above, the remainder of the chapter sets out the detailed characteristics of the research sample providing a reference point for the analysis presented in the ensuing chapters. Following our conceptualisation of the range of forms of political participation, and the issues relating to the establishment and funding of groups with youth membership and/or leadership, Table 3.6 sets out the range of groups and organisations we gained access to, showing how these reflect the different types of groups covered in our research in relation to their focus, and whether funded by or autonomous from the local state. In relation to the demographic characteristics of our research participants in each place, we pay particular attention here to the self-ascribed ethnicity and/or religion, gender, age and occupation of our respondents.

The research involved the participation of 76 individuals in the two cities, who identified themselves as belonging to a variety of different heritages and backgrounds. In addition, we conducted a pilot focus group with a small group of African Caribbean women students from a local Further Education college. Rather than using the categories of the census, we asked participants to self-identify their ethnicity. The range of

Table 3.6 Types of groups included in the research

Birmingham	Bradford
Activist groups	
Birmingham YPP • City-wide, self-selecting youth parliament • 13–18 age range, mixed gender and ethnicity • State-funded, formally organised and run by Youth Services • Mainstream public sphere	**BKYP** • City-wide, elected youth parliament • 11–21 age range, mixed gender and ethnicity • State-funded, formally organised and run by Youth Services • Mainstream public sphere
Saheli • Women's community group, established to provide women with a 'space of their own' • Works significantly, but not exclusively, with Muslim (Pakistani and Yemeni) women • Run by and for women, with youth membership and leadership • Accesses mixed funding sources, including state funding, but autonomous from the state • Community focused, alternative public sphere, but operates as a portal to wider, mainstream political engagement	**Bradford Study and Support Network (BSSN)** • Voluntary organisation providing a range of educational, social and recreational provisions for women and BME groups • Activities include provision of educational opportunities for South Asian young women in a 'women-only' environment • Accesses mixed funding sources, including state and European funding, but independent of the state • Community focused, alternative public sphere
MJM • Self-organised youth group set up to address issues facing Muslim (and other) local communities and in relation to international issues • Youth membership and leadership • Autonomous from the state and does not seek state funding • Protest and alternative public sphere politics	**West Bowling Youth Initiative (WBYI)** • Youth initiative, engaged in community self-help, urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal • Works significantly with Muslim young men to develop their potential to act as community and youth activists and advocates • Youth worker led, with a focus on developing youth leaders from its youth membership

- Accesses a range of funding, including state funding, autonomous from the state
- Community focused, alternative public sphere, but operates as a portal to wider, mainstream political engagement

Young Disciples
- Youth group working with 'hard to reach' young people, to inform 'the public and government agencies on gang culture' and challenge 'the boundaries of local and governmental action'
- Works significantly with African-Caribbean and Bangladeshi young men and women
- Accesses a range of funding, including state funding, but is autonomous from the state
- Alternative public sphere, with an objective to influence mainstream political institutions

MAPA (McMillan Adventure Playground Association)
- A voluntary group providing music and educational activities, with the aim of encouraging positive identities and celebrating achievement among a multi-ethnic group of young people
- Originally a primarily African-Caribbean group, it has gone on to work with African-Caribbean and Pakistani young men and women, with increasing numbers of young people from newly settled migrant groups
- Accesses state funding, but autonomous from the state
- Alternative public sphere

Participant groups

Washwood Heath Youth Inclusion Project
- A programme aimed at reducing truancy and exclusion among young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- Works significantly with Pakistani, Yemeni and Somali young people
- State-funded (Youth Justice Board) initiative, with inter-agency support

Concord Centre
- A centre providing support and educational facilities for young people, predominantly of South Asian heritage
- Funded and managed by Youth Services

Cop Shop
- A centre for young people providing access to sports, music and computing facilities
- Works significantly with African-Caribbean and Pakistani young people
- Funded and managed by Youth Services

Manningham youth group
- User group who access a local young men's initiative for training and mentoring activities
- Works predominantly with young people of Pakistani Muslim heritage
- Voluntary group with local state funding

Table 3.7 Self-ascribed ethnicity of research participants

Self-ascribed ethnicity	Number	Self-ascribed ethnicity	Number
Pakistani	19	Asian Pakistani	1
British Pakistani	6	Kashmiri	1
Muslim	4	Mirpuri	1
British Asian	3	Bengali	1
Indian	3	Somali	1
Yemeni	3	British Black Asian	1
Bangladeshi	3	British Mixed Black and White	1
Black Caribbean	3	Quarter-cast Caribbean Mix	1
Black	3	Mixed Caribbean White	1
Asian	2	West Indian	1
Black British	2	British Muslim (Pakistani)	1
Caribbean	2	Muslim (British)	1
Afro-Caribbean	2	Black African descent	1
White Asian	1	Mixed race	1
Indian (Sikh)	1	Pakistani/Kashmiri	1
Asian British Pakistani	1	*Undisclosed*	*3*

responses was quite varied, as indicated in Table 3.7. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that Pakistanis constitute the largest minority group in both cities, respondents identifying themselves as of Pakistani or a hybrid British Pakistani heritage (with some claiming more localised Mirpuri or Kashmiri identities) were the most numerous within the sample overall.

The sample was relatively even in size across the two cities, with 39 participants in Birmingham and 37 in Bradford. Whilst the main concern was to involve young people with different experiences of participation, we felt it was important that the research should achieve a reasonable gender balance. As such, we worked explicitly with target groups of both men and women to 'stratify' the sample by gender. As indicated in Figure 3.1, the sample ultimately included more men than women, with the gender difference in Bradford being more marked than in Birmingham: in Birmingham, the ratio of men to women was 1.3, as compared to 1.8 in Bradford.

As regards the age structure of our sample, (Figure 3.2), by far the largest proportion of our research respondents were aged between 16 and 18 years, with the mean average age of the sample being slightly over 18. Moreover, there were more 16 year olds in the sample than any other age groups, who made up slightly less than a third of the sample overall.

The large number of people aged between 16 and 18 resulted from the fact that we decided to sample according to the different modes of

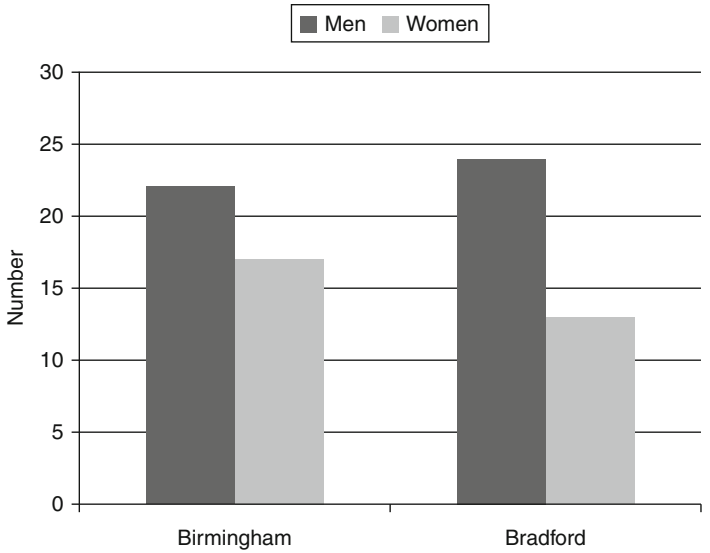

Figure 3.1 Gender of research participants in each city

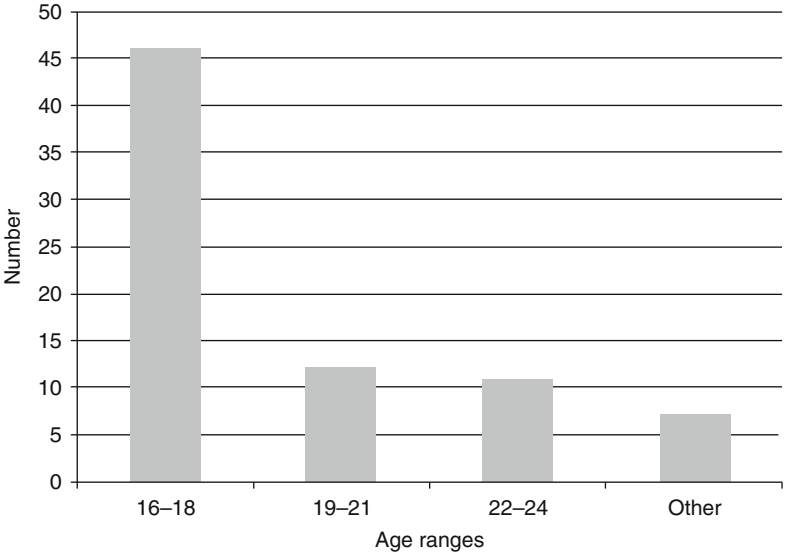

Figure 3.2 Age ranges of respondents in the two cities

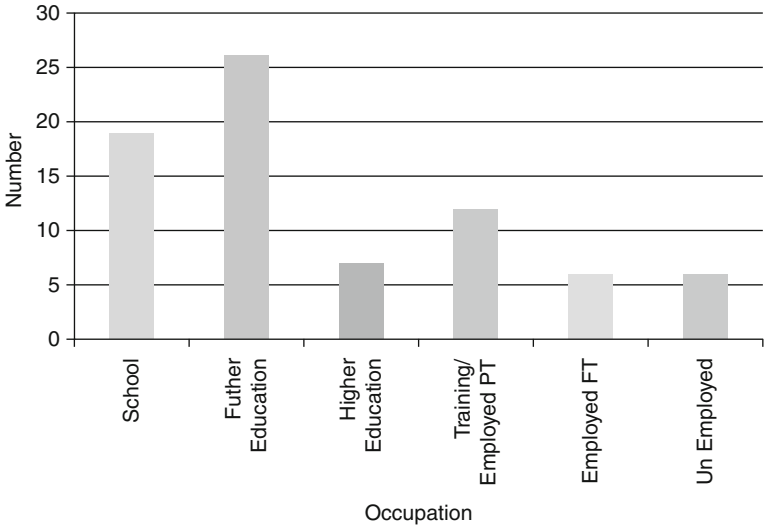

Figure 3.3 Occupation of research respondents

youth participation, rather than sampling specifically by age. It follows from this that well over half of our respondents were either in school or further education, which is shown clearly in Figure 3.3.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have outlined the rationale lying behind our research design, stressing in particular how our use of qualitative methodology stands in a critical relation to existing studies of young people's political participation. We acknowledge here that there is no *necessary* relationship between a particular methodological approach and the way in which 'the political' is conceptualised and operationalised in research on political participation. Nevertheless, there has been a strong tendency in many quantitative studies of young people's politics to construe political participation narrowly in terms of engagement in 'mainstream' representative politics. In contrast, we have used a qualitative approach in our study in an attempt to go beyond these *a priori* constructions, to expand the domains of the political and understand the meanings given to politics and political engagements by young people themselves. Correspondingly, as we will see in subsequent chapters, this has enabled us to explore how different spheres of participation

are not simply isolated and autonomous, but often stand in a mutually constitutive relationship to one another. As we show in Chapter 4 in particular, for our sample, a strong tendency towards engagement in alternative spheres of participation often went hand in hand with suspicion of or disaffection from the political mainstream, a relational understanding of young people's politics that is often neglected in much survey research. In the chapters that follow, we open these issues out in detail, beginning in Chapter 4, which explores the range of 'grammars of action' among our respondents.

4
Grammars of Political Action

Introduction

Accounts of citizen disengagement from electoral and party politics in established democracies around the world are widespread (Hay 2007). Increasingly, these are informed by an emerging literature that contrasts falling levels of citizens' engagement in elections and party activism with relatively high levels of civic, voluntary or other informal modes of political engagement (Dalton 2008). Seen from this view, political participation is not so much declining as changing, as we discussed in Chapter 2. Many locate these changes within broader social and political developments that have been taking place over the last few decades, such as the rise of new social movements since the 1960s, characterised by more informal forms of activism, that focus on questions of identity, and which are associated with the growth of 'postmaterialist' values and political concerns (Inglehart 1997; Norris 2002). Additionally, the end of the Cold War, it is suggested, has had profound implications for political ideologies, diminishing the mass-mobilising role of political parties (Beck 1997). The growth of the internet since the 1980s is credited with making state boundaries and scales of action more fluid, and diversifying the targets of political action beyond the nation-state (Norris 2002) and enabling more creative and personalised repertoires of action (Dahlgren 2005; Bennett 2008). These processes have, according to Giddens (2002), been attended by patterns of 'detraditionalisation' and reflexive individualisation, which have profoundly altered citizens' attitudes towards forms of political authority and vehicles of mass, collectivist political mobilisation. These social and political developments are thought to have transformed citizens' relationships to politics and given rise to new political subjectivities that are more individualised, personalised and reflexive, where citizens

increasingly express their engagement in informal, networked forms of political organisation, using hands-on, direct repertoires of action and where questions of identity and culture are increasingly a matter of political concern. This has given rise to new horizons in political participation research exploring 'DIY', everyday and lifestyle forms of activism.

Debates on, as well as the study of, ethnic minority young people's politics have generally not been connected to these analyses of shifting trends in citizens' political participation. Our own research, however, demonstrates their relevance to the ways in which ethnic minority young people express their political engagement. Thus, we found very diverse repertoires of action among our respondents, including but also beyond electoral engagement, and perspectives on engagement that give substance to arguments that the political subjectivities of young people are oriented towards more informal, personalised, networked grammars of action, such that, whilst they did not completely disavow engagement with mainstream politics, neither were they strongly engaged in this arena. Despite having often very full political biographies, few saw electoral or party politics as the terrain on which their political interests would find expression. Instead, activists in our study tended to prefer more personal, immediate and direct forms of action, rather than engagement through vertically integrated institutions of representative politics, and this was expressed in their orientations towards quite localised, everyday, 'DIY' and online forms of activism.

Whilst we find arguments about the emergence of new political subjectivities compelling in many ways, we suggest that it is important not to consider these free from the specific political and social contexts in which young people are politically active. Both the concepts of reflexive individualisation and subpolitics have been criticised for their lack of attention to the specific contexts to identity formation or political activism. In particular, critics (Bernstein 2005; Adams and Raisborough 2008; Bakardjieva 2009) have cited the continuing salience of class, gender, race and ethnicity in shaping personal subjectivities and political mobilisations. Furthermore, we suggest that attention needs to be paid to the concrete contexts to political participation. Fillieule (2010) suggests that analysis of how individuals become politically participant, or decide to exit political movements, needs to take account of the 'macro level' contexts of the political fields in which citizens are politically active, the 'micro level' contexts of activists' biographies and trajectories and the 'meso level' contexts of group membership and experiences. In our own study, at the macro-level of the political field, broader contexts of public policies and debates on issues of race,

ethnicity, religion, multiculturalism and youth operated as important contextual conditions for young people's political activism. At the micro-level of activist biographies, we found that politicising experiences (or 'critical moments') were significant in shaping activist careers. Similarly, 'meso-level' experiences of activism within groups were important in shaping the 'participatory habitus' and political imaginaries of activists. Whilst we find evidence of more personalised grammars of action, whereby activists tended to avoid submerging their identities into large organisational entities or collectivities, group identities were nonetheless important and politicising, particularly in the context of ethnic minority young people's experiences of racism, inequalities and their awareness of broader contexts of public policies and debates on issues of race, ethnicity, religion, multiculturalism and youth. The salience of these macro-, micro- and meso-level factors emerged from our analysis of activists' personal political biographies and their experiences of activism within the groups in which we encountered them.

We begin our discussion by highlighting literatures on changing patterns of political participation and showing how these are reflected in the repertoires of action among our respondents which ranged from conventional, unconventional, 'postconventional' and alternative public sphere activism – although we found that their activism was relatively less focused on institutional politics or at the national scale. We then go onto consider the nature of new political subjectivities and 'grammars of action' and how these were reflected in the ways in which activists related to political institutions and forms of activism. We then consider the significance of broader debates on ethnicity, race, religion and multiculturalism for activists' politics; the significance of political trajectories and 'critical moments' in activists' political biographies; and the ways in which in certain cases, experiences of group activism served to underpin more enduring commitments to political activism.

Changing patterns of political action

There is now an extensive literature on falling electoral participation and party membership across established democracies that has been developing since the 1990s. Following the end of the cold war, many observed a seeming paradox that, on the one hand, liberal-democracy seemed to have triumphed as a form of political organisation, whilst on the other, citizens in established liberal-democracies appeared to be voluntarily withdrawing from democratic life. As Colin Hay, reflecting on this paradox in *Why We Hate* Politics (2007), commented: 'Despite its near global diffusion, democracy motivates a seemingly ever smaller

proportion of the electorate to exercise its right to vote in the states in which that right has existed the longest' (2007: 1).

The notion that patterns of electoral and party disengagement constitute in themselves evidence of rising political apathy has been much criticised. As Beck (1997: 99) argues, the thesis that citizens are withdrawing from politics is based on looking for 'politics in the wrong places' (see Holzer and Sørensen 2001). Similarly, Marsh et al. (2007) suggest that conflating low levels of electoral engagement with political apathy is based on an overly narrow conception of political participation that discounts the range of ways (young) citizens politically engage – in other words, political apathy is not electoral engagement's 'other'. Furthermore, as Hay (2007) and Bourdieu (2004) point out, voting is not in itself evidence of political interest and engagement either.

This critique is supplemented by evidence of a picture of changing, as opposed to declining, political participation (Giddens 1994; Zukin et al. 2006). For example, Dalton concludes from his study of citizens' democratic engagement in the USA that:

> Rather than an absolute decline in political action, the changing norms of citizenship are shifting the ways Americans participate in politics – decreasing electoral participation but increasing other forms of action. Compared to the halcyon days of the 1950s to 1960s, the American public today is more politically engaged in more different forms of political action. (2008: 91)

Many studies suggest that disengagement from mainstream politics is more marked among some groups of citizens – especially young people (Marsh et al. 2007; Annette 2011). Zukin et al.'s (2006) study of young Americans, the so-called 'Dotnet' generation born after 1976, found high levels of engagement in volunteering and community problem-solving activities among 15- to 28-year olds, alongside lower engagement in electoral activities. Stolle et al.'s (2008) study of political participation among young people in Canada and Belgium found that young women and young immigrants especially were more likely to be involved in 'extra-parliamentary politics'.

As we discussed in Chapter 2, there are indicators of long-standing trends of engagement outside of the terrain of mainstream politics among ethnic minority groups in what we term 'alternative public sphere' participation. Additionally, against this picture of secular decline in electoral and party political engagement is the rising significance of other forms of political activism – such as those expressed in social movement repertoires (single-issue campaigning, consciousness-raising), or shaped

by new technologies (blogging, hactivism, culture-jamming), or forms of everyday, 'subpolitical' action (e.g. ethical shopping), or the choices that activists make in relation to paid work and employment (Beck 1997; Vromen 2003; Solomos et al. 2005).

Methodologically, our study set out to explore the range of forms of activism practised among ethnic minority young people by identifying groups of respondents engaged variously in formal conventional institutional politics, alternative public sphere and community activism, identity groups and protest groups. We held focus groups that explored experiences of group activism. We also set out to enquire about forms of activism outside of the groups in which we encountered activists by exploring the political biographies of activists in individual interviews. Our analysis of the repertoires of action within groups, and among individuals within those groups, demonstrates engagement across repertoires of conventional, unconventional, postconventional and alternative public sphere activism as Table 4.1 below maps out.

Groups' action repertoires

The repertoires of action deployed by the groups in our sample included: engagement in consultations; lobbying; protesting and demonstrating;

Table 4.1 Activists' repertoires of political action

Conventional	**Unconventional**	**Postconventional**	**Alternative public sphere**
Voting	Protest marching	Blogging	Consciousness-raising
Election canvassing	Demonstrating	Supporting e-campaigns	Community self-help
Participating in *ad hoc* government consultations	Lobby capture	E-activism	Volunteering
		Boycotting	Charitable work Fund-raising
Participating in standing governance forums		Buycotting	Campaigning
		Environmental lifestyle choices	Mentoring Mosque activism
Lobbying officials/ politicians		Career choices	
Campaigning			
Student politics			
Engaging in hustings			

consciousness-raising activities aimed at young people, local communities, particular ethnic or religious groups or women; community self-help activities; campaigning; and e-activism. Many groups were engaged across these activities, for example, the members of the BKYP were not only engaged in institutional politics of consultations and lobbying but also mobilised as a group to engage in: protest politics (demonstrating against the war in Iraq); campaigning (in relation to youth issues); and consciousness-raising activities among young people in Bradford in relation to racism and gun crime. Similarly, the Birmingham-based women's group – Saheli – was engaged in a wide range of activities including: consciousness-raising activities among women and in relation to their local community; community self-help activism; protesting against the war in Iraq; as well as participating in consultations with the Local Council, Police Authority and other governance networks. Saheli members had also participated in some of the actions organised by a local broad-based social justice movement – Birmingham Citizens – that targeted the Local Authority, politicians or corporations (e.g. Hilton International), drawing on 'unconventional' Alinskyite tactical repertoires of action (such as lobby-captures; see Alinsky 1971). The MJM, also based in Birmingham, was not only involved in protest activities against the policies of a local FE college with regard to its Muslim students and more widely in relation to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the conflict in Palestine but was also engaged in lobbying, canvassing for the Respect Party in local and general elections in Birmingham, community self-help, and e-activism through their website and blog. Thus, groups tended to deploy a diverse range of repertoires of action.

Individuals' action repertoires

Exploration of individuals' personal political biographies also revealed a very wide range of repertoires of action and political concerns within and outside the groups in which we encountered them, based on institutional, protest, community, consumer and everyday political action, including:

- participation in local, city-based youth councils and forums, planning, regeneration and other governance initiatives;
- activity in single-issue campaigns (such as Drop the Debt);
- social movement membership (e.g. joining or supporting Amnesty International);

- involvement in black and Muslim student politics (such as the Black Students Society or Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS));
- volunteering in women's, community, youth, mentoring and anti-racist projects;
- establishing a Muslim youth 'peace forum' in response to the 7/7 attacks;
- demonstrating and protesting in relation to UK foreign policy and international development, debt and trade;
- blogging and e-campaigning (e.g. establishing alternative online news portals covering issues and events relating to Muslims to counter the influence of mainstream media (MSM));
- ethical shopping (e.g. boycotting Israeli goods, 'buycotting' Fair Trade or eco brands);
- life-style choices around political issues such as environmentalism (e.g. recycling, limiting personal energy usage);
- local and international charity work (e.g. fund-raising or volunteering for Islamic Relief);
- 'subpolitical' activity (such as choosing career or employment paths that allowed the pursuit of political interests – e.g. working in a women's refuge, or becoming a youth worker).

As these action repertoires demonstrate, engagement in electoral politics is only one aspect of a very broad range of possible political activism. Furthermore, engagement in these repertoires of action, even including in electoral and institutional politics, resonated with what we identify as new grammars of action, expressed in highly personalised, DIY and everyday lifestyle approaches to political activism.

New grammars of action

As we discussed in Chapter 2, a number of theorists argue that contemporary forms of political action are increasingly underpinned by new political subjectivities that are characterised by a preference for forms of direct, DIY, personalised and networked activism, in place of engagement in highly mediated, representative or collectivist politics focused on building political structures, programmes and ideologies (Bang 2005; McDonald 2006).

These ways of relating to politics resonate with Beck's concept of 'subpolitics', which is a form of politics 'outside and beyond the representative institutions of the political system of nation-states' (Beck 1996:18). According to Beck, the world of politics is no longer that

of 'symbolically rich political institutions' but of 'often concealed everyday political practice', which forms the basis of a contemporary 'non-institutional renaissance of politics' that is occurring alongside the increasing 'political vacuity of the institutions' (Beck 1997: 98). Such everyday subpolitical practice is rooted in processes of individualisation and reflexive modernity, and has affinities with Giddens' concept of 'life politics', which he describes as 'a politics, not of *life chances*, but of *life style*. It concerns disputes and struggles about how (as individuals and as collective humanity) we should live in a world where what used to be fixed either by nature or tradition is now subject to human decisions' (1994: 14–15).

Similarly, Bang argues that for contemporary citizens, the 'political is increasingly personal and self-reflexive' (2005: 163), manifested in everyday forms of political engagement that eschew formal institutional politics in preference for a politics of direct, self-actualising, DIY action (Bang 2003). One of the implications of this turn towards more personalised, DIY and everyday forms of action, according to Bang, is that these are not consonant with the forms of engagement demanded within mainstream political institutions. He argues (2009: 126) that 'reflexive individuals increasingly loathe hierarchical commands. They demand a much more communicative and problem-oriented authority, if they are going to accept and support it.' Consequently, he concludes 'Activists […] shun 'big' politics, because it does not allow them to feel immediately engaged in, and influential in solving, the many concrete policy problems that confront them in their everyday life' (2009: 122). Bang's (2004) study of activists in Nørrebro, Copenhagen, identified two distinctive political identities among these activists, that of 'expert citizens' and 'everyday makers'. The former tended to have full-time project identities and were typically found in the voluntary sector working as professional members of governance networks, the latter type were more *ad hoc*, 'hit and run' activists, who tended to engage in DIY and everyday forms of engagement. Neither expert citizens nor everyday makers were ideologically driven, rather their activism was characterised by personalised, reflexive engagement within and outside of the political system in flat, networked forms of political organisation.

This resonates with McDonald's (2006) account of contemporary grammars of action within global social movements, which he characterises as more fluid, personal, direct and expressive in contrast with 'civic-industrial grammars of action', which are expressed through formally organised, vertically integrated representative institutions. This shift in grammars of action manifests itself in a turning away from

action directed through delegates, representatives, rules, constitutions and procedures, towards more hands-on, loosely organised forms of action, where activists can engage directly in concrete action to make a difference, but without submerging their identity into any organisation or movement. One consequence of this is that activists typically do not want to invest time in drawing up constitutions, membership rules, voting procedures or political programmes, but engage in what McDonald characterises as a 'culture of urgency', where the 'ethic of action […] is framed in terms of the imperative of acting now' (2006: 76).

Engagement with mainstream and electoral politics

These accounts of contemporary political subjectivities help to explain some recurring themes in our data. Thus, we found that the high levels of political interest and activity among the activists we met were not matched by similarly high levels of engagement with representative political institutions. Indeed, a recurring feature of activists' political engagement was their scepticism towards representative politics and institutions – a common finding in recent studies of young people's political participation (see Marsh et al. 2007). As one young parliamentarian commented:

> I don't think young people are politically apathetic, I think they care a lot about lots of different issues, they just don't have the right platform to say what they care about and to tell people that this is what they're interested in, 'cause […] a lot of young people don't want to do it through a party, because the party is not necessarily representing them.

Although most of our respondents were likely to be voters, few cited affiliation to any particular party as a reason for voting: instead reasons were often local (e.g. to block the BNP) or global (e.g. to register opposition to the war on Iraq).

Even respondents who were members of a local youth parliament were ambivalent about its status as a representative institution, and in one focus group, there was extensive discussion of whether 'parliament' was an appropriate term for the Birmingham YPP. As one MYP argued:

> You're branding yourself with this, this – and why? […] [Impassioned] Clearly people are not involved, participating in that kind of democracy to begin with, why are you giving yourself that label deliberately? […] It's amazing the number of people you can speak to, both

> adults and young people, who will say that Westminster no longer actually changes a great deal in terms of policy. And to have that same kind of connotation with a young people's forum, you know, nothing'll ever change. […] And that's you know, that's actually a much bigger problem, that people are disaffected in that way.

The same MYP went on to express his frustration with national politics and the party political system, in a way that speaks to McDonald's contention that contemporary forms of action privilege more personal political grammars:

> In terms of national politics, I would be sorely tempted to deface my ballot and just express my sheer, you know, sort of discontent if you like, *extreme* discontent with the way the machine works at the moment, and I think that's part of what we were talking about earlier, with Westminster being more of the machinery, than politics in the broader sense.

For this respondent, 'politics in the broader sense' meant 'working together […] to achieve common ends', 'even if you don't necessarily like each other', advocating a perspective on politics within a more personalised and emotional register as 'a relationship of love, of a sort'. Many other respondents shared this ambivalence towards 'machine politics', and placed an emphasis on a variety of forms of personal and direct action. As one women's group activist discussed:

> *Respondent*: I've been on like you know marches and things for campaigns that I think are really important but, I don't think I'm *that* political. […] I want to spend my energies on doing the work I'm doing, as opposed to kind of making change within the Government, or sitting on even a local level as a Councillor. I don't see that as productive for *me*.
> *Interviewer*: OK, so you'd see yourself more at grass roots?
> *Respondent*: Yeah. As just more of a doer. I think you get really kind of – held up in a system, and I don't really want to be a cog really.

Similarly, another young parliamentarian commented that the Young People's Parliament should avoid party politics and 'should be about community involvement regardless of all of that', because, in her view 'few young people are actually political because they believe in […]

the party [...]. And I think it's better to have, without all of those trappings [...] and just be what we really think ourselves.' Whilst not entirely rejecting of formal political institutions, our respondents were generally sceptical towards them.

It is possible, of course, that scepticism towards mainstream institutions in the present period is particularly heightened among young Muslims – who comprised a significant proportion of our sample. Many young British Muslims at the present time, it is suggested, are suspicious of mainstream political institutions as a result of British foreign policy in relation to Iraq and Afghanistan (Birt 2005) and as a consequence of the heightened scrutiny of young Muslims under counter-terrorism measures (Mcdonald 2011). Our research suggests this has not necessarily resulted in a wholesale jettisoning of conventional forms of participation among young Muslims, but that the adoption of more direct, alternative modes of participation coincides with frustration over 'unresponsive' mainstream institutions – and this perspective was reflected across our sample.

Our sampling strategy did not include youth wings of political parties – largely because of the difficulties in identifying and finding ethnic minority young party activists in significant numbers for our research in the two cities. It was noteworthy nevertheless that despite many activists having very full political biographies, engaging in a very wide range of political activities, with most declaring themselves to be voters, and many knowledgeable about Westminster politics, we found relatively little direct engagement with political parties among our respondents. There were very few party members, although any expressions of party identification tended to be with Labour, the Liberal-Democrats or the Respect Party. The latter has made some significant gains through sustained activism with and among Muslim constituencies in Bradford in recent times, and in Birmingham in the period of the mid-2000s. Where we did find activism on behalf of a political party, this was nevertheless quite contingent – as we discuss below.

The contention that new grammars of action are expressed in a politics of personalised action, in which individuals do not subsume their identities within that of the group (McDonald 2006) sheds light on the highly contingent relationship some activists forged with party engagement. This was most obviously expressed in the case of the MJM, an informal, self-organised group based in Birmingham, who were ambivalent towards (although not entirely rejecting of) established forms of political engagement. The MJM had been to anti-war meetings hosted by the Socialist Worker Party and mosques across the city, participated in marches and

petitions against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and had been active in grass-roots campaigning for the Respect Party in Sparkbrook, canvassing door to door in the run up to the 2005 General Election.[1] Their relationships with these organisations were qualified, however, and they did not strongly identify with Respect, despite the fact that they campaigned on the ground for them, as one activist explained:

> [I]t's not that I have any affiliation with Respect in terms of its ideology, or anything, 'cause I'm still trying to unravel that myself. I know that they're a coalition of various different groups and […] I'm still trying to look for some kind of coherent aim, some agenda […] And, I'm just flirting with various different groups. […] I'll never join any of them. They've all asked us, because they would do, but I've never joined any of them.

As is clear from the work of Solomos and Back (1995), the motivations underlying the party allegiances of ethnic minority activists have long been multiple and complex, often deriving from other sources than commitment to the ideological premises of any particular party. However, the activists discussed in Solomos and Back's work were nevertheless full members of political parties (most commonly the Labour Party), since operating from within the machinery of party politics was seen to afford greater opportunities for realising these activists' political objectives (Solomos and Back 1995: 130–70). In contrast, the MJM operated externally to party politics, withholding full commitment but mobilising in consort with party initiatives where this offered scope to achieve their particular goals. This stance was also replicated in their relationships with mosques, and other campaign organisations, which were based on hands-on involvement rather than formal membership or affiliation. This tends to substantiate McDonald's contention that activists avoid subsuming their identities into that of formal political organisations, preferring to form *ad hoc* network links in relation to specific issues or goals.

DIY, everyday and 'subpolitical action

Like Bang's (2004) 'expert citizens' and 'everyday makers', then, our respondents tended to prefer direct involvement in horizontal, informal networks or movements, or *ad hoc* involvement with particular initiatives, rather than membership of formal, centrally organised political organisations. As an activist from the Saheli women's group in Birmingham, involved in working with women from different religious

communities, as well as in local community politics and protest activities, explained:

> personally, I would never become like, people have joked like "Why don't you become a ward Councillor or something?" but [...] that's not where I'm at you know. I come to it from a more questioning, learning point of view, as opposed to becoming bogged down with the bureaucracy of like trying to make change, 'cos I don't think that's my way of doing it. I think there's more benefit in doing it in, through my role here at *Saheli* or you know in another position where I'm hopefully impacting on the real people, as opposed to getting bogged down with party lines and like party agendas and stuff, that doesn't interest me.

This was echoed by an MYP from Bradford who contrasted her preference for an everyday politics that speaks to a politics of the 'lifeworld' as opposed to that of the 'system' (Habermas 1987), observing:

> [W]hat tends to happen is that the very passionate tend to come up against systems and they get so disheartened by lack of community.

Among many respondents there was a perception of party politics as inauthentic – and that activism within a political party entailed losing touch with one's community. For example, a Saheli member, in commenting favourably on the election of a Muslim woman (Salma Yaqoob) to a position of local councillor in Birmingham, voiced concern that she would become estranged from community concerns and perspectives as a result of entering formal politics. Echoing this, a Birmingham MYP articulated a political imaginary based on devolving power away from structures to grass-roots level, recognising the expertise of those on the ground, advocating 'devolution within, and that whole system, to kind of put power back into the hands of the community. And let them work with the so-called experts, if you like'. It was common for activists to express wariness towards system or 'machine' politics and a preference for more personalised and hands-on forms of activism. As one Saheli activist commented of her organisation's approach:

> Whether they're a housewife, whether they're a career professional, it doesn't matter to us as long as they're always questioning and not accepting the status quo. [...] So if they've got a community problem or whatever else hopefully they've got enough you know,

> confidence in themselves, or see a positive example, they'll be like 'Yeah you know what? I'm gonna go do something about that because it's wrong'.

Activists' scepticism with regard to mainstream political institutions contrasted with their intensive engagement at local, community and international levels. One MYP in Bradford, who had been a leading actor in the establishment of Muslim youth forums in Bradford and adjacent areas, expressed a strong desire for Muslims to claim an autonomous political space in which to mobilise in response to the 2005 London bombings – particularly to the scrutiny of Muslim communities that this event had prompted. Echoing Fraser's (1997) arguments regarding the value of 'subaltern public spheres' which form outside (the membership and scrutiny) of the mainstream public sphere, she argued that Muslims needed to organise autonomous spaces for reflection and action in order to take:

> time to resolve that and they need to pull themselves together, to take a bit of responsibility, and you know take some shared responsibility, like for example the mosques and the communities have now after what has happened.

Most activists were engaged in, and oriented towards, 'subpolitical' activism, in the form of everyday and lifestyle politics in relation to local spaces or specific social issues, and through actions such as voluntary activity (e.g. supporting Islamic Relief), career choices (e.g. working in an Asian women's refuge or as a youth worker), political shopping (e.g. buycotting Fair Trade), web-based action (such as blogging or website construction) or discursive political action (to challenge perceptions of Muslim women or black or Muslim youth).

There has been an extensive debate among political scientists about whether some or all of these repertoires of action should be included within analyses of political participation. Van Deth (2001), for instance, objects to the conceptual inflation of political action that this involves, arguing it makes all action potentially political and thus defines political action away – a problem acknowledged by Beck (1997) in his discussion of subpolitics. Vromen (2003) argues strongly nonetheless that identities and everyday practices expressed within the private domain should be seen as integral to citizenship identities and as politically significant, whilst signalling the gendered significance of activism within the private domain. Her study of community activism among men and

women found a variety of ways in which women particularly fused their private domestic roles and concerns with political activism through forms of everyday community activism.

Activities such as political shopping, in particular, have aroused debates about their political significance, and in relation to questions such as how actions as individualised and everyday as shopping can be interpreted as political, given the variety of motives that consumers may have for purchasing, for instance, Fair Trade products, which could be connected to issues of pricing, branding, availability, taste as well as ethical and political considerations concerning production, supply chains and corporate and consumer responsibilities. It should be noted that politically oriented consumer action is not a new phenomenon: consumer boycotts, for example, have featured historically in various countries (e.g. the National Consumers' League in the USA; see Wiedenhoft, 2008). Stolle et al. argue that 'political consumerism reveals itself not as an entirely new phenomenon, but as part of an array of activist performances that serve to broaden the spectrum of politics' (2005: 260), and one that is on the rise. According to Adams and Raisborough, in 2005, Fair Trade certified products were worth €1billion globally – up 37% from the previous year (2008: 1166). Political shopping has become a more prevalent, and arguably significant, form of political action in the contemporary period, as a consequence of: consumers becoming more aware of the risks involved in consumption choices; the rise in consumption generally making it a powerful social practice; individualisation and the increased prevalence of personal choice; and the increased presence and power of (transnational) corporate actors. Furthermore, Stolle et al. (2005) argue that political shopping should be seen as a form of subpolitics in Beck's sense, denoting a personal engagement with the politics of contemporary problems of risk through everyday, individual decision-making and action, suggesting:

> Citizens fear that government either does not understand or cannot control new uncertainties and risks that characterize society today and search for new ideas, arenas, and methods to work on these important political problems (Shapiro and Hacker-Cordón, 1999). As a result, they choose to take on this responsibility themselves rather than delegating it to professional political actors (Beck, 1997). Concerns about governability and ungovernability therefore can motivate citizens to venture into new or simply different forms of political participation. (2005: 251)

This echoes with the sense of personalised, everyday responsibility that many of our respondents demonstrated generally, and for some through political shopping or in their decisions to limit their personal consumption for ethical reasons. As one Birmingham MYP commented:

> what do I actually do myself, […] I can turn off a switch and I can reuse a plastic bottle every now and then and I think that is something so easy and it makes such an effect, I think if everybody did it, because it's not like it takes anything out of our lifestyle, but then we're so used to live in the way that we are but we don't really think about small things like that, I think. … I just make sure that everyone uses a container so you can wash it afterwards, and buying eco brand instead of buying Fairy liquid. It's just little things like that which I think, it, it makes so much sense to do so, so why wouldn't you, I think?

This sense of personal responsibility-taking was also expressed in the forms of volunteering and career choices that activists made, for instance, in becoming youth workers, mentors, community workers or engaging in youth advocacy. For instance, one respondent involved in youth work in Bradford contrasted his lack of political efficacy 'as an individual' with his ability to make a difference and practice politics in everyday ways, where he was, in concrete ways, through youth work:

> I think as a person, as an individual I don't think I can make that change on a bigger scale. […] whereas with my skills as a youth worker I can make a difference on a smaller scale, where I live […] I have my own politics in a way.

For many activists, the possibilities for everyday engagement in direct forms of action were greatly facilitated by access to web-based forms of activism. There is a developing literature suggesting that globalised forms of communication and networking have made internet-based political action increasingly significant (Norris 2002; Bennett 2003; Dahlgren 2005; McDonald 2006). These developments, aligned with the emergence of more direct, personalised grammars of political engagement, have given rise to greater use of communications technologies as a means of DIY political action.

The recourse by political activists to the internet is characterised in Häyhtiö and Rinne's work (2007) as 'de-medialised' and reflexive political action that allows activists to circumvent MSM and directly engage in media production and consumption through blogging, website production

and online protests, such as signing e-petitions or 'swarming' – with the latter describing the viral character of web-based dissemination that allows, sometimes highly effective, online campaigns with little or no organisation or leadership (and see Segerberg 2011). New technologies, such as the internet and SMS, in many ways enable direct and creative forms of political action, and this was particularly evident in the practices of MJM activists in Birmingham who were critically engaged with a range of media, not only analysing messages about Islam through consumption of a global range of broadcast and internet media sources but also as producers of media communications – through blogging and website construction – as forms of direct action that allowed them to circumvent conventional mediated forms of politics. The creative possibilities for more direct action through the internet were commented on by one MJM activist:

Respondent: I want to be the next Rupert Murdoch, but the left-wing version [laughs] … yeah.
Researcher: So would you do that through like a web presence or a …
Respondent: […] it would be web based, wouldn't it, because the future is web based so, yeah, but, see, that's the thing, everybody knows that, that everything is moving towards the internet, […] if you wanna set up a business or something, best to just try and work it around the internet as opposed to setting up a shop. The Muslim Justice Movement – we've tried to set up funding for a building but MPAC [the Muslim Public Affairs Committee], one of the most successful Muslim organisations, started in a dude's bedroom.

The communication tactics of MJM activists drew on the internet not only as a tool that facilitated de-medialised, direct forms of mobilisation. It was also clear that they also viewed web-based communication itself as a terrain of political action, particularly in terms of disrupting discursive constructions of Muslims/Islam found within MSM. Their strategy for achieving this was through 'narrowcasting' (see Häyhtiö and Rinne 2007), whereby individual activists interact with other e-activists in small-scale actions that develop their political momentum by building out through communication networks (as in the case of swarming). For our participants, such forms of action were aimed at engaging with a range of Muslim publics and at challenging the hegemony of MSM and broadcasters – particularly in relation to the tenor of debates concerning Muslims and Islam. As the MJM focus group explained in relation to the

logic of web-activism and protesting, much of their action was at the level of discursive politics:

Respondent 1: That's what we see as our only effective means for doing something. But, in order to draw people to come and protest with us, or to take onboard the issues that we are trying to portray, and to let people know about, it's, it's difficult because it's hard to defeat the logic behind what Bush and Blair are doing over in the Middle East, and, and the whole 'war on terror'. The whole lot, we have to defeat the logic of the war on terror before we can get the real points across. Because they, like he said, they portray it as like a clash of cultures. Bush would say, you know, "they hate our values, that's why they are doing this", you know, and "they don't like our way of life" and all that crap.

Several: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: But it's, it's not that. They don't like *your* actions, what *you're* doing, *your* government. They, they mix up the issue, and so when the public see it, the few individuals can see it for what it is, but the rest of them they just … so when we are protesting Lebanon, you know …

Respondent 2: Extremism is going on over there! [Laughter]

Respondent 1: They don't wanna, they don't even debate the issue. Talking about Palestine and Israel, you know, the standard conception that you have of Palestine and Israel is that these terrorists are terrorising the Israelis. And that's, that's the common understanding. So, we, I think we have to defeat the logic behind these stories.

As Bennett (2003) points out, information communication technologies (ICTs) have facilitated more direct forms of action, and across scales enabling engagement in global and international issues, which among our respondents created possibilities for direct political engagement on issues such as Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Islamic Relief, Tsunami relief, debt, or the terms of international trade and development. Thus, political engagement with global and international issues and campaigns captured the imaginations of many activists, in ways which found

little equivalence at the level of national politics, as one Saheli activist elaborated:

> *Interviewer*: What does 'politics' mean to you?
> *Respondent*: What does it mean? […] middle aged men in suits, talking endlessly and not really doing anything constructive! It's got quite a negative impact on me. But I think that's due to you know, all of these individuals not really making it accessible, on a real kind of basic level and so there's more barriers up again, with people who aren't able to overcome them. […] there aren't kind of those dreams going across. […] on the flip side of that […] politics does kind of grab me as well. How do we function internationally and how I feel all of that, that's more interesting to me than nationally.

These issues of scale and political engagement will be further explored in Chapter 8. For now, it is important to note that such engagement was not solely an outcome of diasporic ties, in which young people engaged transnationally with the issues and politics of their countries of heritage (for example, see Eade and Garbin's (2002) study of Bangladeshi young activists in the east end of London). Whilst these were often important, their engagement was also underpinned by more globalised orientations, made possible through their use of ICTs. Such use of ICTs: enabled access to a range of media and information sources; enhanced possibilities for creating and disseminating, rather than only consuming, information and political messages; enhanced their ability to engage in campaigns with little need to invest in organisation-building; and facilitated engagement in personalised, horizontal and networked forms of activism, which as we suggested above was a recurring characteristic of the activist preferences of most of our respondents.

Contextualising activism

Our analysis of the repertoires of action among our activists shows a wide range of activities across our sampling matrix of conventional, unconventional, postconventional and 'alternative public sphere' participation. It also shows that whilst voting and forms of institutional and electoral participation featured in the political biographies of activists, these formed a fairly minor aspect of their activism, and significantly their relationship with these forms of activism was often

ambivalent (as expressed in the Birmingham MYP's objections to naming the Birmingham YPP a 'parliament') or contingent (as in the case of the MJM's relationship with Respect, which entailed hands-on involvement in the form of electoral canvassing but stopped short at formal membership). As our data suggest, activists typically sought to engage in personal, direct and DIY ways – consonant with Beck's, Bang's or McDonald's arguments about the significance of subpolitical, everyday and new grammars of action.

The significance of reflexively constituted personal identities in underpinning contemporary forms of political and social action has emerged as a concern of studies of political engagement in ways that do much to expand conceptions of the political. Giddens (1994: 91), for instance, describes his concept of 'life-politics' as 'a politics of identity as well as of choice'. As Bakardjieva (2009) argues, this conception of politics acknowledges long-standing feminist formulations of the personal as political, whilst temporally connecting this to processes of high modernity – and particularly to reflexive individualisation. This conception also resonates with the concerns of identity politics movements more generally, which, as Bernstein (2005) reminds us, have long been centred on dimensions of everyday, personal experience (and see Marsh et al. 2007).

Arguments for understanding contemporary political action in terms of 'reflexive individualisation' have been criticised, however, as Adams and Raisborough (2008: 1169) note: 'work on the rise of reflexivity has been greeted with a cacophony of critical voices'. In particular, they criticise the lack of context to much theorising about reflexivity, identities and social and political action, suggesting within such theories there is 'the assumption of a seemingly universal, disembedded and disembodied self, which somehow uniformly transcends the cultural, material and affective parameters that were once conceptualized as the underpinnings of identity formation' (2008: 1169).

Similarly, Bakardjieva (2009) contends that there are risks attendant in both Giddens' and Becks' redefinition of the sphere and nature of the political, particularly in generating an understanding of the political that is narrowly concerned with *individual* choices and decisions. In this respect, she is critical of the lack of attention to the significance of *collective* identities in both Beck's and Giddens' accounts of sub/life politics, suggesting their theory 'downplays and almost cancels the significance of collective identities for citizenship and political life in general' (2009: 95).

These observations raise some significant questions, then, with regard to how does context matter in shaping contemporary grammars of

action among ethnic minority young activists? What is the significance of collectivities and groups for individuals' activist trajectories? And, what conceptions of identity are being invoked in accounts of subpolitical or life-political activism?

In addressing these questions, we point to the significance of the broader political field in which activists are, or become, politically active, the shaping experiences of group membership and politicising moments in activists' biographies. In so doing, we reflect on the significance of debates about reflexivity, identity and life politics in light of the ways in which activists in our study connected their own identities and political concerns.

The political field, identity politics and young people's activism

As we noted in Chapter 2, questions concerning identity politics have been much debated within sociology, particularly in connection with questions about the salience of collective identities in the present period in the context of a sustained post-structuralist challenge to the notion of stable group identities and, by extension, to identity politics. As we discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, a literature emerged in the 1990s onwards concerned with the development of complex and hybrid identities in societies shaped by migration and diasporic connections, which was also founded upon an epistemological critique of group identities as essentialist and reductionist, positing instead a view of ethnic and cultural identities as deeply contingent and fragmented (Bhabha 1994). That account of contemporary cultural identities is countered by Modood (2000, 2007), who argues that ethnic or religious group mobilisations are not necessarily based on *essentialist* accounts of group identity, rather he argues, on the basis of empirical research on identities, for an engagement with the salience of group identities characterised by some degree of continuity and stability, without necessarily seeing these essential and unchanging. He argues 'it is a misunderstanding of anti-essentialism to conclude that all collective agency rests on mythic and dishonest, albeit strategically necessary, agency. Unities, continuities, resemblance, groupness are not all a priori banished, but remain the object of empirical enquiry' (2000: 194).

Similarly Bernstein (2005) argues that group identities remain politically significant. The postmodernist critique of identity politics, she argues, ignores the ways in which activists can make identity claims without necessarily understanding 'their identities as ontologically prior to their activism' (2005: 58). Furthermore, group identities are not only a matter of *self*-construction: the possibility of engaging in

a 'politics of deconstruction and decentering' may not be available as a political strategy for those 'whose difference is marked on the body' (Bernstein 2005: 58). Consequently undermining group identities as a political strategy also undermines the basis of resistance or recuperation for oppressed groups. This point is particularly pertinent for those groups whose inclusion within the public domain is constrained by limited and limiting repertoires of representation or formal or discrete modes of exclusion. Like Modood, Bernstein argues for a thorough *empirical* account of the ways in which identities are invoked in contemporary forms of political action.

As we have argued so far, empirical accounts of the ways in which new ethnicities and complex, hybrid identities might find political expression have generally been limited, and there has been little attempt to examine the implications of changing identities among ethnic minority young people for their political engagement. Echoing our arguments earlier concerning the characteristics of new grammars of action, we suggest that questions of identity were worked through the political engagements of our respondents and expressed in ways that were highly personalised and reflexive.

Nevertheless, as we explore in further detail in Chapter 6, the salience of public debates and policies on ethnic diversity, multiculturalism and community cohesion, black youth, Muslim youth, security or urban conflict were important in defining the contours of the political field in which activists formed their political perspectives and engagement. The period in which we were working was characterised by intense debate on and critique of multiculturalism, as a consequence of both the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001 and the London bombings of 2005, in which, particularly following the 2001 disturbances, the community cohesion paradigm emerged as a dominant discourse on the governance of diversity. A particular feature of this discourse was its assertion of ethnic and cultural group differences as a social problem, and its emphasis on the mixing of cultural groups as a solution. For young activists in our study, some implications of the disturbances involved a heightened sense of their lives as shaped by their association with areas stigmatised by urban disorder and perceptions of maladjustment and failed integration – an awareness, as we discussed in Chapter 3, that manifested itself in a critical stance on outside characterisations of areas such as Bradford and a close questioning of our own motives as researchers for wishing to interview ethnic minority young people in Bradford. Similar issues arose for young people in Birmingham, who identified outside perceptions of areas such as Aston, Handsworth or Lozells as

sites of urban disorder and high crime, attended by racialised moral commentary on black and minority ethnic residents in those areas, as constraints on their own social, occupational and spatial mobility, and factors that shaped their political consciousness. A further implication of the community cohesion paradigm, particularly in the aftermath of the London bombings of 2005 was that it intensified debates on the place of Muslims, and particularly young Muslims, within British society. These factors underpinned policy interventions that placed particular emphasis on inculcating in young Muslims norms of active citizenship, moderation and identification with core British values (pursued under the community cohesion agenda, and later, after our fieldwork had taken place, through the Prevent agenda). These broader debates and issues shaped the political terrain on which young activists formed their political identities and trajectories, and meant that identity issues were in many ways highly politically charged for young people – sometimes perceived as constraints on or a stimulus to activism. Thus, we found many instances of young activists reflecting on their own identities and responding to, and seeking to shape wider debates on the governance of diversity, ethnicity and British Muslims.

The continued salience of social discourses that are preoccupied with group differences – particularly in relation to their racialising effects – nevertheless stands in tension with the focus on fluidity and complexity of group identities that we noted above, and we explore these tensions in further detail in Chapter 6. It is important, for now, to note some key dimensions of how identities informed the political engagements of our respondents. Group identities certainly did matter in shaping the perspectives and experiences among the activists that we met, but these tended to be referenced to general principles of recognition of difference that were non-essentialist, non-reductive and resistant to submergence in collectivist organisations. In particular, we found that principles of the recognition of ethnic, cultural, religious or gender differences and diversity were deeply embedded in the political outlooks of our respondents, and were expressed in terms of a willingness to extend recognition of differences across groups, but in ways which resisted reducing individuals to their membership of groups. This sentiment was reflected in one Bradford-based MYP's reflections on the politics of representation:

> [I]t doesn't matter whether a man or woman is in that particular role as long as you are meeting the needs, that is the important thing but you need to be able to be able to empathise with those people, to

> understand, to know that you are part of that and, you don't have to be Asian, Black, White, Muslim, Jew to not experience those people's feelings.

Echoing our account of activists' relationships with formal political organisations, we found that whilst group identities mattered, activists tended to avoid immersing themselves into collective identity movements. They were nevertheless highly critical of mainstream politics in relation to their lack of inclusion of ethnic minorities, young people or women. Their responses to this were to seek out ways of engaging in direct, personal projects to counter representations of black or Muslim young people, or Muslim women, or what they regarded as the problematic ways in which the issues that concerned them were articulated within mainstream political institutions. Echoing Bang's account of the interplay between identity politics and 'project politics', the identity concerns among our respondents tended to be focused on achieving 'concrete influence on the articulation and delivery of social policy' rather than deliberation over 'abstract political rights' (2009: 123). This was expressed, for instance, in the practical ways in which the West Bowling Youth Initiative (WBYI) in Bradford worked to counter educational, training inequalities among Muslim young men, or the MJM's campaign against the opening of a casino in the Alum Rock area of Birmingham – not just on the grounds that it is an area of Muslim settlement but also because it is an economically disadvantaged area with little other regeneration activity. This approach was manifested in the search for personal ways to resist particular representations of, for instance, black youth, or young Muslims, or Asian women. This was expressed in the web-based discursive political action of the MJM that we described above, or in the aims of the 'Young Disciples' in Birmingham to inform 'the public and government agencies on gang culture' and to challenge 'the boundaries of local and governmental action' in relation to representations of areas of black settlement and black young people in Birmingham. It can also be seen in the activities of the Saheli women's group in Birmingham campaigning for a women's gym in Balsall Heath to tackle health inequalities among South Asian women in Balsall Heath, where challenging perceptions of Asian women by funders and the Local Authority formed key aspects of their campaigning (as we discuss further in Chapter 7).

Whether at individual or group level, activists' political orientations were shaped by their awareness of broader debates and policies that shaped the political terrain on which they operated, and as we discuss

in Chapter 5, the emergence of forms of participatory governance which increasingly targeted ethnic minority young people to address political disaffection or segregation.

These experiences and concerns are illuminated by further contextualisation of activists' engagements in relation to their personal political biographies and membership of activist groups. Following Adams and Raisborough (2008: 1169), we suggest that activists' reflexive political engagement should be 'situated' in the complex relations between subjectivity, agency and social structure. Drawing on Fillieule's (2010) framework for understanding activists' political (dis)engagement, this means considering activism in the context of activists' political biographies, group membership and experiences as well as the broader political field. To this end, the next section explores the personal political biographies of our respondents to understand their development as activists, the range of contexts in which they engaged, and why, before we go onto to consider the significance of experiences of group activism.

'Critical moments' in activists' biographies

In his analysis of activists' disengagement from social movements, Fillieule (2010) draws attention to the processes of primary and secondary socialisation and 'critical moments' or 'biographical ruptures' that shape activists' commitments. The significance of 'critical moments' is also explored in Crossley's theorisation of the 'political habitus' of social movement activists. His account draws on Bourdieu's (1977; 1990) concept of 'habitus', which denotes the durable 'dispositions' (i.e. practices and perceptions) of social agents that internalise 'objective' social structures, and which are transposed from one social structural setting to another, informing the ways in agents respond to 'objective' social conditions. As such, habitus provides a useful way of conceptualising processes of social reproduction, in that social agents' habitus is not only a product, but also a producer, of existing social conditions (Crossley 2003: 43). Bourdieu suggests that the habitus tends to reproduce the political field in ways that are largely unconscious – such that the political legitimacy of a political regime largely depends on unreflective, unconscious affiliation to the regime, which he terms 'doxa' – or the universe of the undiscussed. However, at times of crisis, actors may perceive a disjuncture between their own habitus and doxa, when the structures and practices of the political field become subject to discussion and critique: 'when the 'fit' between objective structures and subjective expectations is broken the opportunity for critical reflection and debate upon previously unquestioned assumptions is made

possible' (Crossley 2002: 185). Thus 'In moments of crisis […] doxic assumptions and the habits of everyday life are suspended, giving way to more critical and innovative forms of praxis' (Crossley 2002: 186). In Crossley's terms, this is expressed in terms of the disjunctures between habitus and field which can create a political consciousness. Crossley's account highlights the significance of critical moments, in which people become aware of a disjuncture between their own lifeworlds or habitus and the fields (or systems) that they find themselves in, which can propel political activism.

Many of our respondents spoke of family backgrounds of activism in politics, which suggested a particular predisposition to those fields of activism, but, they also spoke vividly of critical moments that altered their consciousness of their own place within social, educational or political structures. For instance, narratives of early stirrings of political consciousness were frequently connected with a dissonance between social practices around culture and 'race' encountered in settings such as school and their own perspectives on these – which for many were politicising experiences. For example, one MYP in Bradford talked of being politicised by her early school encounters with teachers, and in particular her experience of the imposition by her teachers of highly ethnocentric perspectives on her and other young people. This disjuncture between her own understanding of culture and that expressed by teachers translated into anger, challenge and ultimately her emergence as an advocate for young people at school, in the parliament and in the field of youth activism generally, as she recounted:

> … [W]hat used to frustrate me was when I used to hear the school teachers saying something like "oh those Asian lads they are so and so" or "those Asian girls and their parents came in and said that". I didn't like that, because I thought well it's not all like that. The only reason it is like that is because you don't listen to what these young people have got, the issues they have got, you know? […] and as a young student I couldn't really step in, you know, I was powerless to do that. […] I think that's where I was really passionate. I thought to myself, one of these days you know I will be able to say these things.

For another MYP, low teacher expectations and cultural stereotyping formed the back-drop to her drive to become politically active:

> [T]eachers' expectations have such a major effect on the kids, I mean, and school is so important, and I even channelled my experience

> into youth parliament in, to […] focus on the fact that education is important, […] we all react, you know, to situations in different ways, people have come out of that, and gone on to fail, […] they've […] fulfilled what people expected of them, whereas me, I've fought against it. And education, like Malcolm X says, it's the passport to the future.

An activist from the WBYI recalled how his awareness of events in Yugoslavia and discussing it with a youth worker at WBYI had awakened his own political consciousness, recalling 'I can remember it vividly, I was in there and bombing was taken place, in Balkans, former Yugoslavia'; following a discussion about civilian casualties of the bombings, he suggested 'that really made me think and then from there it was like my mind opened a bit, just those questions … ', which propelled him into Socialist Worker campaigns in relation to the Balkans and later the Palestine cause and Arab politics. For many of the young Muslims in our sample, the events of 9/11, the war on Iraq, or the 2005 London bombings and the ensuing heightened surveillance of young Muslims were critical, politicising events that shaped their political perspectives and activism. As one Saheli member reflected, these events, the wars on Iraq, and the rise in the use of police stop and search powers among young Muslims, had had the effect of politicising her. As we discuss in more detail in Chapter 8, the experience of her younger brother being subject to a stop and search, and cast as a terror suspect, was linked in her consciousness with international events in relation to the war in Iraq, such that she perceived local and international events as cohering in a more generalised attack on Muslims and Islam, suggesting 'So – that's why I got active and used the first demonstration I went in was in College. And then I went in one to London'.

Similarly, another Muslim woman explained her decision to participate in the BKYP and in media interviews and public debates in terms of her desire to challenge dominant representations of Muslims, and Muslim women, following the 2005 London bombings:

> I think it was just the consciousness-raising to be honest with you […] having that kind of thing of wanting to change things, as a young person, it's quite strong. I had an interest in politics 'cause I was doing it for A-level, and just like after anything had happened in the world or global scene, it makes you aware that if you are not gonna make your voice heard, then somebody else is gonna come and theirs, might not be, you know, the best reflection of things. And I think,

> I think now like as a Muslim women, as you know, coming from a black background, it feels more important because, you know, that we are seen to be out there and be active, because well, probably always thinking about the Muslim community secluding itself from everyone and you know sort of isolating itself, especially Muslim women being oppressed and, you know, subjected to their fathers and tied to […] their religion. Whatever the nonsense they have said, […] and I think that there are lot of assumptions made about people like myself and it was important and thinking back on it, that I did get involved in challenging things and that I did have an opinion and I was, I was assertive, without being too aggressive and I think yeah, Muslims have opinions too.

One member of the MJM reflected on the impact of 7/7, and the immediate impact that this had had on him and the subsequent activism in which he engaged. He recounted 'I kind of woke up after 7/7', and went on to explain how the different reactions to him from white peers at College in the aftermath of 7/7 shaped his engagement in political campaigns:

> [T]he black people were still like, on our side, kind of thing, and the white people were like still kind of, they were hostile towards me even though I didn't have anything to do with it. That's what kind of pushed me more towards helping out with the protest because they were like really Islamophobic.

Group membership and the shaping of a 'radical habitus'

Whilst these 'critical moments' were significant in shaping the trajectories of many activists, such episodic experiences are not enough in themselves to explain activists' trajectories. Fillieule argues for a multimodal model of understanding how and why activists (dis)engage with movements, arguing that the 'meso level' of group involvement is an important determinant of engagement, which means 'understanding how organisations, structurally, socially and politically, select and orient individual activities' (2010: 5). Similarly, Crossley points out that whilst critical moments can trigger political participation, they are not enough in themselves to explain patterns of mobilisation, arguing that we need a 'multi-dimensional model of mobilization' (2003: 63). Crossley argues that the very act of participation in political movements, whatever contingent circumstances or critical moments may have led to it initially, can result in a reshaping of the habitus (2003: 50), and that experience of activism can be particularly important in creating a further

'disposition' towards political participation. He suggests that experience of participation can create new and radical habits and a competence in activism, promoting 'a particular way of perceiving and understanding the world, an ethos, an inclination to fight and the know-how necessary to do so' (2003: 61). In particular, Crossley (2003: 52) suggests that involvement in events or movements propentiates the acquisition of (i) questioning, criticising and distrusting perceptual-cognitive habits that facilitate challenging political elites, (ii) 'the political know-how' to turn critique into action, (iii) an ethos of action and (iv) a feeling of pleasure and purpose from activism. These combine to create a habit of action, and what is significant for Crossley is the interplay between habits of action and reflexivity/critique (that is an ability to question doxa or the 'universe of the undiscussed'). This interplay between action and critical reflexivity has the potential to institute itself as a 'radical habitus' – or as Crossley describes it 'habit-busting habits' (2003: 56)!

This resonates with McAdam's (1986; 1989) study of the 1964 'Freedom Summer' project in the USA, in which, mostly white, college students spent two months of their summer staffing 'freedom schools' and registering black voters in Mississippi as part of a civil rights campaign. In this study, McAdam adopted a political biographical approach to explore why these students applied to join the Freedom Summer project – despite the high risks and high costs to themselves of such participation. He found that the profiles of those activists who applied to the Freedom Summer project were quite similar, but that the later political trajectories of those who had participated in the Freedom Summer were very different to those who had applied but not participated, showing the socialising effect that participation *within* movements can have in encouraging further social movement activism. He concluded that participation in the movement had been transformative for the long-term trajectories of the activists involved, and that 'the summer set them on course for a kind of activist career that has continued to shape all aspects of their lives' (1989: 758). In other words, experience of activism within a movement can lead to more durable habits of activism.

Group membership can then be very important in shaping activists' habitus and this was evident from our individual interview data, in which we explored activists' personal political biographies, when we asked them to reflect on how they had become politically active, and for their reflections on their experiences within the group. For example, whilst many MYPs in the BKYP referred to 'critical moments' that had triggered their political activism in antiracist projects, campaigning for youth issues, or Muslim community politics, their reflections on their

experiences within the BKYP drew attention to the radicalising effect of group activism in the BKYP on their political consciousness. In this case, the development of a group consciousness was shaped and galvanised by confrontations between the BKYP and the Council over a number of issues (as we discuss in Chapter 5), which gave rise to a collective analysis of the opportunities and constraints that faced the Parliament, and the formation of challenges and tactical responses to these. This had had the effect of creating a group consciousness and had been important in shaping activists' perceptions of their own agency and developing their know-how and experience of activism, whilst their participation in the activities of the BKYP had developed their political interest and efficacy. The experience was transformative for many; as one female MYP, whose account of the impact of her participation in the BKYP exemplified the processes of acquisition of habit-busting habits that Crossley identifies (cf. questioning perceptual-cognitive habits, 'political know-how', ethos of action and pleasure and purpose from activism):

> [A]fter coming through this, I am now I'm politically assertive […] It's changed me. Actually, it's made me excel as a person, […] and I have a whole lot of aspirations that I'm going to use out of the knowledge that I've gained now to apply to the world […] Like now, currently, right, me and there's other people as well, we're involved with student politics. I've just gotten newly active, […], I'm the women's rep and in the Black students' committee, and I've been to National Conference, blah blah blah, and then there's Amnesty and things like that […] it's like you see the news in a different way. […] you see people in a different way, you work with things a different way, […] it's immense. … You know, you want to gain more knowledge, you appreciate where you are, […] it makes you ever more determined to succeed, and, and to do good things. […] you come to learn that […] perhaps you are a passionate person, or the fact that you can make a difference. […] there's that unity that comes together and so now, now that we're all dispersed, like, we're, we've left BKYP, we are still probably, like, carrying those sort of directions on in those sort of goals and means and try to still achieve […] in different ways.

Another male MYP explained how he felt his time in the BKYP had transformed his outlook and developed his political aspirations:

> I suppose again it is joining the Bradford Keighley Youth Parliament – that was a big stepping stop for myself. I've overcome a lot, achieved

> so many things and […] I do hope to go into politics or something similar to help make a difference in the future. […] the youth parliament is only a stepping stone. I do like to, I would like to see myself in the future taking a very much active role to be honest.

Another male MYP explained:

> *Respondent*: it was the BKYP that set me up with voluntary work […] before BKYP I didn't, I didn't know where to start on, you know, becoming a volunteer or whatever, I didn't really think about it … I was happy in my own little, world, playing computer games and whatever [laughs]. But …
> *Researcher*: But this sort of opened things up?
> *Respondent*: Yeah, it definitely did … And, I mean, as I say, it's gotten me places I never thought I'd go. Because through BKYP, I … started up a mentoring class …
> *Researcher*: So that's, that has got you involved in other things then?
> *Respondent*: Yeah, definitely, yes.

Through gathering biographical data, we found that the MYPs had emerged as BKYP candidates from a background of school, community or anti-racist involvement, although participation in the BKYP had developed their political consciousness and appetite for activism. All had either branched out into other forms of action or were planning future activity. These included mentoring, anti racist peer group training, student activism (in a women's group, Black Students Society or the FOSIS), international campaign activism (such as the Drop the Debt, Amnesty or Tsunami relief) or community activism (including setting up a Muslim youth forum in Leeds to cover the Beeston area where one of the 7th July London bombers had grown up). If questioning engagement, political know-how, an ethos of action and pleasure in activism signal the development of a radical habitus, then these were much in evidence among many of the BKYP MYPs and indicated that their involvement in the BKYP was likely to underpin more enduring trajectories of activism.

Membership of other groups in our sample had similar effects in developing the trajectories and habitus of activists, and this was a particularly notable aspect of the ways in which Saheli and the WBYI worked – with clearly gendered dimensions at work in both cases, which were important for the ethos and impact of these groups and

particularly in shaping the political trajectories of individuals within them, which we discuss in more detail in Chapter 7.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the significance of literatures on shifting repertoires of political action for understanding the diverse ways in which the activists in our sample politically engaged. As we noted, most activists voted and were knowledgeable about mainstream politics, but few saw mainstream political arenas as sites where they would express their political interests. In large part, we attribute this to young activists' preference for more direct, unmediated, 'DIY', personalised grammars of action, alongside their scepticism about the efficacy of action in mainstream political arenas. Such grammars of action reflect perhaps some emerging trends among young people more generally. We highlight however the need to contextualise political activism, and in particular, we highlight the relevance of public discourses on ethnicity, religion and diversity, experiences of racism and racialisation and membership of groups in shaping and animating political activism. We return to the role of identity and political engagement in Chapter 6. In the next chapter, we pay closer attention to the context of emergent patterns of governance and particular policy discourses in shaping the political terrain on which ethnic minority young people politically participate.

5
Participatory Governance

Introduction

Participatory governance, as we set out in Chapter 2, can be understood as a form of decentred governance based on partnering between governors and citizens (Newman 2005) that has become an increasingly prevalent mode of governance in the UK and elsewhere. Participatory governance is often advocated as a means of addressing complex policy problems (Bang 2004) such as ethnic conflict, social exclusion or youth disaffection. Indeed, under New Labour, the engagement of ethnic minority and Muslim young people through participatory governance was regarded as a mechanism for addressing problems of urban disorder, social inequalities and violent political extremism (Cantle 2001; O'Toole et al. 2012), framed by discourses of active citizenship, civil renewal, neighbourhood renewal, 'double devolution' and community cohesion. Back et al. suggest that these changing modes of governance should be central to any analysis of ethnic minority political participation, not least because the 'reconfiguration of central state/local state relations in the UK since 2000, and the reframing of the balance between participatory and representative democracy, has pluralized the institutions and sites where political power is contested' (2009: 2). This insight in our view is an important one, although not one that has been sufficiently theoretically or empirically investigated in the study of ethnicity and political participation.

Within the field of study of participatory governance, there has been a great deal of debate over the extent to which it enhances citizens' involvement in democratic decision-making and in relation to the models of citizenship and community that underpin participatory governance initiatives. Many critics of participatory governance point

to the limited offer of participation such initiatives typically entail, whilst Foucauldian-inspired theoretical perspectives tend to locate participatory governance within the range of managerial techniques that enhance governors' capacity for the discipline of citizens and communities. Such criticisms were evident in relation to the range of policy agendas developed nationally and locally during New Labour's period of office, which sought to secure ethnic minority young people's participation in the delivery of policy goals such as urban regeneration, community cohesion or preventing violent extremism. Many have argued that the participatory initiatives pursued under these policy rubrics entailed particular problems of tokenism, co-optation or social control (Bang 2004; Newman 2005). For example, the global city imaginaries that underpinned many local authorities' urban regeneration strategies were criticised for their formulaic trumpeting of ethnic diversity and inclusion in the face of continued ethnic inequalities and segregation (Henry et al. 2002). Similarly, the mobilisation of young people in the promotion of community cohesion was attacked for presenting a narrow social imaginary, based on reductive and pathologising accounts of ethnic minority communities (Amin 2005; Ratcliffe 2012). More recently, engagement with young Muslims through the Prevent agenda has been particularly contentious, with critics regarding such inclusion as a mode of discipline and control (McGhee 2008).

It is our contention that whilst participatory governance may entail problematic logics of participation and inclusion, analysis of its democratic impact needs to take account of the agency of those who participate in such governance structures. As Cornwall and Coelho (2006) suggest, governance spaces are 'invited spaces' that are framed by those who create them, but which can nevertheless become 'claimed spaces' – opening the possibility of the emergence of more productive interactions than those necessarily conveyed by institutional design or policy logics.

Much of the literature on participatory governance has tended to focus on either institutional design or state discourses in evaluating its democratising potential or the stance on difference and diversity that it expresses. Issues of institutional design are certainly important in a context where there is a proliferation of models of participation, strategies for inclusion, mechanisms for accountability and deliberative practices. However, the key premise of this chapter is that there is also a need for *practice*-oriented assessments of how state and civil society partnerships play out within participatory governance arrangements – which may operate contrary to design principles. Similarly, whilst analyses of state discourses are revealing of the logics that underpin participatory

governance, such discourses are often contradictory or inconsistent in their application and across localities and scales. This is particularly because, as Keith, in arguing for a more textured account of the functioning and practices of the local states, notes: 'Any suggestion that a local authority represents the cumulative power of a singular function ('the local state') strikes most as implausible through their empirical engagements with local councils up and down the country' (2008: 325).

To take account of these issues, we draw on de Certeau's distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics' to underpin a practice-based assessment of the interactions between governors and citizens (de Certeau 1984) that permits consideration of the scope for citizens to exercise agency to enhance their political efficacy. We contend that practice-oriented analyses allow identification of the possibilities for tactical appropriations of governance spaces by citizens – even where their founding rationale and framing discourses may appear to limit substantive participation or present narrow conceptions of inclusion.

We situate these arguments in relation to recent participatory initiatives in Birmingham and Bradford, analysing the ways in which ethnic minority young people have been targeted within these. We present data on different ways in which young activists came into contact with participatory governance – particularly through funding streams, consultations, and youth forums in the form of city youth parliaments. We discuss how participatory governance initiatives can distort the aims and practices of youth or community groups, offering limited opportunities for democratic inclusion and participation. Nevertheless, by adopting a practice-based assessment of these initiatives, we find that ethnic minority young participants employed a range of tactics to counter these effects and in some instances to achieve more autonomous objectives than those necessarily envisaged by the state.

Democratic engagement and participatory governance

There is a substantial literature on the theme of participatory governance in contemporary advanced democracies examining the emergence, design and practice of state-sponsored initiatives aimed at the inclusion of citizens in democratic political processes (Bang 2003; Newman 2005; Wagenaar 2006). Participatory governance has been broadly described as 'institutions and processes, both formal and informal, which provide for the interaction of the state with a range of other agents or stakeholders affected by the activities of government' (Mitlin 2004: 3, cited in Chhotray and Stoker 2010: 165), and as a 'practical response to

a "new" context of governing' (Chhotray and Stoker 2010: 165). This form of governing has been valorised as a turn towards a strengthening of democracy and citizens' empowerment (Fung and Wright 2001). It was evident under New Labour across a range of policy agendas (Imrie and Raco 2003; Newman 2005), and frequently involved targeting the participation of ethnic minority young people in order to address complex policy problems, such as urban regeneration, community cohesion and preventing violent extremism.

Critique of participatory governance

Critics of participatory governance have questioned whether it tends to create opportunities for citizens' meaningful participation. Bang (2003) and Newman (2005) argue that the forms of participatory governance that have been emerging incur particular problems of co-optation primarily because their rationale typically is not the empowerment of citizens *per se*, but the achievement of *effective* governance in situations of increasing social and political complexity, where governments need to partner with citizens because they cannot rely on old-style bureaucratic expertise to solve complex policy problems (Bang 2003). Accordingly, Newman (2005) detects a strong self-interest on the part of governors in seeking to partner with civil society actors, suggesting that participatory governance serves three functions, namely to address states' legitimation crises by mobilising citizens into governance practices, supply the expertise needed for solving complex policy problems and produce social integration and cohesion through the fostering of civic responsibility, where 'disorder and dissent are not legitimate elements of participatory governance' (2005: 126). For many, the emphasis on 'output politics' – or policy implementation rather than political decision-making – that characterises participatory governance (Bang 2004) falls short of substantive democratisation, constituting instead a neo-liberal model of democracy in which citizens are transformed into service consumers and producers (Cornwall and Coelho 2006), with the market becoming a 'surrogate arena of citizenship' (Beaumont and Nichols 2008: 91). Some see participatory governance as an extension of governmentality rather than a move to empower citizens in their interactions with the state (Newman 2005; Beaumont and Nicholls 2008), where partnering is seen as a mechanism for disciplining citizens, communities and neighbourhoods.

Under New Labour, the role of communities came to occupy particular significance within participatory governance: underpinned by its broader communitarian outlook (Robinson 2008) that viewed communities not just as repositories of social capital but also placed

upon them a responsibility to actively engage in governance, service delivery and tackling policy problems. Amin (2005) suggests that this emphasis on the role of communities within governance was a departure from previous state- and market-oriented approaches, and at face value 'can be praised for recognizing at long last the power and potential of an enlarged democracy that draws on the creative impulses of an active civil society and a devolved polity' (2005: 618). Amin suggests, however, that both its democratic promise and aim to tackle spatial inequalities through locally-inspired solutions were limited. In part, this was because of the difficulties in charging local areas with delivering economic growth or urban regeneration in a context of increasing connections and flows between spaces and localities (2005: 619). More than this, New Labour's approach to achieving economic, political or social renewal in 'hard-pressed areas' was particularly problematic, he suggests, in its articulation of a 'new ethic', 'epitomised by talk of revitalising social capital, community cohesion, civic responsibility, public spaces' (2005: 615), which made the 'social symptoms of decline/deprivation the subject of moral commentary' (2005: 620). Thus, the emphasis on local community engagement, according to Amin, amounted to a form of 'conformist civic particularism [...] that expects collective action from communities in particular places and for highly instrumental ends' (2005: 615). Similarly, Newman argues that models of devolved participatory governance under New Labour tended to offer 'a narrow social and political imaginary' and to citizens a 'myth of agency' (2005: 127).

The concept of community that was invoked in New Labour's participatory initiatives has been subject to critique in terms of how it was seen to contain encrypted assumptions about particular ethnic and cultural groups as problems to be managed (Worley 2005) and in valorising an assimilationist conception of community that downplayed inequalities experienced by racialised groups (Back et al. 2002). Many commentators suggest that these problematic logics were particularly evident in the Community Cohesion agenda that increasingly came to characterise New Labour's approach to the management of ethnic and cultural diversity (see Flint and Robinson 2008).

The summer of 2001 is frequently historicised as a turning point in the way in which the New Labour government approached issues of 'race', ethnicity and integration, breaking with earlier commitments to anti racism and multiculturalism (Worley 2005). In the wake of New Labour coming to power in 1997, early commentators were quick to point out a lack of clarity and coherence in government policymaking and performance on issues of 'race', ethnic inequality and social justice

(Lister 2001; Back et al. 2002). Nevertheless, in their first term of office, instances of policy innovation and change could be cited as evidence of a progressive 'race' agenda: the report of the public inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, published in 1999, ushered in critical changes to the functioning of the criminal justice system, with the concept of 'institutional racism' being given a key place in investigations into prejudicial policing practices; the European Convention on Human Rights was incorporated into English law as the Human Rights Act 1998, 'bringing home' the ECHR's provisions with regards to the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9) and to protection against discrimination according to the protected categories of 'race', colour, language and national or social origin (Article 14), whilst the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 extended the already powerful provisions of the 1976 Act, which had likewise been passed by a Labour government. Following these developments, the Runnymede Trust Report on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain, published in 2000, called for a re-envisioning of the 'national story' to reflect the social plurality and multicultural constituency of contemporary British society (Runnymede Trust 2000).

The series of inquiries that ensued from the 2001 disturbances, however, ushered in a paradigm shift in how issues of 'race', ethnicity and difference would be addressed and managed by the state. As other commentators have remarked (Robinson 2008; Ratcliffe 2012: 264–5), the lexicon of '*community* cohesion' had been unknown in British social policy discourses on 'race' and ethnic identity prior to 2001. However, its adoption and use in the aftermath of the 2001 disturbances posited the notion that 'unmanaged diversity' was a threat (Burnett 2008: 38), and henceforth gave priority to value-oriented integration between ethnic 'communities', couched in terms of fostering shared commitment to 'core values' (Hussain and Bagguley 2005; Bagguley and Hussain 2006). In the guidance offered to local authorities, these priorities emphasised a 'common vision and sense of belonging' between people of different backgrounds, as well as an appreciation of 'diversity' and the development of 'strong and positive relationships' in different social settings, including schools, neighbourhoods and the workplace (LGA 2002: 6; Ratcliffe 2012). As Ratcliffe observes, such culturalist concerns effectively eclipsed long-standing issues of socio-economic inequality between ethnic groups, with material disparities being only partially acknowledged in the form of a euphemistic reference to the need for 'similar life opportunities' between people of different backgrounds (LGA 2002: 6; Ratcliffe 2012: 265–6).

Underpinned by New Labour's Civil Renewal and localism agendas, this rubric of community engagement stressed the importance of

empowering and enabling local communities to take responsibility for finding solutions to the problems they faced – a view echoed in the recommendations of the Denham Report (2001: 14). As the 2002 LGA Guidance made clear, the active involvement of communities was crucial to the community cohesion agenda, arguing that 'real cohesion' and 'real change' can only occur when different sections of the community are involved (LGA 2002: 10).

The focus on community engagement was similarly evident in New Labour's approach to counter-terrorism, and particularly in relation to the implementation of the Prevent agenda. The government's 'Contest' strategy for combating terrorism has four elements: 'pursue', 'protect', 'prepare' and 'prevent'. The latter, in the aftermath of 7/7, developed as a 'hearts and minds' (DCLG 2007) approach to countering violent extremism based on developing partnerships with Muslim groups at national and local levels (O'Toole et al. 2012). The Prevent agenda was heavily influenced by ideas of community cohesion as expressed within the Cantle Report (McGhee 2008), and there was significant overlap with community cohesion policies in the implementation of Prevent (Thomas 2010; O'Toole et al. 2012). McGhee (2008) identifies contradictions in this community-focused counter-terrorism strategy, with Muslims posited as both a suspect community and partners within 'a 'broader' community relations counter-terrorism strategy' (2008: 50). He suggests that partnering with Muslim groups rested on a number of problematic binaries (good and bad, extreme and moderate Muslims; and see Birt 2008) and assumptions (about faith leaders and language skills), but perhaps most damagingly extended an offer of engagement on highly limited terms, where issues of British foreign policy, for instance, were not up for discussion, with government seeking to cultivate 'a 'moderate' majority to work with them on *their* counter-terrorism strategy' (2008:57–8; and see Birt 2009). As a consequence, McGhee suggests 'it is clear that reaching out to young Muslims, through strategies that would include them and engage them (before extremists do), is limited by the restricted dialogue that these young people are being invited to participate in' (2008: 62).

Participatory governance in practice

Whilst the critique of both the limited democratic orientations of much participatory governance and the problematic conceptions of community that underpinned participatory governance under New Labour pose serious questions for the substantive democratic potential of participatory governance, we argue that there is a need to attend

to the agency of citizens who engage in such initiatives. Here, we are interested in the possibilities for citizens to effect changes on the practices of the state, even where the state's purpose in including citizens in new structures of governance may be circumscribed. As Cornwall and Coelho argue, participatory opportunities that are provided by the state are 'invited spaces', marked by asymmetric power relations, but they may be 'conquered by civil society demands for inclusion' (2006: 1) in order to become 'claimed spaces'. Characterisations of participatory governance as a form of governmentality aimed at producing new citizens who assimilate to government objectives often tend to assume that such strategies are successful. Clarke (2005: 460) points out, however:

> It is easy to read strategies, grand designs or interests as being realized in practice, but the regularity with which new strategies have to be invented suggests that reality is often recalcitrant. People sometimes refuse to 'know their place'. So, in the context of New Labour's strategies to modernize them, do people – in their complexly differentiated places – live up to the aims and ambitions of the strategies? Do they comply cynically and calculatingly? Do they resist or refuse?

As Newman (2005: 134) suggests, 'the active citizen may not act in the way envisaged by government', and Taylor (2007), following Tarrow, suggests furthermore that despite problems of co-optation and colonisation, participatory governance can create new political opportunity structures that social actors may exploit. These possibilities, we suggest, require practice-based analyses of how state and civil society relations play out (and see Chhotray and Stoker 2010).

In outlining a practical, critical approach to the study of politics, James Tully (2002) argues that the 'practices of governance', that is 'the means by which the structure of governance is held in place', including language games, webs of relations of power and habitual ways of thinking and acting, need to be understood alongside the 'practices of freedom', that is the responses of individuals and groups who act within systems of governance. Practices of freedom are 'the diverse means by which subjects are able to resist, organise networks of support, bring the governors to negotiations and hold them to their agreements' (2002: 546). Tully specifies three types of 'practices of freedom':

1. Individuals and groups comply with governance practices, but in so doing modify them in often 'unnoticed and significant ways' (2002: 540).

2. Individuals and groups challenge governance practices and use available procedures to modify them.
3. Individuals and groups resist governance practices by escaping or confronting them.

Such 'practices of freedom', Tully suggests, constitute the 'democratic' side of governance, and he asserts moreover that 'Practices of governance imply practices of freedom and vice versa' (2002: 541).

This focus on practices of governance and freedom foregrounds the interactive nature of governance – although, as our own account acknowledges, this interaction is typically based on asymmetric relations of power. De Certeau's (1984) distinction between the 'strategies' that institutional actors with the power to constitute the rules of the game adopt, and the 'tactics' deployed by citizens to pursue their own more autonomous objectives, is a useful way of framing the asymmetric nature of the interactions between state institutions and citizens, whilst permitting consideration of the scope for citizens to exercise agency to enhance their political efficacy in their encounters with institutional power (see also O'Toole and Gale 2008). Although state-civil society relations within participatory governance are typically asymmetric, with state actors holding strategic power to (re)constitute the terms of engagement, we hold open the possibility that civil society actors may act tactically within them to change, modify or 'claim' governance spaces (Cornwall and Coelho 2006).

De Certeau's distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics' resonates with Cornwall and Coelho's acknowledgement that participatory spaces are asymmetric spaces in which citizens may nevertheless exercise agency:

> As 'invited spaces', the institutions of the participatory sphere are framed by those who create them, and infused with power relations and cultures of interaction carried into them from other spaces … Yet these are also spaces of possibility, in which power takes a more productive and positive form. (2006: 11)

Central to our analysis of the relationship between the state and citizens, then, is the agency of civil society actors who engage in participatory governance arrangements. We suggest this is a particularly neglected aspect of research on the relationship between the state and ethnic minority young people, which has focused a great deal on state discourses and policies and paid rather little attention to the agency of ethnic minority young people. We concur with Keith (2008: 326) that

'study of the interface of multicultural dynamics and bureaucratic process is essential (and frequently forgotten) in a study of "race relations sociology"'.

Participatory governance in Birmingham and Bradford

In this section, we set out some contextual aspects to the ways in which ethnic minority young people featured within participatory governance in Birmingham and Bradford during the period of our field work in 2004–2007.

In Birmingham, from the mid-1980s and throughout the 1990s, attempts at including ethnic minority groups within local decision-making processes tended to focus on developing different models of 'group representation' within the SCF (see Chapter 2), with individual representatives being required to represent the interests of entire 'communities'. As we discussed in Chapter 2, for many commentators (BRAP 2004: 7–8), this model encountered significant difficulties, not least because different sectors of ethnic minority groups – and particularly women and young people – were excluded from effective participation in local decision-making. The SCF was ultimately disbanded in 1999 (BRAP 2004; Smith and Stephenson 2005). Shortly afterwards, questions concerning the representation of ethnic minorities within local governance in Birmingham were highlighted in the highly critical findings of a commission on race equality in the city: the Birmingham Stephen Lawrence Inquiry of 2001. The Commission's report stated that, despite a 'raft of race equality policies, initiatives and structures', '[t]hings are not working' in Birmingham, and drew attention to the under-representation of ethnic minority groups in the city's governmental structures (2001: 2). In relation to young people, at the '1st Race Summit' that was held in Birmingham in January 2003, the then Council Leader Albert Bore acknowledged: 'it is clear that some parts of our communities, particularly our young people, continue to experience high levels of unemployment, low educational achievement etcetera, and they feel therefore that they have little stake in this City' (2003), a point that was later echoed in the Parkinson Report (2007) on the city's future development which made critical reference to the lack of diversity within the city centre. This deficit acquired a particular resonance within the regeneration strategies that were pursued in the city from the late 1990s, in which ethnic diversity was routinely cited as a key asset in Birmingham's quest to become a 'global city' (Henry et al. 2002; Parkinson 2007: 46). Yet, the Parkinson Report was highly critical

of the city's lack of engagement with its young and ethnic minority populations (2007: 52).

In the mid-2000s, during our period of fieldwork, the local democratic engagement of ethnic minority young people assumed a particular place within City Council's narratives on urban regeneration and in its 'going local', community cohesion and Neighbourhood Renewal strategies, with initiatives such as the establishment of the North-West Birmingham Youth Senate, ward-level youth forums and the development of the Birmingham Young People's Parliament that was established in 1997 (which became the Birmingham Children and Young People's Parliament (BCYPP) in October 2008, and subsequently re-styled as 'Voice is Power' in November 2009). Birmingham was also a recipient of PVE funding aimed at engaging young Muslims from 2007, when Birmingham City Council drew down Pathfinder funding for projects aimed at engaging Muslim young people, although this was not in place at the time of our fieldwork and thus did not feature in our data.

Participatory governance initiatives were also evident in Bradford, during the period of our research, although the local expression of this was driven by the Community Cohesion agenda that developed in the wake of street disturbances that took place in the city in the summer of 2001. In a similar way to the urban disorders that occurred in a number of British cities during the 1980s, those that took place in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001 triggered a series of institutional responses in the form of governmental reports and recommendations (Cantle 2001; Clarke 2001; Denham 2002). Whilst these reports differed in detail and emphasis, central to each was the assertion that patterns of ethnic segregation had resulted in a lack of interaction between people of different ethnicities in all three areas. The theme of 'segregation' formed a key focus of the reports, and as Bagguley and Hussain (2006) argued, was discussed almost exclusively in cultural terms, whilst the socioeconomic dimensions of 'segregation' received very little attention. Consequently, the ensuing policy recommendations gave pride of place to the need for value-oriented (as opposed to socioeconomic) integration, couched in terms of the discourse of 'community cohesion' (Hussain and Bagguley 2005; Bagguley and Hussain 2006). The Home Office report chaired by Ted Cantle emphasised that 'community cohesion' around shared sets of 'core values' should be a fundamental goal of government strategy at both local and national levels (Cantle 2001). In both its normative connotations and its implementation, the discourse of 'community cohesion' exemplified many of the limitations identified within much participatory governance as

outlined above. Thus, the goals of the community cohesion agenda were defined within national government initiatives, with responsibility for delivering them devolved onto local government and partnerships forged between local state actors and voluntary sector groups and organisations. In this way, as Bagguley and Hussain (2006) commented, the Community Cohesion agenda resulted in a 'blurring of the state/civil society distinction' (2006: 2), as the political connotations of the 2001 disorders gave way to the 'management' of community interaction and the 'managerial techniques' through which this was to be achieved (2006: 6).

Importantly, the initiatives underpinned by the Community Cohesion approach laid stress on the engagement of young people in local democratic processes. Concerns about young people's political engagement were an important point of focus in the aftermath of the 2001 disturbances, with governmental reports and media commentators suggesting that particular groups of ethnic minority young people were increasingly politically disaffected. (LGA 2002: 23).

In Bradford, the local response to the Community Cohesion agenda took a variety of forms. Central to its delivery was the Local Strategic Partnership, 'Bradford Vision', which co-ordinated urban regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion through partnership with Bradford Council and a variety of community and non-governmental actors. Bradford Vision was established in April 2000, predating the disturbances of the summer of 2001 (and replaced by the 'Bradford District Partnership' in 2008). Nevertheless, subsequent to the Bradford Race Review (Ouseley 2001) and the Cantle Report (2001), Bradford Vision worked closely with the Home Office to implement a Community Cohesion Delivery Plan, using central government funding in the form of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. In keeping with the overall themes of the Community Cohesion agenda, Bradford Vision paid considerable attention to the participation and inclusion of young people – and particularly young people from ethnic minority backgrounds – in local democratic processes. Thus, alongside concerns with civic pride, participation and citizenship, a key strand of the Community Cohesion strategy focused on encouraging young people into leadership and active citizenship. The establishment of the BKYP in 2002 was a key facet of this strategy, alongside the development of a system of school councils and a 'Bradfordised'[1] Citizenship Education programme for secondary schools.

In both cities, there were a range of initiatives aimed at the democratic inclusion of ethnic minority young people in order to fulfil a

variety of objectives, such as urban regeneration, crime control, educational achievement or community cohesion. In both cities, there were locally specific political and institutional contexts that formed an important part of the terrain on which ethnic minority young people politically engaged. In the next sections, we consider how young people responded to the different governance initiatives that they encountered, focusing on funding streams, consultation, and state-initiated youth forums in the form of the youth parliaments in the two cities. Across these encounters, we found that activists were often very critical of the implicit conceptions of ethnic minority young people that were embedded within them, as well as of the often constraining nature, and limited offer, of participation they entailed. Despite, or even at times because of, such critique, we found numerous examples of young activists employing 'practices of freedom' in their encounters with 'practices of governance', that served to modify or challenge them in ways that made them at times, more responsive to the interests or concerns of ethnic minority young people.

Funding streams

In our discussion of mobilisations in locally focused alternative public spheres in Chapter 2, we raised the issue of how seeking access to local authority funding streams potentially entailed problems of co-optation, dependency and state 'colonisation' (Werbner 1991) of ethnic minority political organisations and agendas, particularly for what Werbner describes as 'moral communities' based on mutual welfare and internal giving and orientated towards 'collective provision for communal needs' (1991: 30). These dilemmas were certainly experienced by the many groups we encountered, which emerged not only in the course of the focus groups and interviews in our research but also in discussions with a wider range of groups and individuals working with ethnic minority young people who we contacted during our mapping work in the two cities.

Many of the groups we contacted had links to various governance networks, and many were in receipt of, or seeking, central and local governmental funding for initiatives focused on engaging ethnic minority young people to participate in the delivery of particular policy agendas such as combating crime, intervening in gang culture, promoting interactions across young people from different ethnic and cultural communities to serve the Community Cohesion agenda or promoting civic engagement. Those groups that were in receipt of such funding

were often acutely conscious of both the constraining and the enabling effects of these funding sources upon their activities. Thus, funding was often seen as underscoring the asymmetric nature of the relationship of partnering between the local authority and groups involved in working with ethnic minority young people. This was manifested in perceptions of funding streams as tied to local authority goals and priorities rather than as responsive to the needs of local groups, or as steering or even distorting groups' work – sometimes in ways that exacerbated highly problematic representations of black young people or Muslim women.

Thus, several groups identified what they saw as a disjuncture between the needs of the constituencies with whom they worked and the priories of local authority funding streams: one interviewee from 'Saheli' women's group in Birmingham suggested that there was frequently a mismatch between what was considered 'good for the city' and what her group felt was in the best interests of the local area in which they operated. Another interviewee from a Youth Inclusion Project felt that his organisation was torn between providing quality programmes that added appreciable value to the knowledge, skills and experience of its members, and the requirement to meet the prescriptions and targets specified by funding bodies, where targets, in his view, placed greater emphasis upon the quantity of individuals accessing the services his organisation provided than upon the quality of the provision itself. Such mismatches often resulted in groups reconfiguring their remit to fit with the prescriptions and criteria of funding guidelines – sometimes with distorting consequences. One interviewee from the Birmingham Voluntary Youth Sector Network (BVYSN), gave the example of a central government funding scheme known as 'Connexions', which funded organisations providing training and recreational activities aimed at diverting young people away from involvement in gun-related 'gang culture'. Whilst this programme had funded a range of youth organisations, the normative underpinnings of the scheme necessitated the implicit 'self-criminalisation' of young people who were not yet 'criminals', in order to be eligible for funding. On the one hand, such groups were seeking to resist representations of black young people in terms of crime, gangs and disaffection, whilst on the other, funding streams required them to classify black young people in this way in order to enable them to provide training, mentoring or educational support for those young people. Another organisation working with black young people, *Young Disciples*, spoke of the gulf between the priorities of the local authority and the needs and concerns of black young people. Established to challenge 'the boundaries of local and governmental

action' particularly in relation to areas of black settlement and black young people in Birmingham, Young Disciples saw its remit to address what it saw as the lack of governmental response to unemployment, educational disadvantage and poor amenities and youth provision, as well as to tackle representations of 'gang culture', and what it saw as a pathologising focus on black young people in relation to crime or rioting. For example, the focus group discussed an instance of a cross-group initiative with a group of South Asian young people to provide mutual help in renovating and developing premises, which they saw as a positive initiative that had received no local authority support or attention. The focus group complained about the asymmetry of their engagement with the Council in relation to which issues were seen as worthy of funding, support or attention:

> [T]here was no councillors, there was no MPs, there was nobody. Now, I can guarantee if it was a day about the riots, or if it was a day about the girls that died,[2] the place would have been packed with every journalist you can think of and news reporters. And the youths in our community see and they notice for themselves. And then […] they're expected to, at a drop of a hat work with them when it suits them. It is no, there, there is no transparency between the two. There always is, like, wolves in sheep's clothing syndrome.

These examples concur with the thesis that New Labour's Third Way compact to address local, youth and welfare issues by engaging community and voluntary groups in service provision was underpinned by a managerial approach to moulding such groups to deliver state objectives (Clarke 2005). Nevertheless, many groups were not merely passive objects of such state strategies, but engaged in their own tactics to achieve funding for their activities, whilst holding out for a more autonomous identity and purpose. For example, certain organisations developed strategies for creating autonomy for themselves within the constraints imposed by funding bodies by pursuing multiple grants, or from funders at different spatial scales, in order to make the requirements of any one funding agency less binding in its effects on the group or to bypass the over-determination of youth work by local authorities by tapping into national or European level funding. Whilst this still necessitated the customising of the organisation's goals to the respective funding stream, due to the scale of their operations and geographical distance from the organisations they supported, national or European level funding agencies were seen to be relatively less intrusive than

those operating at the local level, helping to release the group from being over-determined by local authority agendas.

Consultation

In many ways, the groups with whom we worked were involved in local consultations with a variety of agencies and organisations, such as the local council, the police, or health and fire services. Whilst there was a general view that consultation could or should be a normal aspect of government decision-making processes, many respondents were sceptical about consultation procedures, particularly in relation to their rationale, outcomes, the ways in which they were conducted, and the terms on which young people were invited to participate within them.

These issues arose particularly for MYPs in the Birmingham YPP, which was often patronised by local government officials and other service providers to fulfil requirements placed upon them to consult with young people. As one respondent commented during a focus group, the state-of-the-art electronic voting facilities provided within the YPP debating chamber provided a particularly seductive and easy mechanism for agencies to claim to have fulfilled their obligations to consult with young people, without necessarily entailing genuine engagement:

> Young People's Parliament quite often is used as, as this way of showing, because obviously a number of organisations have to fulfil the requirements under Article 12[3] of the UN Convention, they have to fulfil the requirements under 'Every Child Matters', under youth matters [...] we often got people coming in to almost show that they had consulted young people because it was a box they had to tick on a form somewhere, erm fantastic! But it didn't, it wasn't really much use to us, and they got their boxes ticked but, and that's all sorts of different service providers who have to consult with young people, because of course a very formal structure like that is a fantastic way of being able to consult with young people, minimal effort maximum output! You get statistics, I mean you go in there and there's a voting facility there, telling you in graph form within seconds!

Similarly, another Birmingham MYP stated:

> That's been a problem with the Young People's Parliament. A lot of people come, you know, just seeing young people, they [...] aren't

> really interested in what you want to say, but so that they can tick the box and say that they talked to you.

John Clarke, in evaluating New Labour's participatory and consultative initiatives, suggests they: 'are often disconnected from consequences or outcomes – such that it is hard to tell the effectivity [sic] of being consulted, involved or engaged' (2005: 45), and this was echoed by our respondents' experiences of consultations. As one Birmingham MYP, reflecting sceptically on his experience of participating in a consultation with a government ministry, commented on the tokenistic nature of the consultation, in which MYPs' views were solicited not to affect the outcomes, but to validate the decision:

> [T]he Department of Work and Pensions […] were very interested in getting young people's views on pensions over the last few years […] they weren't going to change what they were doing, because young people said 'Actually we don't like the plan that you're now putting in place, where we all have to work till we're much older than you will have to work currently'. […]they're not in a position where they're going to relinquish, or change their decisions so […] I find it difficult to objectively see how they will usefully use our input. […] and this is another danger that, you know, the DWP will now turn around and say 'Yes, we consulted with young people who are, you know, going to be working longer than we will, whilst producing this new scheme, and this is what we've come up with'. But that's not to say that they have changed anything because of listening to young people [Amused].

Similarly, in relation to another consultation he reflected on the lack of connection between the consultation and the outcome:

> [W]e had the fire brigade to talk about installing sprinkler systems in schools and I'm sure they went away with that, that information that they gathered here and said 'OK, this many young people said that we want sprinkler systems in our schools', and I'm sure that went to someone somewhere in some form of document to support, whatever, sprinklers in schools … But we don't see that, it just goes and gets buried in a pile of papers somewhere and I think that's the problem.

Another Birmingham group, the Saheli women's group, was involved in a wide range of consultations with statutory authorities, including

the local authority, police or Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), given their organisational presence and remit focused on working with under-represented women, regarded by statutory authorities as a 'hard to reach' group. The Saheli women were critical of much of the tokenism of such initiatives, the lack of impact of much of this activity, and the terms on which they were invited to participate:

> [W]e're endlessly invited to like consult. For example, just earlier this week we were at a CPS consultation about the police and about Muslim women and, just the Muslim community being hardly listened to, and how we wanted to influence the CPS […] it had a lot to do with the kind of like the whole 7/7 and terrorism, and us being labelled terrorists and stuff like that, […] And it was useful but you kind of, they call the same kind of people there and they asked Saheli to go along to you know, get more women in […] maybe they are productive, but I never see the kind of fruits of those kind of consultations […]And now you're getting like the same people coming and with the same kind of questions and not really getting the answers that they want, so I just, I dunno if it's the most productive way of using our time really.

Nevertheless, they regarded such events as an important aspect of government responsiveness and accountability. As we discuss in further detail in Chapter 7, Saheli members regarded their own involvement in such events as significant, particularly where this helped consolidate the collective political identity of the group by providing a training ground for very young women to encounter officials and representatives. This participation also enabled them to challenge gender and ethnic stereotypes by providing an opportunity for Muslim young women to articulate their perspectives – countering perceptions of them as passive or politically uninvolved. Such experiences support the argument of Cornwall and Coelho (2006) that participatory spaces, even when their democratic practices are questionable, can facilitate the development of new political subjectivities. In particular, the example of Saheli's engagement with such initiatives points to the significance of this particularly for groups whose presence in the public domain has hitherto been constrained – and we explore this in relation to women's presence in the public domain further in Chapter 7. This is not to say that the criticisms that Clarke and others raise about consultation are not well-founded, or indeed reflected in the experiences of the activists with whom we worked, our point here is that these limitations

notwithstanding, activists can sometimes forge from these initiatives more autonomous political agendas and gains than those necessarily offered by the local state.

Youth parliaments

In this section, we discuss the establishment and operation of the youth parliaments in the two cities, and how this exemplifies some of the often-cited limitations of state-sponsored participatory initiatives. Specifically, the problems of co-optation and the colonisation of young people's engagement by the state were evident in some aspects of how the parliaments were constituted and run. Nevertheless, an analysis of the interplay between institutional strategies to achieve a particular set of government-determined goals, and the tactical challenges of the young people involved in these, lends weight to a different account of the democratic significance of these youth forums.

The BKYP was established in September 2002 with the election of 30 members (MYPs) to the Parliament representing five constituencies from across the Bradford and Keighley district. Anyone between the ages of 11 and 25 was allowed to stand and vote in the elections. The first cohort of MYPs was elected on a turnout of 6,417, which was equivalent to a turnout of approximately 6.5% of the youth population in the district. Whilst no specific strategies were adopted to achieve ethnic diversity among the MYPs, the elections attracted relatively proportionate numbers of white and Asian Muslim candidates – perhaps as a result of the area-based nature of selection, which in Bradford is strongly characterised by territorially-based ethnic concentrations (Phillips 2001, 2006).

Bradford and Keighley Metropolitan District Council established and funded the BKYP, and the Council's Youth Service was responsible for its day-to-day running. The BKYP was established by the Council to carry out its 'strategies' for policy implementation and service delivery in the local area. In particular, the BKYP contributed to and extended two prominent strands of local government policy: firstly, the Council's Community Cohesion agenda, and secondly, the Youth Service's four key objectives of 'participation', 'education', 'equality' and 'employment'. The Council not only funded the Parliament but also drew up its constitution and expressed a formal commitment to consulting with the BKYP in its policy-making processes. Thus, the Council's constitution recognised the BKYP, and MYPs sat on certain Council committees (including its Neighbourhood Renewal Committee). As such, the BKYP had no institutional foundation that stood apart from its relationship

to the local state: the terms on which the MYPs came together and were subsequently able to act as a coherent political body were entirely dependent upon this relationship.

The Birmingham YPP was formally established in 1997, but began its life in its custom-built facilities at Millennium Point in 2001, becoming the BCYPP in 2008 (after our fieldwork had been completed). The YPP served a dual function. On the one hand, it was an organisation for facilitating the delivery of the Citizenship Education curriculum through its work, coordinated by youth workers, with schools across Birmingham, who subscribed to the Parliament. The YPP also acted as a forum for young people aged between 10 and 19 to meet and discuss issues relating to young people. This forum met on a weekly basis, with a formal Council that met five times a year. Attendance at the forum was potentially 200, but in reality, members suggested numbers were much lower than this. In organisational terms, the YPP was closely tied to the schools that subscribed to it, in that they formed the pool from which the members of the Parliament were drawn. By contrast, the BKYP membership was constituted through district-wide elections. This is an important point of contrast between the structures of the Birmingham and Bradford Youth Parliaments, which has significant consequences for the ways in which young people engaged with the local state, as we explore in more detail below.

Birmingham City Council provided part-funding for the YPP, and it was supported by the revenues raised by the citizenship education activities organised by the attached youth workers. The agenda of the YPP, however, was very much led by the MYPs, and the types of issues that emerged from the sessions included graffiti, crime, street lighting, the criminalisation of young people through the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), the lack of recreational facilities for young people, personal safety and the lack of consultation with young people by the City Council. Indeed, to exemplify the latter point, the YPP's contact with the City Council tended to depend on the initiative of individuals within the Council to get in touch with and take an interest in the YPP, or attend one-off events, such as question-and-answer sessions, or a young people's summit that was held to mirror the G8 summit in 2003. This was quite distinct from the situation in Bradford, where the Council had a constitutional and formalised engagement with the BKYP.

Although the two parliaments were constituted to provide young people with a forum for participation and expressing of their views, they exemplified quite different models of representation and participation.

In both cases, we found that MYPs developed highly critical narratives of the structures and practices of the Parliaments, and there were similarities and divergences in these critiques. At the broadest level, both sets of MYPs discussed problems of tokenism in the constitution of the parliaments as youth forums. During the focus group with MYPs in Bradford, for example, the following comments in relation to the MYPs' lack of impact were made:

Respondent 5: [A]s young people, you know, I felt like they'd given us responsibility with one hand, but they took it away with the other.

Respondent 3: Yeah.

Respondent 5: Do you see what I mean? So we were allowed to do it, because they were ticking all their boxes to say, 'oh, young people are going here, young people are getting involved here …' you know, but it wasn't, we knew what was going on, kind of thing, and we had to put up with a lot, you know, and we had to put up with a lot. And we had to stay quiet and remember we were representing the young parliament, and even though individually we all had our views.

In Bradford, a key concern was that consultation exercises initiated by the Council had overloaded the MYPs, colonising their time and resources, and thus limiting the scope and autonomy necessary to forge their own agenda. The MYPs became increasingly dissatisfied with the manner in which the Council's consultation requirements over a broad range of Council policy initiatives set the agenda for the Youth Parliament, and with what they perceived to be the excessive constraints exercised by the Council over their activities. Moreover, the forms which these consultations took were felt to be inappropriate, in that MYPs were asked to sit on Council committees and read through long policy documents, with little effort having been made to ensure that the language of the proceedings and documents was accessible to young people.

Similarly, in Birmingham, some MYPs felt that events held by the parliament were not taken seriously as meaningful expressions of young people's interest in specific issues. Rather, they were patronised by local government officials and other service providers to fulfil requirements placed upon them to engage with young people. As noted above, the state-of-the-art electronic voting facilities provided within the YPP

debating chamber provided a particularly seductive and easy mechanism for agencies to claim to have fulfilled their obligations to consult with young people, without necessarily entailing genuine engagement.

In Bradford, MYPs reported becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the dominant role that the Council played in setting the Youth Parliament's agenda and because issues moved by the MYPs were often over-ridden by the Council or relegated below Council issues. As the focus group discussed:

Respondent 1: [P]ersonally I feel that we do have difficulties, or to discuss the issues we want to discuss. It's always, like, 'talk about that, yeah, but don't go that way, talk a bit more about these issues'.

Respondent 2: We were being controlled.

Despite the BKYP's role as a mechanism for youth engagement in relation to the Community Cohesion agenda, MYPs felt that the Parliament was given little say over how or when it might engage with the issues arising from the 2001 disturbances. This is somewhat paradoxical considering the centrality of this event to the founding of the BKYP. As one of the participants commented:

> [T]he Bradford riots, that was one of the problems – not any more – but when we wanted to talk about that, we didn't have the chance. And that time has gone now, and it's a different issue […] racism for example. But, they [the Council] would come back and talk about old issues, when we were trying to, maybe, get over that, you know, resolve that and move on. And I just feel like they were the ones that put the questions on the table and they pretty much controlled the agenda.

From the outset, MYPs in Bradford perceived a gap between their own political aspirations and the objectives set for the parliament by the Council. As another participant commented:

> It's like you get told you've got the freedom, yet you haven't, do you know what I mean? You're still being controlled, it's like, you know, 'you can do this, oh go on, go on, do it' but 'oh no actually, may be not that, you can't do that'.

From the earliest phase of their period in office, then, the MYPs felt frustrated by the idioms and procedures (the 'strategies') adopted by

the Council for the functioning of the BKYP, and regarded these to be at odds with their own conception of effective youth participation. In the focus group, the MYPs continually signalled their awareness of co-optation within the Parliament:

Respondent 1: We got co-opted …
Respondent 2: Yeah, we got co-opted …
Respondent 3: At times, we may be the puppets on strings, kind of thing. Do you know what I'm saying?

Nevertheless, once constituted as a body, the MYPs began to appropriate certain formal aspects of the institutional space of the Youth Parliament, as a means to forge what they perceived to be a more responsive youth agenda than the one originally envisaged by the Council. In other words, the MYPs began to make what we would define as, following de Certeau, a 'tactical' use of the institutional arrangements available to them in the Youth Parliament, to develop an alternative youth agenda in the strategic domain marked out for them by the Council. For instance, almost upon the opening of the parliament, a significant instance of disagreement between the MYPs and Council came as a result of the MYPs' proposal to hold a 'stop-the-war' rally in opposition to the war in Iraq. This proposal was blocked by the Labour-controlled Council (who had passed a motion signalling support for the New Labour government's policy on Iraq). For the MYPs, this clash illuminated at a very early stage the nature of the parliament's relationship with the Council. As one participant noted:

> I mean, like, I think when we all started, I mean I personally think I was a bit naïve, and I expected too much … because the Council had passed a motion saying 'we support the troops in Iraq' and therefore we can't let you do this, and the young people, the kind of consensus was we wanted to do something and therefore we were just told 'finito', we can't do it, and that kind of caused a barrier, because we thought, OK, we've been elected legitimately, we've got a right to do this and we've got a Human Rights Act, Article 12, blah-de-blah-de-blah … and why, and then kind of, the whole financial barrier, the whole kind of controlling the space, the whole police permission, that kind of all came into the thing, and I think that kind of woke us up a lot, in terms of, there's us guys thinking, OK, we've got the power, we're the voice, well actually you haven't because the Council controls where the money goes, and what you can do.

However, rather than acquiesce unconditionally to this opposition, the MYPs compromised by staging a 'peace walk' – thus ostensibly submitting to the Council's position, whilst tactically signifying their anti-war position.

Another crucial development, and one which is significant to future cohorts of MYPs, was the decision to re-write the constitution of the Parliament, which had been originally drafted by the Council. Changes included lowering the age range of the parliament from 11–25 to 11–21 – to stop the 11- to 15-year olds being dominated by the 21- to 25-year-olds: in other words, to make the parliament 'younger'. A further shift in the terms of engagement made by the MYPs was to change the name and terminology of the BKYP 'sittings'. This change came about as a reaction to their experience of the first Council-led sitting, which had been viewed as over-formal and inaccessible (being housed in Council Chambers and appropriating the formal idioms of Council proceedings). Instead, Youth Parliament sittings were dubbed 'wot's ur flava?' to better communicate to young people the purpose of the Parliament and to overcome what had been perceived as alienating language and practices of the more formal sitting. This dissonance between the language of the Council and young people was jokingly referred to in the focus group:

Respondent 1: [S]he [a city Councillor] sent me a personalised letter [following the first sitting]. I think she quite enjoyed it, really.
Respondent 2: Did she?
Respondent 1: Yeah. Saying I was the Chair.
All: Oh, you were the Chair!
Respondent 3: She called you a chair?
All: [Laughter]
Respondent 1: Insulting!
Respondent 4: I know, insulting, you're an object …

They decided that, in future, these events would be held in alternative venues to the Council Chambers, which were found to be too formal. In a similar vein, the MYPs resisted attempts to have their work-load determined by the Council, by diverting the consultation functions of the Parliament to a 1,000 strong E-panel of young people drawn from the Bradford and Keighley district. They argued, not unreasonably, that this forum was more likely to express the diversity of young people in the district and to provide a much more robust mechanism for articulating

youth perspectives in relation to Council policies – rather than seeing the 30 MYPs as the embodied voice of young people in the area.

There were a series of other changes made by the MYPs to the terms on which the Youth Parliament engaged with both the Council and with young people in the Bradford and Keighley area who constituted the electorate. These included strategies for determining their own political agenda, including holding residential workshops for the MYPs and youth consultation events to facilitate more autonomous agenda-setting practices. In a variety of ways, the MYPs sought to resist the Council's view that the Parliament should confine itself to local and service delivery issues. For instance, the MYPs continued consciousness-raising work in relation to international political events (such as the war on terror and Iraq, the Drop the Debt campaign, or Tsunami relief), despite their awareness that this was not seen by the Council as a legitimate focus of the parliament:

Respondent 1: [J]ust something that happened yesterday in the papers, about certain charities being told that they support terrorism, so therefore, and you're kind of making people aware of how that is political and what changes they can make, even if it's not a big global change.

Respondent 2: Yeah, but you see, the Youth Parliament won't be able to do anything to do with that, because they'll say 'what's that to do with our issues?' You know? And I think it's unfair because it affects you, do you know what I mean?

Respondent 1: It does, yeah …

Respondent 2: And the fact that we're in a transitional period, but the world the way it is, I just feel like, sometimes, this is the pretence of doing X, Y, Z, you know, we're not able to do the issues, or deal with the issues we want to deal with.

…

Respondent 4: And we weren't allowed to be party political, and get a sense that, there was a big focus on, we should only do it local issues. So like …

Respondent 5: Yeah. But if that's what's affecting young people, then I don't see why we couldn't mention it. I mean, those that have got an understanding on national and international issues, they are obviously going to express those concerns …

Adapting de Certeau's terminology set out above, each of these changes and challenges can be interpreted as appropriations of the 'established language' and rules of procedure governing the activities of the Youth Parliament. Each of them indicates that the power relations between the MYPs and the Council were not static or unidirectional. Rather, they show how the MYPs were able to thread an alternative youth agenda through the Council's existing objectives, working in tandem with these objectives when there was an overlap, yet working in opposition to them when they were perceived to be unduly constraining. The MYPs were not merely subjects of power within a given institutional set-up, but were skilled actors who were critically aware of the constraints imposed upon them by the Council and the role these played in defining the terms on which they were able to politically engage. Whilst the focus group's discussion reveals frustration at the pervasiveness of the Council's control, they also hint that this control was experienced most acutely at times when the MYPs sought to fashion elements of their own youth agenda. Moreover, other comments made during the group discussion suggest that the shared experience of this control served to increase the cohesiveness of the group:

> [T]he Council controls how much power we have. But to be honest that was a positive as well, because it brought us all a lot more close together [agreement from other group members]. I mean, to begin with we were all like colleagues, you know like, we just met every now and again, but then, but *now* … [semi-jokingly] I can safely say … we're all like friends, do you know what I mean!

Although the BKYP made efforts to forge a more autonomous and youth-responsive agenda, there remains the important question of whether or not their actions can be interpreted as having had a transformative impact on the way in which the Youth Parliament is configured as a forum for young people's political participation, and on the relations between this forum and the Council. Whilst the MYPs were able to make 'tactical' appropriations of the institutional space, this does not necessarily suggest that changes in the structural position of the Youth Parliament ensued as a result. Interestingly in this regard, there are certain aspects of the way that the structure was set up by the local council that empowered the MYPs to challenge the constraints that they experienced. In the first place, the members of the BKYP are elected to represent constituencies, which imparted to the MYPs a sense

of being legitimate representatives and conferred a strong sense of connection with the areas that they represented:

> *Respondent 1*: And it kind of felt legitimate because we were elected, and it wasn't just that we'd been chosen by someone …
> *Respondent 2*: Yeah, by some random figure … 'you can and you can't …'
> *Respondent 3*: It was like, young people *for* young people.

In this respect, the traditional method of democratic control via elected representatives, although qualified in a variety of ways,[4] exercised a powerful symbolic and motivational effect on the respondents' perceptions of their role within the Parliament:

> [I]t was quite complex trying to sort out for each area how many votes they got, and stuff, but then it kind of motivated me when I got in and I thought, OK, people have voted for me so I've got a duty to represent them too, you work that bit more hard to get their views heard.

The creation of constituencies was important for creating a sense of an area-wide focus with the parliament and in our view, perhaps unintentionally but effectively, brought about an ethnically diverse group of representatives. In Birmingham, by contrast, the MYPs were self-selecting, and as a consequence, tended to come from a limited range of areas of Birmingham, and from a predominantly white, middle-class background. They did not see themselves as able to speak to power on behalf of young people in Birmingham.

A second key feature of the structural arrangements related to the BKYP's relationship with the local state. The City Council's formal obligation to consult with the BKYP as well as to respond to its work encouraged a two-way relationship between the local state and the Youth Parliament. In Birmingham, involvement with local elected representatives and members of the City Council was very much dependent on the interest of individual Council members, MPs and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) rather than on any formal commitments. The relatively institutionalised relationship between the state and the Youth Parliament in Bradford provided a mechanism by which the BKYP could potentially exercise political power in a manner that was not available in Birmingham.

A key consideration regarding the transformative effects of the BKYP's tactical challenges to the structures provided by the Council

was that when the first cohort of MYPs formally stepped down from the Parliament (in January 2005), fresh elections were held and a new second cohort of MYPs was elected. In this process, it was possible to see that some of the gains (or cultural capital) achieved by the first cohort were transferred to their successors. In particular, the first cohort engaged in a series of mentoring meetings with the second cohort, concentrating particularly on the Parliament's strategies for determining its own political agenda. These emphasised the need for the new MYPs to foreground agenda-setting in the work of the Parliament and to forge an agenda in consultation with other young people. Thus, the second cohort, under the guidance of the first cohort, held a youth conference with 200 young people drawn from the Bradford Keighley District, in order to consult with, and determine the strategic priorities of, young people. These were identified as drugs and gun crime, racism, disability and potentially significantly for the institutions of the Council, the issue of youth provision, which could well involve the BKYP mobilising in relation to the Council's organisation of youth services. Contemplating the future of the second cohort, the focus group of members from the first cohort predicted a changed structure:

Respondent 1: It's changed for the new people a lot. It's going to be very set in how many meetings there are going to be, and in terms of, they're going to have a national conference where they prioritise key issues, and they, and next year they'll concentrate on that …

Respondent 2: Yeah, they'll have a set number of projects they're going to be working on, whereas us lot, if a project came along we just started up …

Respondent 3: We just latched on and did as much as possible.

Respondent 2: This time, it's more structured, and they know exactly what they're going to do.

Respondent 4: Plus, we're linking in with the Council this time as well […]. Also, ideas were that, like […] MYPs are actually going to go out in the area and actually do something. You see, we did this, do you know what I mean, we did our area youth work. But […] I mean your question being about, you know, how much of an influence we've had, I think we had a massive impact, you know, on whatever's going to happen in the future, do you know what I mean? Obviously we

were kind of 'the dummies', so to speak, do you know what I mean, it was a kind of … trial …

Respondent 3: The pioneers, the pioneers!

Respondent 4: Yeah, all right OK [laughs] trial and tested everything, do you know what I mean, that come our way, but it's been an interesting experience.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have posed some questions concerning the changing relationship between the state and civil society and how these relate to the political participation of citizens in participatory governance structures. Whilst the move towards participatory governance appears ostensibly to hold democratic potential, a number of theorists point to the limitations of state-sponsored relationships to underscore a substantive increase in the democratic input of citizens into decision-making processes. In part, our data bear out these criticisms. For example, the establishment of the BKYP emanated from 'state imperatives' and was under-girded with sets of normative, and culturalist, assumptions concerning how ethnic minority young people, should enter into relationships with the state. Similarly, the Saheli group's experiences of participatory governance also involved problems of tokenism, lack of recognition and impact and narrow assumptions about Muslim/Asian women. Nevertheless, we argue that a practice-oriented analysis of the unfolding relationships that play out in such initiatives point to the possibilities for participatory spaces to be reconfigured by civil society actors.

Furthermore, we suggest that participatory governance can serve to create new political subjectivities and political spaces, even when they are steered by top-down strategies. Thus, the experience of co-optation strategies on the part of the Council in Bradford was highly politicising for the members of the BKYP, and galvanised them to organise as a cohesive group in order to forge an autonomous political agenda in opposition to that imposed upon them by the Council. Thus, young people who entered into state-sponsored youth schemes were active in reconfiguring the terms on which they interact with the state, achieving thereby a partial fashioning of their own agendas and creating a political space for young people that did not previously exist. Similarly, interactions in participatory governance were significant for Saheli members in promoting the presence of Muslim/Asian women within the public domain, thereby drawing attention to their capacities as public actors

to both the local state and their local communities. In the following Chapter 6, we develop further our analysis of the ways in which state practices inscribe particular conceptions of ethnicity and culture, and how these shape ethnic minority young people's political engagement.

Questions concerning the agency of civil society actors in their relations with the state have arguably become more pressing in the new policy environment created by the Coalition government, particularly in light of the major restructuring of the state's role in service provision, which has had an impact on the ways in which citizens participate in governmental processes, particularly at the local level (Lowndes and Pratchett 2012). In part, these developments have not only been driven by government's public spending cuts but it is also clear that this restructuring is ideologically underpinned by a model of devolving state powers of decision-making and service delivery into the hands of groups and organisations within the voluntary and community sectors (Lowndes and Pratchett 2012; Sage 2012). These policy developments have made specific, albeit limited, reference to youth engagement, most notably in the form of a proposed National Citizenship Service for young people aged 16 to 19, to stimulate social engagement and responsibility (Evans 2011: 168). However, as parliamentary discussion of youth services has made apparent, cuts to local government are having a disproportionate effect on youth services, which are often regarded as dispensable, 'Cinderella' services: in some instances local authorities are considering closing their youth services altogether (Hansard 2010). As community cohesion is increasingly subsumed under the themes of 'Localism' and 'the Big Society' in a period of fiscal shrinkage, it remains to be seen what form schemes to enhance young citizens' participation will take in the coming years.

6

'Race', Culture and Representation: The Changing Contours of Identity Politics

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we considered the ways in which the state enshrines a variety of models of youth participation, and the implications this has for ethnic minority young people's political engagement. In particular, we examined how Birmingham and Bradford have developed divergent models of participation for young people in the form of their respective youth parliaments. Left largely implicit in our discussion of these models was the issue of how institutions of the state, at both local and central levels, inscribe and enact particular constructions of the identities of the groups they target in their policies and initiatives. In this and the following chapter, we address the political connotations of changing ethnic and cultural identity categories, exploring how specific categories of identity become lodged in the political and operational machinery of the state, and the implications this had for young people's political identity formation and mobilisation. Given their centrality to the emerging research literature, we position the chapter in relation to recent developments in the theorisation of black identity politics, focusing in particular on the overlapping notions of 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1996[1989], 1999; Gilroy 1993), 'hybridity' (Werbner and Modood 1997), and 'intersectionality' (Young 1990; Collins 1998, 2000).

In our research, we find much to support these recent theoretical departures, particularly in their aspiration to transcend group essentialism and their attempts to give expression to layers of sociological complexity in identity politics that have tended to be elided in older paradigms of 'race relations' research (Collins 1998). As we discuss in detail in Chapter 7, for example, the work of Black feminists on 'intersectional

paradigms' (Collins 1998, 2000) has considerable relevance to the ways in which we conceptualise the engagements of young Muslim men and women in our study, whose activism simultaneously articulates their youth, gender and faith commitments in ways that are politically overlapping and categorically non-reductive. Nevertheless, our findings also lead us to concur with Modood (2000) that there is more to be said for the endurance of various forms of communal, group-based politics, and the recreation of the constituencies on which these politics rest, than the recent focus on 'hybridity' and 'intersectionality' allows for. In light of this, we argue the case for a reappraisal of the 'political' within identity politics, in a way that neither reifies identity categories nor characterises them as irremediably 'essentialist' when they can be seen to be at work in the political practices of young people themselves. We argue that such a reappraisal needs to be premised upon empirical investigation of the ways in which young people's ethnic identities underpin their political engagements and mobilisations.

To pursue this argument, the present chapter is organised into four sections. In Section 'Anti-essentialism and the racialisation of politics: reconsidering the relationships', we set out the broad trajectory taken by debates over 'race' and identity politics in recent years, evaluating the prominent position that notions of 'hybridity' have come to occupy in these debates as they have become focused around issues of essentialism and anti-essentialism. We also discuss here the analytically cognate concept of 'intersectionality', examining both its potential and its limitations as a tool for identifying the overlooked complexities of group-based interests and experiences. In each of the ensuing sections of the chapter, we develop these theoretical concerns empirically, to consider how our respondents' political engagements, and the meanings they ascribed to them, connect with current writing on the politics of identity. In Section 'Changing identities and the cultural politics of representation' of this chapter, we address the ways in which our respondents' social and political self-understandings, whilst diverging from state-driven representations of 'ethnicity', nonetheless rested upon group-based imaginaries that were shaped by shared experiences of racialised exclusion, as well as in the generational negotiation and recreation of cultural heritages. In this context, we also address the growing importance of religion amongst members of our sample, and how this was negotiated in relation to more identifiably 'cultural' components of their heritage. In Section 'Institutionalised disadvantage: an enduring legacy', we develop these themes further by honing in upon our respondents' encounters with mainstream institutions such as the criminal justice and educational systems, which have featured

most prominently and lastingly in debates over the racialising effects of institutional policies and practices. Picking up the thread of the political-biographical approach taken in Chapter 4, in the Section 'Discrimination, disadvantage and the shaping of participation' we consider to what extent these encounters with state institutions, in conjunction with the media, served to shape both the ways in which our respondents understood themselves as political actors, and how they politically engaged. Having established the parameters within which we consider it appropriate, and necessary, to engage the conceptual and analytical language surrounding 'intersectional' identities, we move on in Chapter 7 to examine the ways in which religion, 'race' and gender become mutually constitutive of the activism of members of our sample.

Anti-essentialism and the racialisation of politics: reconsidering the relationships

Over the last three decades, approaches to theorisation in the field of 'race' and ethnicity have undergone considerable revision and change, with significant – if often implicit – ramifications for the ways in which the relationships between ethnicity and politics are investigated and conceptualised. From the late 1960s to the late 1980s, much sociological research on migrants and minorities in Britain was premised on a 'race relations' paradigm that was indebted to research on 'race' in the context of the US. Most notably, the seminal works of John Rex and his collaborators (Rex and Moore 1967; Rex and Tomlinson 1979) broke new sociological ground in the UK by adapting and augmenting the insights of US-based studies of 'race', such as those of Gunnar Myrdal (1944) and the early Chicago School (Park et al. 1925), to the postwar British experience of mass migration and settlement. From the 1980s onwards, however, the dominance of this approach was increasingly called into question, most prominently in the work of scholars associated with Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (Hall 1996[1989]; Gilroy 1987). Stuart Hall, in particular, criticised these research models on account of what he saw as their tendency to reify the cultures of South Asian and African Caribbean settlers in Britain (Hall 1996[1989]).). Politically, moreover, research conducted within the 'race relations' paradigm was considered by some critics to be normatively suspect because of its concern to inform – 'at one remove' – the production of governmental social policy instruments that mobilised and uncritically reproduced established, popular ideologies of 'race' (Gilroy 1980: 48). This more critical 'cultural studies' approach to

engagement with identity and politics linked to parallel epistemological developments within feminism, opening up important new research vistas that drew attention to the intersectional and multifaceted nature of social identity formation. This intellectual project is compellingly stated in the work of Iris Marion Young (1990), whose central focus is the way in which the dynamic interplay between 'identity' and 'difference' acknowledges multiple dimensions to the constitution of identity, and the correspondingly multiple forms (or to use her term, 'faces') of 'oppression' experienced by marginalised groups.

In terms of interrogating the essentialism inherent to much work on 'race' and identity in Britain, one of the most enduringly important statements on the shift in black cultural politics in Britain is Stuart Hall's seminal essay 'New Ethnicities' (Hall 1996[1989]). Although the immediate concern of this essay was to analyse emerging trends within black British film-making, its attempt to relate these trends to what Hall clearly saw as a more wide-reaching departure within postwar black politics served to foreshadow much subsequent debate over precisely what is at stake in the politics of 'race'. In particular, much has been made of Hall's claim to have identified a key moment in black politics, in which the 'unifying framework' constituted through mobilisation around the term 'black' had given way to more complex political subjectivities, which demanded to be reconciled with, rather than simply subsumed within, an over-arching 'black' political identity. As Hall famously expressed it:

> What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category 'black'; that is, the recognition that 'black' is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature. What this brings into play is the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experiences of black subjects. This inevitably entails a weakening or fading of the notion that 'race' or some composite notion of race around the term black will either guarantee the effectivity of any cultural practice or determine in any final sense its aesthetic value. (Hall 1996[1989]:443)

It is important to acknowledge here that Hall was careful to allow for the continued availability of a politics premised on the shared experiences

of exclusion around which black politics in the 1970s and early 1980s had provisionally cohered. In the same essay, for example, Hall observes that the shift he claims to identify in the configuration of black cultural politics should not be understood as the emergence of a 'new' phase from the exhaustion of the 'old', since these phases 'overlap and interweave' in significant ways. As Hall remarks:

> [W]e need to be absolutely clear what we mean by a 'new' phase because, as soon as you talk of a new phase, people instantly imagine that what is entailed is a *substitution* of one kind of politics for another. I am quite distinctly not talking about a shift in those terms. (Hall 1996[1989]: 442)

Similarly, in a closely related essay on 'old and new identities, old and new ethnicities' (1999), whilst noting the tendency for an over-arching black politics to 'silence' the experiences of some of the groups brought under its sway, he stresses the fact that struggles organised around this identity have not gone away: 'So long as the society remains in its economic, political, cultural and social relations in a racist way to the variety of Black and Third World peoples in its midst, and it continues to do so, that struggle remains' (Hall 2000: 151). The significance of this from our point of view is that, as we show in later sections of this chapter, there were some instances in which our respondents did ascribe to inclusive anti-racist politics, but there were also numerous examples of young people converging on forms of group politics, particularly amongst our Muslim respondents. Nevertheless, as the impulse to counter the regressive tendencies towards essentialism in much public and academic discussion of 'race' gained ground throughout the 1990s, more attention came to be focused on the complexities, differentiations and fusions – the 'newness' – discernible in changing minority ethnic identities, which were critically opposed to the homogenising use of reified ethnic ascriptions. As Claire Alexander (2002) has argued in an assessment of the changing fortunes of the category 'black' within identity theory, the trend in recent decades has been resolutely towards the abandonment of analytical concern with the coalitional moves that can inform anti-racist and other identity-based struggles, in favour of a search for the 'new' and 'emergent' elements within different identity positions, approached within the increasingly dominant framework of 'cultural difference' (2002: 553). The titles of academic studies alone, appearing in the two decades following Hall's essays, clearly indicate this recurrent preoccupation with the 'new' in research on ethnic identities: 'new ethnicities,

old racisms?' (Cohen 1999), 'racism and reform: new ethnicities/old inequalities?' (Gillborn 1997), 'new ethnicities and urban culture: racisms and multiculture in young lives' (Back 1996), 'constructing the "new ethnicities": media, sexuality and diaspora identity in the lives of South Asian Immigrant Women' (Durham 2004), 'new ethnicities and language use' (Harris 2006), 'new ethnicities online: reflexive racialisation and the internet' (Parker and Song 2006) and 'mixed race, post-race: gender, new ethnicities and cultural practices' (Ali 2006).

As is well known, it was through these debates over 'new ethnicities' and the critique of essentialism that, from the 1990s onwards, the notions of 'hybridity' and 'intersectionality' came to occupy prominent positions in the lexicon of cultural theory. As such, it is important to recall that the lionisation of 'hybridity' within cultural theory served an avowedly politicised analytical purpose. Whilst specific applications of the term and the connotations with which it has been invested varied considerably, more celebrated uses of the term draw upon the concept's perceived ability to disrupt through transgression the categorical orderings on which racialised practices and cultural representations rest. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), for example, Homi Bhabha uses 'hybridity' to underwrite his concept of 'third space', an 'in-between' position he identifies in the writings of postcolonial authors that confounds the distinction between national cultural 'authenticity' and tradition on the one hand and 'Western' (post)colonial modernity on the other. The value of this position, according to Bhabha, lies in its potential to inform a 'new' politics that is not founded on the entrenchment of putative cultural polarities:

> [T]he theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity.* To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the people. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves. (Bhabha 1994: 38–9)

Similar political tropes inform Paul Gilroy's discussion of the emergence of hip hop in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), a musical form he characterises as 'a hybrid' that was 'nurtured by the social relations of the South

Bronx where Jamaican sound system culture was transplanted during the 1970s and put down new roots' (1993: 38). The key question underlying Gilroy's discussion of hip hop and other 'hybrid' forms of black cultural expression is why, and under what cultural political forces, a music which 'flaunts and glories in its own malleability' should come to be represented, including by African American elites, as 'an expression of some authentic African-American essence?' (Gilroy 1993: 33–4) For Gilroy, it is precisely in their transgression of reified, 'authentic' cultural categories that this and other cultural forms associated with the trans-Atlantic African diaspora can be regarded as politically significant. Recently, these and related ideas have been extended through the work of Anoop Nayak (2006) who identifies the makings of what he describes as a 'postrace paradigm' in ethnographic research on identity that also can be seen as a political commitment to disrupting racial categories.

Whilst its sources lie in debates within feminism (Yuval-Davis 2006), the notion of 'intersectionality' is closely related, conceptually and politically, to that of hybridity. Hybridity has been applied, largely though not exclusively, as an aesthetic category in relation to various fields of cultural production, where its reference points are the complex cultural positioning and identities of those implicated in such production. In contrast, the concept of intersectionality has tended to be used as a way of capturing the interface between different categories of social division, especially gender, ethnicity, 'race' and social class. However, as in the case of the academic discourse surrounding hybridity, 'intersectionality' has also been assigned a critical role in countering the tendency towards reification that accompanies the ascription of undifferentiated social and cultural categories in social analysis and policy debates. Correspondingly, advocates of intersectionality stress the political potential of intersectional approaches to provide a bulwark against group-based essentialism, whether in academic parlance or in the field of political mobilisation itself (Crenshaw 1991; Yuval-Davis 2006).

Intersectional approaches have been developed particularly strongly within black feminist thought in the US context (Collins 2008), where attention has been drawn to the ways in which African-American women have been exposed at the level of structure to a conjunction of socio-economic, racial and gender-based forces of oppression. However, recent contributions in this field emphasise that whilst such overlapping forces of oppression may have separate structural bases, at the level of experience, they are not 'additive' but mutually compounding and constitutive (Collins 2008: 138–45; Yuval-Davis 2006: 196–9). Patricia Hill Collins, for example, reveals how patterns of violence experienced

by African-American women are distinctive in their tendency to arise at the intersection of race and gender, a tendency that has been all too readily overlooked in the essentialising though counter-hegemonic social movements of (colour and culture-blind) feminism and (male-dominated) anti-racism (Collins 1998: 925–30). As Crenshaw (1991: 1) observes in relation to the same theme:

> [t]he problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite – that it frequently conflates or ignores intra group differences. In the context of violence against women, this elision of difference is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class.

As we explore more fully in the next chapter, these critical contributions to anti-essentialism provide an important conceptual vantage point from which to consider the politics of ethnic minority young people. In particular, an intersectional perspective proved crucial in our research as a means to understand the distinctive political engagements of young Muslim activists, both men and women, whose political biographies reflect a pronounced gendering of the racialising discourse of Islamophobia (see Chapters 4 and 7). More generally, the underlying premise of our overall study can be construed as 'intersectional' insofar as it is concerns the distinctive political interests and engagements of ethnic minority *young* people.

Academic contributions organised around the themes of 'hybridity' and 'intersectionality' have provided a critical counter-weight to the homogenising representation of ethnic 'cultures' and 'communities' that have predominated in much public (and indeed some academic) discussion on the theme of identity, and such interventions continue to have analytical and political potency. This can be seen, for example, in relation to the crude culturalism of integrationist thinking that was evident in New Labour policy and practice associated with 'community cohesion', which we discussed in the previous chapter (see also Back et al. 2002). Nevertheless, there are a number of serious critiques to which the premises of anti-essentialist positions have been exposed that need also to be taken into consideration, in terms of their implications for the political research undertaken in our study. One major challenge to the concept of hybridity, mounted by critics such as Floya Anthias (2001) and John Hutnyk (2005), concerns the masking effects

of hybridity when used in relation to globalisation, regarded by most hybridity theorists as the driving force behind the forms of cultural interchange that produce hybridisation to begin with. As Anthias has put it (2001: 619) '"hybridity" may unintentionally provide a gloss over existing cultural hierarchies and hegemonic practices'. A key issue for Anthias here – and one that relates to the issues engaged in Chapter 7 of this volume – is the relative silence of the literature over the forms of social power implicated in globalisation, and how the expansion of global capital may compound and reshape the patterns of patriarchy that are inherent to it.

From the point of view of our research, a more serious issue arises from specific conceptual tendencies inherent to anti-essentialist positions, which have important implications for the conduct of empirical research, particularly in the field of politics. Significantly, the preoccupation in much research to explore hybridic 'newness' and 'intersectional' forms of identity often plays out on a rarefied conceptual terrain that is disconnected from the daily social and political realities that structure the lives of racialised individuals. Paradoxically rather than offering a way out of the impasse of categorical reification, anti-essentialist arguments risk becoming locked into an unending search for forms of categorical interplay that disregard or overlook the experiential and strategic continuities in group structure. Yet in methodological terms, there is no necessary reason why acknowledging the need to unsettle reified and essentialised categories of (minority) identity, where they can be shown to exist, should commit researchers to regarding all claims to group-based identity politics with scepticism.

As is shown in the work of a number of ethnographers (Back 1996; Alexander 2002), whilst anti-essentialism undoubtedly captures important aspects of the cultural political experiences of individuals in socially marginalised positions, the restriction of its concerns to particular kinds of cultural expression means that other dimensions of racialised experiences are left untouched. On this issue, the observations of Les Back in his research on youth identities and urban multiculture in London, are instructive:

> What is omitted in the deafening row over 'essentialism' and 'anti-essentialism' is the complex interplay between these two impulses at the everyday level and how forms of social exclusion and inclusion work through notions of belonging and entitlement in particular times and places. Within Europe's major conurbations, complex and exhilarating forms of transcultural production exist simultaneously with the most extreme forms of violence and racism. (Back 1996: 7)

Similarly, in *Cartographies of Diaspora,* Avtar Brah (1996) tries to steer a course through these issues in her categorisation of difference as experience, social relation, subjectivity and identity. Specifically, she attempts to differentiate between individual identities on the one hand and collective social relations on other to explore mobilisations that link experiences with social relations to develop emancipatory political movements (Brah 1996: 95–127). Together, the work of these and other critical voices alert us to the discrepancies that exist between the conceptual discussions characterising much recent cultural theorisation around 'race' and ethnicity and the experiences and interpretations that operate in the racialised interactions and lives of young people themselves.

Our purpose in this and the ensuing chapter is to provide an account of the interrelation of identity and politics that neither discards the insights of what might be termed the 'new ethnicities' paradigm nor overstates the significance of these insights in relation to the political subjectivities and patterns of engagement of ethnic minority young people as these actually emerge. As we reveal throughout the discussions that follow, we find much empirical evidence to support the arguments of anti-essentialists for whom the concepts of hybridity and intersectionality have become intellectual lodestones. Against this, however, we do insist that the relevance of these theoretical innovations is not to be established at the level of theory, but rather on the plane of empirical enquiry and validation, and in turn, in the political engagements of racialised individuals. On this issue, we strongly concur with Tariq Modood's (2000: 179–180) powerful observation that:

> we do not have to be browbeaten by a dogmatic anti-essentialism into believing that historical continuities, cultural groups, coherent selves do or do not exist. Nothing is closed a priori; whether there is sameness or newness in the world, whether across time, across space, or across populations are empirical questions.

In summary, we find much to support the views of Hall (1996[1989]), Gilroy (1993) and, most recently, Nayak (2006) with regards the changing contours of racialised identities in Britain, and the view that the dialectics of cultural fission and fusion which are driving these changes have refashioned older, collective forms of struggle that previously coalesced around a politics of race. However, we also suggest that the structuring effects of enduring experiences of racialisation, often at the hands of mainstream institutions, give a continuing vitality to collective political forms. These sit alongside but are not effaced by hybridic or intersectional

cultural politics. In the remainder of the chapter, we develop further these overlapping concerns with change and continuity in the identity politics of the young people we encountered in our study, grounding our observations in the mobilisations in which our respondents engaged. We show that whilst an over-arching 'black' politics had only a limited resonance, there is nevertheless evidence of anti-racist mobilisation in relation to ongoing ethnic and religious attachments, which continue to give important purchase to group-based political imaginaries. In this context, we trace the implications of the increased salience of religion as an aspect of the political subjectivities of our Muslim respondents, and how this underpinned the emergence of new forms of group-based politics, framed in terms of shared experiences of stigma and discrimination. We discuss examples in which these politics were shaped, in part, by experiences of institutional disadvantage to which older cohorts of ethnic minority groups were also exposed, most notably as a result of interactions with the criminal justice and education systems. Finally, picking up themes introduced in Chapter 4, we explore further ways in which issues surrounding the politics of identity undergird the engagements and participation of ethnic minority young people.

Changing identities and the cultural politics of representation

As we argued in the preceding section, the politics of ethnic and racialised identities, and the terminology in which these politics are expressed in the British context, have undergone profound change in recent decades. In this section, we show how this change is reflected in the identities and political subjectivities of the young people we encountered in our research. At the same time, however, we show how the identities and political subjectivities of our respondents confirm Modood's (1994) proposition that key facets of minority ethnic identities are recreated across generations, through both the transmission of social and cultural practices and the persistence of patterns of disadvantage and discrimination (Modood et al. 1997). As discussed in Chapter 3, one lens through which we explored the stability of salient identity categories was in asking our respondents to self-ascribe their own ethnic identity in the demographic information we collated on completion of focus groups and interviews (see Table 3.7). Although not a predominant focus of the overall project, this exercise was critically important in allowing us to see how respondents situated themselves in relation to communal backgrounds on the one hand, and to prevailing categories of 'race' and

ethnicity on the other. Whilst no generalisations can be made from this relatively small sample, the responses nevertheless provide important insights into the complexity of ethnic minority young people's identities, which are at best only partially captured by the dominant, census-driven categories through which ethnicity is represented at the level of the state. Above all, the identities claimed by our respondents appear to reflect a number of divergent trends rather than any single pattern, confirming the argument set out above that there is both 'newness' and continuity in how ethnic minority young people choose to identify.

The clearest indication of continuity in the ethnic self-ascription of our respondents is that many of them identified themselves according to salient ethno-national identities, which in most instances coincided with ethnic categories used in the census and related instruments of public policy. As shown in Table 3.7, this is most notable in the case of Asian respondents in the sample: thus, over a quarter of our respondents identified themselves as 'Pakistani', whilst smaller numbers articulated the analogous ethno-national identifications of 'Bangladeshi' and 'Indian'. Other respondents, including small numbers of 'Yemenis' and 'Somalis', likewise articulated ethno-national identities extending beyond the narrow limits of officially inscribed categories. Equally notable was that other respondents appeared to shun this form and scale of identification in favour of more localised diasporic identities, expressing thereby a continuing attachment to the places of origin of the migrant generation. Examples here included small groups of respondents identifying themselves as 'Kashmiri', 'Mirpuri', 'Pakistani/Kashmiri', 'Bengali' and 'Caribbean'. In some instances, consciousness of a continuing attachment to a particular ethnic heritage was a feature of the specific terms chosen by respondents to characterise their identities, as in the case of respondents who identified themselves as being of 'Black African descent' and as 'Quarter-cast Caribbean mix'.

Such indications of cross-generational continuity in the identities of many of our respondents also sat alongside other, frequently hyphenated, forms of identification that expressed overlapping diasporic and British attachments. Thus, a large number of respondents, totalling 15 in all, laid claim to some form of 'British' identity, *albeit* with varying degrees of attachment simultaneously being maintained to one form of community identity or another. Salient examples included 'British Pakistani' (the second largest category overall), 'British Asian' and 'Black British'. Several respondents in the sample also articulated mixed heritage identities, although importantly, these tended to diverge from the simple additive logic informing the 'mixed' categories of the census. Thus, one respondent chose to identify themselves as 'White Asian', a

category whose semantic implications subtly differ from the additive 'Mixed White and Asian' category of the census. A further important divergence from the 'mixed' categories of the census was articulated by respondents identifying as 'British Mixed Black and White' and 'Mixed Caribbean White': here, whereas in each of the official categories 'White' precedes the category of minority ethnicity the order is now reversed, placing greater emphasis on the minority identification.

One important observation in this context, given the discussion of the increased salience of religion as a marker of minority identities in Britain, is that categories of religious, and particularly Muslim, identity were an important focus of several of our respondents' self-identification. A number of variants of Muslim identity were stated by our respondents, including 'Muslim', 'Muslim (British)' and 'British Muslim (Pakistani)'. An important commonality between these identities is that they all either subsume or expunge a specific ethnic component; thus, in the first and second of them, no ethnic or cultural tie is claimed, whilst in the third, ethnicity is given relative rather than central importance through being placed in parentheses. Correspondingly, the second and third categories accord the adjective 'British' a key role. This clearly suggests that for a proportion of our respondents at least, identifying as 'Muslim' and 'British Muslim' was arguably more significant than identifying with a more avowedly ethnic heritage.

Finally, we noted in the introduction to this chapter that we encountered few instances of 'black politics' based on subsuming narrower ethnic and cultural ties to make common cause against shared experiences of colour racism. The self-identification data are inconclusive in this context, since the increased prevalence and wide usage of the terms 'Black' and 'Black British', adopted by several of our respondents, has arguably diluted some of the political resonance previously invested in these terms. An isolated instance of the term 'black' being used in its political sense however, applied in the case of a respondent who self-identified as 'British Black Asian', signifying that for this individual, the term 'Black' was construed as politically relevant independently of any association with a particular ethnic heritage, and this perspective underpinned her affiliation to black student politics.

These trends in the self-identification of our respondents provided an index of the kinds of themes repeatedly raised during the focus groups and interviews, indicating a close affinity between how our respondents constructed and articulated their identities and the politics in which they engage. Moreover, there were clearly discernible ways in which this coupling of identity and politics reflected the coexisting patterns of continuity

and change identified in the opening section of this chapter. For example, in accounting for their political views, some of our respondents were acutely aware of the need to confront longstanding issues of racism and stigma that had previously been faced by adults from their own backgrounds, revealing in turn how specific kinds of racialised identity and politics are recreated across generational divisions. This was articulated particularly strongly by one respondent during a focus group conducted in Birmingham with an organisation catering principally to African Caribbean young men and women, Young Disciples. The remarks were made in the context of a discussion surrounding how racial stereotyping and prejudice continue to structure key aspects of the group's lived experience:

> [A]t the end of the day you can't go around saying certain things. Do you get what I'm saying? Because you're offending people. And the joke is, it's obvious, we've got people, have got feelings. Now, us as youths, yeah, like, we're not adults yet, but we've been growing up with the same thing. You get what I'm saying? So, we're living with it, day in and day out, you know, these Asians kids are this, these black kids are that. So we've got to live with it. We've got to keep on going and living with it.

For this respondent, there was a clear sense of how young people must negotiate experiences of racialisation in similar ways that previous generations had to. As the respondent put it, 'we've been growing up with the same thing'. Moreover, whilst we noted above that this organisation is run and organised by and for young people of African Caribbean heritage, these views are manifestly not constrained to express a particular set of group interests. Rather, the respondent acknowledged in a very direct way the fact that young people of different backgrounds are exposed to the same stigmatising forces and with similar consequences, in their everyday lives: 'these Asian kids are this, these Black kids are that …'. It is also important to set these views in the context of the overall work of this group, which included various outreach programmes aiming to attract young people in the surrounding area from South Asian backgrounds into its organisational fold as evidence of the coalitional politics that such group identities may yet sustain.

In contrast, other respondents articulated an identity politics that was more ambivalent about the continuing relevance of cultural and ethnic ties to their senses of self and pathways into participation. Importantly, this ambivalence was most starkly expressed in the case of respondents who articulated a commitment to religion, and particularly Islam,

which provided them with a basis from which to consciously decouple ethnicity and faith as distinct modes of identification. Thus, some of the members of the MJM (discussed in Chapters 4 and 8) acknowledged a continuing 'connection' to Pakistan, but laid greater stress upon a hyphenated 'British Muslim' identity. This confirms the observations made above in relation to the emergence of religious identities that not only intersect with but also eclipse ethnicity, whilst simultaneously articulating a link to Britishness. In the words of one respondent:

> I think […] the youngsters are more attached to Islam, more […] that's more of their identity, as Muslims, British Muslims, and they don't paint themselves as to be, kind of, […] Pakistanis as much, you know, they know that they've got some connection with Pakistan […] those kind of things, but I think, it's, it, that they've come to the conclusion that they're more British Muslim. And … I don't think the two clash, one's where you're born, the other thing is what you believe in.

The respondent went on to contrast this sense of the mutuality of faith and belonging with what he perceived as his parents' more latent commitment to religion:

> [I]t wasn't like they [his parents] forced me how to pray or something […] you know, wake me up at, in the morning, those kind of things. It's kind of left down to me, if you know what I mean, that if I wanna do it, you do it. … obviously, if I wanted they encouraged me … you know. Um, they, they'd be there for me […] it's more me now telling them, rather than them, them […] telling me. 'Cause again there's, like, kind of typical story of them coming from Pakistan, they weren't exactly religious, but their kids turned out more religious than they are.

Importantly, for these and other respondents in our sample, the emphasis placed on faith as something standing apart from more immediate familial and ethnic ties was closely entwined with their views of, and avenues into, political engagement. Thus, one member of the group stated explicitly that not only had his faith encouraged him to distinguish between cultural practices and religion but also that Islam animated and shaped his political activity:

> My religion has given me more freedom than anyone. I mean things like arranged marriages which is more culture than religion, I mean

> parents they bring up their kids more culturally, especially Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshis. It's quite, I don't know, when they read Islamically […] it gives them more freedom the way I see it, and it's given me more freedom to do things, and more freedom to speak out. It's like when my parents say to me, 'Don't go to a protest, they're gonna arrest you', but Islamically it tells me to, yeah, go to a protest and I see the word of God greater than my dad's any day.

Another member of the group drew a similar contrast between his own religiosity and that of his parents, indicating that his faith was a major source of motivation lying behind his politics:

> [T]hey want you to go and practice your religion, they want you to pray five times a day, but they don't want you to do anything else other than [that] … Islam is a way of life, it's not just, it's, it's about the way you speak, your manners and everything, but they [the respondent's parents] don't want to see anything of that. They just want me to pray five times a day, come home, don't get involved in anything.

These findings confirm observations increasingly made in the emerging sociological literature on British Muslim politics and mobilisation (see, for example, Meer 2010). Above all, this body of research has usefully shown how commitment to Islam provides not only a normative and ethical basis for the construction of a 'British Muslim' political consciousness but also a group-based framework and set of symbolic resources to be drawn on in the course of mobilisation and engagement itself. As Meer (2010) has argued, on account of the ongoing stigmatisation and Islamophobia that British Muslims face, there is a clear analogy to be drawn between this more recent form of group-based politics and forms of black and feminist struggles of the past. Arguably, it is the lingering secularist bias of the social scientific academy that prevents these analogies being more clearly drawn.

Institutionalised disadvantage: an enduring legacy

As emerged from our discussion of activists' personal political biographies in Chapter 4, a more complex narrative of political engagement and its motivations is necessary than one focused narrowly on the 'newness' of young people's social and political concerns. As we have suggested, these need to be set in a wider context, which continues to

take seriously the existence of longstanding patterns of disadvantage and discrimination experienced by members of minority groups. Of importance in this context is the way in which services and institutions of the social and political mainstream are both perceived to and demonstrably do disadvantage members of minority groups. Our argument here is that such patterns of disadvantage continue to be of profound importance in shaping the identities and politics of ethnic minority young people, underpinning in turn the continuing purchase of mobilisations forged around common experiences of racialised exclusion. Our observations in this regard are strongly supported by existing research, not least the findings from the fourth Policy Studies Institute report on ethnic minorities (Modood et al. 1997), in which an innovative chapter on 'culture and identity' revealed clear evidence that for many respondents, experiences of stigmatisation were a significant factor in their continued investment in forms of collective identification:

> The strength of their ethnic identity was owed to a group pride in response to perceptions of racial exclusion and ethnic stereotyping by the white majority. The consequent sense of rejection and insecurity was instrumental in assertions of ethnic identities, often in forms susceptible to forging new anti-racist solidarities (such as 'black') and hyphenated (such as British-Pakistanis) or multiple identities. (Modood et al. 1997: 337)

Our research shows that these experiences of exclusion and rejection continue to have a wide reach, playing out in many of the social, political and institutional spheres touching on our respondents' lives. There are therefore many substantive topics through which to further explore the theme of exclusion and its relation to the shaping of identity and identity politics. However, one of the most keenly felt examples of institutionalised disadvantage experienced by ethnic minority young people, and which has clearly endured across different generations, arose from contact with the police and wider criminal justice system. This is not of course to imply that there is a timeless and essential nature to the vexed relations between British police and racialised minorities. As Keith argues persuasively in *Race, Riots and Policing* (1993), it is necessary to guard against accounts of these relations that tend to essentialise both minority ethnic (principally young) people and the police. Nevertheless, a striking demonstration that defining aspects of the relationships between ethnic minority young people and the police are recreated across generations is that some of the core elements of the

Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies' classic account, *Policing the Crisis – Mugging, the State, Law and Order* (Hall et al. 1978) continue to apply, albeit in modified form, to the contemporary realities of racialised policing. Not the least of these concerns the way in which constructions of minority ethnic 'criminality' are invoked to justify mobilising key resources of the state to preserve 'law and order': as we show below, the folk devil of the young black 'mugger' has incompletely given way to the equally gendered figure of the 'radicalised' young Muslim male. We suggest that there is a demonstrable consistency to the ways in which various symbolic and procedural mechanisms – involving not only the institutions of the state but also the pervasiveness of the media – are implicated in socially and discursively constituting a 'moral panic' over a given social group's 'pathological criminality' (Hall et al. 1978).

One indication of continuity in the ways in which the police relate to members of minority ethnic groups vis-à-vis the wider population is clearly discernible in stop-and-search statistics collated by police forces across England and Wales, which in accordance with Section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, are recorded according to the 'ethnic appearance' of the individuals who are stopped and searched. Data on stop-and-search rates by ethnic appearance are presented in Figure 6.1 for the years 2006 to 2010, and reveal some stark contrasts.

As the chart makes abundantly clear, stop-and-search rates across England and Wales are consistently higher for members of ethnic minority – including 'Mixed' – groups in comparison with members of the white majority population. The clearest pattern revealed by the chart is that in each year, stop-and-search rates were substantially and consistently higher for 'Black' people than for all other groups: thus, across the four-year period covered in the chart, stop-and-search rates for 'White' people ranged between 15.2 and 17.9 per thousand of population, whilst for 'Black' people, the corresponding rates ranged from 91.6 to 125.7, representing a rate varying between six and seven times higher than that for 'White' people. Although less high than for the 'Black' group, rates of stop-and-search for the 'Mixed' and 'Asian' groups were also considerably higher than for the 'White' majority. Between 2006 and 2010, the stop-and-search rate for people of 'Mixed' heritage increased from 37.4 to 50.3 per thousand of population, representing an increase from 2.5 to 2.8 times the rate for 'White' people. The stop-and-search rate for people of 'Asian' backgrounds, increased dramatically between 2006 and 2010, from 28.3 to 40.2 occasions per thousand of population, corresponding to an increase from 1.9 to 2.2 times the rate for 'White' people in the same time period. These statistics become all the more revealing when

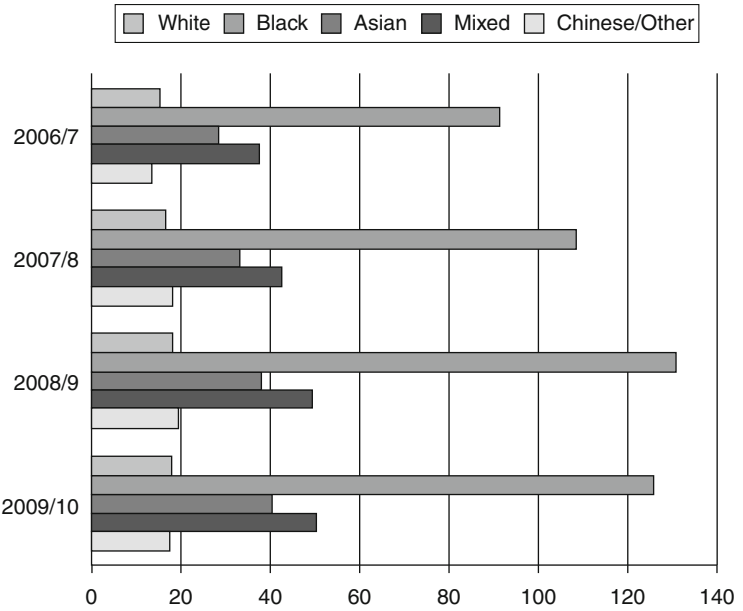

Figure 6.1 Police 'stop-and-searches' by self-defined ethnicity, 2006–2010[1]
Note: Stop-and-searches made under section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and other legislation per 1000 of ethnic population.
Source: Adapted from the Home Office Research Development Statistics reports, *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System*, 2010, http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/statistics/mojstats/stats-race-cjs-2010.pdf, 19 September 2012.

placed in the wider context of the procedures of which they form a part. Above all, it is important to note that not only do a very small proportion of stop-and-searches ultimately lead to arrests but also that the rates at which arrests are made following stop-and-searches do not differ significantly by ethnicity. This fact alone is sufficient to raise important questions over the extent to which the stop-and-search practices of forces across England and Wales continue to bear the hallmarks of racialisation.

This observable pattern of differential treatment of ethnic minority groups by the police feeds into a marked difference of perception on the part of the members of minority ethnic groups vis-à-vis the white majority, in terms of whether they believe they will receive favourable treatment in their dealings with the police and other authorities of the criminal justice system. This is clearly confirmed by data from the 2007 round of the Citizenship Survey, set out in Table 6.1. When asked to state whether they thought they would be treated 'better', 'worse' or 'the same

Table 6.1 Percentage of respondents within ethnic groups stating they would be 'treated worse than other races' by particular services/authorities (cell percentages)

Service/ Authority	Ethnic group			
	White % No.	Asian % No.	Black % No.	Mixed/Chinese/ Other % No.
The courts (magistrates and Crown Courts)	5.6 (727)	6.9 (40)	18.9 (53)	10.8 (24)
The Crown Prosecution Service	4.9 (639)	7.1 (41)	18.6 (52)	9.9 (22)
The police	5.7 (744)	18.1 (105)	33.9 (95)	16.2 (36)
Your local police specifically	4.2 (548)	13.9 (81)	26.1 (73)	11.3 (25)
The immigration authorities	8.1 (1048)	14.1 (82)	23.9 (67)	12.7 (28)
The prison service	2.4 (317)	11.9 (69)	21.4 (60)	10.4 (23)
The probation service	2.3 (299)	7.6 (44)	16.1 (45)	6.8 (15)

Notes: Figures in brackets are the counts on which the percentages are based. For each question, respondents were asked to state whether they would be treated 'better', 'worse' or 'the same as other races' by each service/authority.
Source: Citizenship Survey 2007–2008.

as other races' in their dealings with criminal justice institutions, almost a fifth of 'Asian' respondents (18%) and over a third of 'Black' respondents (34%) stated that they would expect to be treated worse by the police than members of other groups, as compared to only 6% of 'White' respondents. This pattern changes only slightly when respondents were asked to express a view on how they would be treated specifically by their local police, but here again, 26% of 'Black' and 14% of 'Asian' respondents stated they expected to be treated worse than members of other groups, as compared to 4% of 'White' respondents. Table 6.1 also shows that this pattern of response is replicated in relation to a variety of other institutions making up the criminal justice system, with consistently higher rates of 'Black' vis-à-vis other respondents anticipating comparatively worse treatment by the courts, the Crown Prosecution service and the probation and prison services. The treatment of minority groups in each of these institutional areas again represents a longstanding issue on

which there is a considerable research literature spanning several decades (Hall et al. 1978; Norris et al. 1992; Keith 1993; Macpherson 1999).

These patterns, drawn from a nationally representative dataset, provide an important context for the qualitative findings of our study, particularly those which touch on relations with the police. Indeed, expressions of negative sentiments about the police were amongst the most commonly recurring themes across all of our data insofar as relations with institutions were concerned, ranging from a generalised sense of wariness and mistrust through to bitter animus borne out of specific, and frequently politicising, experiences. A general perception of how police officers differentiate between people of different ethnicities, for example, was starkly expressed during a focus group discussion with young men of Yemeni and Pakistani heritage at a youth centre in Birmingham. One of the members of the group established a hypothetical comparison between himself and one of the researchers, a white British male, to convey how, all things being equal, a patrolling policeman would respond to them differently in the street:

> I'm Asian, you're British. I walk down the street – I smoke a fag, you smoke a fag. You take a right, I take a left. He's gonna take a left.

It is clear, moreover, on account of evidence also gleaned from our focus groups and interviews, that perceptions and actual experiences of police treatment were highly mutually constitutive. Thus, the comment cited above was made in the context of a lively discussion involving all members of the focus group over which of the young men present had been stopped and searched – a discussion which swiftly digressed into asking which of them had *not* been stopped: it transpired that all of them, without exception, had undergone this experience. Importantly, the articulation of these experiences had important connotations not only for the young men's spatial mobility but also their territorial identity – a theme we develop more fully in Chapter 8. In particular, the experience of being stopped and searched was an affront to the group not only because of the sense of infringement and violation this gave rise to but also because the practice was enacted within *their* local area:

Respondent 1:	We've been stopped, we've been stopped, we've been stopped, stopped, stopped.
Interviewer:	Who *hasn't* been stopped?
Respondents:	[talking over each other] We've all been stopped!
Respondent 3:	Yeah, everybody.

Respondent 4: In Sparkbrook […]

Respondent 5: We're not talking, okay we were not in that area, in a different area – we're talking in our *own* area. I've been stopped on my doorstep as well. On my own doorstep. And they said, 'Where are you going?' I said, 'I'm going home, I live there.' And they said 'Hang on, we'll just take your details in case something happens later on.'

Another respondent, a member of youth-led organisation in Bradford working largely with young men of Pakistani/Mirpuri heritage, spoke at length about how his personal stance with regards to the police had shifted from neutrality to mistrust, resulting from specific, negative encounters with members of the local police force. He began by remarking that he 'never used to have a problem with the police I never, ever did'. However, he went on to recount an episode in which he and some friends from school got into a fight with a group of white young men which ended in the police being called out. From his point of view, he and his friends were acting in self-defence, above all because a friend of his had been struck with a nail studded piece of wood causing a flesh-wound, and because they were out-numbered. However, on their arrival at the scene, the police allegedly arrested the respondent and his group of friends, whilst the white youths were allowed to disperse, and it was only on the intervention of a teacher from the school who had witnessed the altercation that the police ceased to regard the Asian group as the culprits and began to pursue the white youths. In the respondent's own words:

> The Police come and they threw us in the car, they took us in the back of the van and they were like swearing at us and everything and let the rest of them lot go, and […] we were gonna get arrested but luckily our teacher, my Sociology Teacher, right, he came and he explained everything to them, so they chased them lads, but by that time them lads had gone, so then they asked us, they asked us do you wanna carry out a case and we said no, basically we don't even wanna talk to them we don't wanna know them.

This experience fed directly into a more general account of why, in this respondent's view, many young men from Asian and other ethnic minority backgrounds tend not to invoke the services of the police. On the one hand, he acknowledged that disengagement from the police emanates from a lack of trust in the service, but he expressed a

conviction that this mistrust was grounded in differential treatment. As he explained:

> The point I am trying to get across is loads of lads especially Asian lads and black lads, any crime, anything that takes place, they don't normally tell the police because they don't like them, and they don't wanna know them so that's one example of why they don't like the police because why work with someone if they don't like them and why go to someone and ask for help, because then they think they are god […] The way I see it is if something happens there's loads of lads here, cos his car got broken into and they won't, they will pursue it after three or four months later but if it was somebody else's car a white guy's or whatever, then they will sort it straight away, that's how they all see it.

Importantly, this experience of exclusionary and stigmatic encounters was by no means restricted to interactions with the police and criminal justice system, but resonated in a wide variety of other institutional settings. As already touched on in Chapter 4, an equally poignant issue for several of our respondents was that of the different educational experiences and outcomes of members of minority groups in school, particularly boys of African Caribbean heritage. As with the racialisation of relations between ethnic minorities and the police, this is an issue which has also spanned several decades, and which has been debated in a correspondingly substantial research literature. Already by the 1970s, as the first generation of British-born offspring of Caribbean and South Asian migrants began to enter the school system, educational institutions came to be regarded as one of the primary settings in which racialisation needed to be tackled, on account of its incalculable long-term implications for labour market entry, social mobility and individual esteem (Gillborn 1990, 1995; Modood and May 2001: 306–8; Rhamie 2012). Recent work in this area has shown that factors such as parental and out-of-school support for pupils' learning, as well as critical engagement with the learning environment of the school itself, can help to offset some of the more entrenched patterns of educational disadvantage experienced by minority groups. However, disadvantage linked to stigma and prejudice is well-evidenced and continues to shape many young minority ethnic children's experiences of school and early life chances (Rhamie 2012). Concern about these patterns of disadvantage, and also the lack of targeted institutional support to overcome them, formed an important focus of discussion during a focus

group with young women of African Caribbean heritage at a college of Further Education in Birmingham. One of the focus group participants commented as follows:

> [B]asically, at the moment, there's, young black boys are under-achieving, and I do believe that there should be some more organisations in place to actually target these boys because, a lot of them probably are under-achieving but when they're being stereo-typed and then living by the stereotype. [...] And the legacy is living on, do you know what I mean? They're just saying, 'oh well why should I bother to go to university' or ... such and such ... 'I'd be better off doing this', or 'I'd be better off doing that', so I do believe there are, there needs to be more organisations targeting these boys.

Here again, then, we find an institutional domain in which continuity sits with change in the identity formation of ethnic minorities of successive generations, with important implications for the development of particular kinds of political consciousness and related political engagement among ethnic minority young people in the contemporary period.

Discrimination, disadvantage and the shaping of participation

So far in this chapter, we have examined some of the ways in which young people in our sample articulated their perceptions and experiences of the institutional processes through which particular group categories and identities are mobilised and stigmatised. However, of concern to us in this study was the particular patterns of response such perceptions and experiences stimulated, and more specifically, what role they had in shaping ethnic minority young people's political participation. Our respondents articulated a wide variety of reactions to their experiences of racism and ethnic stereotyping, as well as to their perceptions of the exclusionary practices of mainstream institutions. These ranged from a palpable sense of frustration, which in some accounts appeared to have given rise to a degree of political fatalism, through to a sharply honed commitment to the idea that ever more energetic political activism was necessary to overcome the pernicious effects of cultural and political marginalisation. Closer to the former of these extremes were the remarks of a member of the Birmingham-based African Caribbean organisation discussed above, which painfully articulated the dilemma that emerges when

individuals are exposed to racialised targeting on the part of mainstream organisations:

> Now, when someone throws that at you, and you're already living with it, you're thinking, 'Well, what is the point of me trying to be civilised about this. Why am I being discriminated? Why am I being targeted? Why are you always picking on me?' 'Cause you're looking around and you're not seeing no-one else but yourself being picked on and you're thinking, 'Hang on a minute'. So what am I meant to do? Am I meant to sit here and get trampled on, or am I meant to defend myself?

For this respondent, however, the impulse to self-defence did not in fact resolve the dilemma, but was perceived to increase the likelihood of exposure to reprisals, and hence to further targeting. The result was a sense of resignation that ultimately rendered defensive and non-defensive reactions equally inefficacious:

> If I do defend myself, they gonna call the police. Or if they don't, if I don't defend myself, you know, I'm still gonna get trampled on. So what do I do? Get trampled on or, you know, I'm still gonna get, either way I'm gonna get trampled on, or they gonna call the police, and the police are gonna come out and say, 'Oh, arrogant black people'. […] trample on you, so there's no point, there is just no point at all.

At the other end of the scale, however, were the views of another respondent affiliated to an all-male organisation in Bradford, primarily comprising Pakistani Muslims, although with a small membership of Eastern Europeans (we discuss this organisation in more detail in Chapter 7). Referring specifically to the contemporary prevalence of stigmatic perceptions of Muslims, particularly in the wake of the London bombings of July 2005, the respondent began by acknowledging the existence among his close acquaintances of a generalised instinct of self-preservation, taking the form of a tendency to minimise out-group contacts, and hence to avoid particular forms of targeting:

> A lot of my friends don't want to apply for a job or anything, they are like, we won't get no jobs, or we won't become anything, cos it's what they see on the news, they see, you know, like Muslims getting a bad name because of bombings and […] and the riot, they're just

> going in one corner and that's it. It's just what they are doing, it just brings them closer together and they like, won't even talk to no-one, knowing that they won't accept it, because they know they'll be a target … The media as well, they won't progress in anything, so that's another reason why. Again you just need reassurance, you just need that kind of stuff and they are not getting that.

It is clear from this that the respondent perceived withdrawal from routes into employment and other public domains as an understandable and even legitimate response to experiences of racialisation and religiously-motivated stigmatisation that he and other Muslims faced, stressing in particular the ever-present role of the media. However, whilst offering these insights into his friends' reactions, the respondent also demurred from their response, articulating the diametrically opposed view that the current circumstances constituted a moment for active engagement as a basis for challenging and over-turning misperceptions and stereotypes. As he went on to remark:

> [B]asically, nowadays it's like, the way I see it as, you have to show yourself out there, you can't just like, most of my friends they will just be in their own little corner and they will be like, we can't do this and we can't do that, whereas you have to, we are in that situation of, in order for us to live, not live as in survive or anything it's just like you know, be part of society, you have to adapt to it and like, you know, explain to them and talk to them, that's the only way they can know so it's like basically, it's all in the head … it's educating them, they need to know more about us and then they will know what's right and what's wrong, and that's what it is. That's the way I see it.

To an important extent, views such as this have taken shape against the backdrop of a pervasive media presence, which has frequently worked with other institutional processes to proliferate and magnify the stigmatic cultural categories and representations that have been at the base of a series of racialised 'moral panics'. Crucially, many of the young people in our study were acutely aware of this presence and power of the media, which helped to further constitute and shape the political, participative choices made – *albeit* in divergent, non-deterministic ways. One Muslim female activist in Bradford, for example, reflecting on her experiences of engagement with local governmental procedures through participation in the BKYP, was adamant that she would not become active in formal 'politics' on account of what she

saw as the power and tendency of the media to project distorted group representations:

> Without mentioning names, people have jumped on band wagons, specific community issues, just to hike their name up. I just think you know what are your intentions […] I think the only thing that stops me from getting involved on a political level is the media because the media will traumatise you and shame you if they want to, they do all this stuff to you depending on what you say, do you know what I mean?

However, in other instances, negative media reportage was a strong stimulus to active participation. Thus, Muslim respondents in particular were keen to exercise agency in relation to media characterisations that took shape without reference to Muslim voices. As we saw in the case of the young Muslim man in Bradford cited above, there was strong feeling on the part of some Muslims that 'you have to show yourself out there', engage with the media and wider society so as to 'explain to them and talk to them'. Very similar views about the need for engagement to overcome mediatised stigma, particularly in the post-7/7 era, were expressed by a young Muslim female member of the BKYP cited in Chapter 4, who commented on the 'assumptions made about people like myself' and the corresponding need to 'get involved in challenging things' and this was a particular political objective of the MJM in their online activism, which as we discussed in Chapter 4 was aimed at disrupting MSM representations of Muslims and Islam.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have engaged with ongoing debates within sociology and other social sciences concerning the changing contours of ethnic minority identities, tracing the significance of these debates for the political engagements of young people. Above all, we have critically engaged with the literature on 'hybridity' and 'intersectionality' which have recently gained ground in recent writings on racialised identity formation. We have found much to recommend these terms in their application to the identity politics of young people of ethnic minority backgrounds, most notably in their ability to capture, in conceptual terms, how different strands of minority identities are combined together in forces of oppression and practices of discrimination. We find them particularly powerful, in their application to the combined effects of gender, race and religion-based discrimination, which we explore

more fully in the next chapter. However, we also find that there is a marked tendency in the academic literature for debate over hybridic and intersectional 'newness' to become rarefied and ultimately divorced from the realities faced by racialised groups on the ground. Moreover, as we have seen in our discussions of young people's encounters with various institutional settings in this chapter – including the police force, education system and the media – there are ways in which younger members of ethnic minorities face very similar patterns of discrimination to those experienced by their parents' generation, hinting at large areas of continuity in how racialisation is recreated, and how in turn this enters into political consciousness and political participation. Overall, therefore, this chapter has argued a strong case for empirically re-engaging recent debates over the cultural politics of identity with the political field itself, and evaluating the validity of terms associated with 'anti-essentialism' accordingly. Adopting such a practice-oriented approach, we contend, has shown a continued relevance of group-based politics among young people, which are shaped out of shared experiences of racialised discrimination and a shared will to mobilise against them.

Additionally, as this chapter has attempted to show, among many of our respondents it is clear that faith identities serve to animate political engagement. In part, this is based on a re-imagining of the relationship between faith identity on the one hand and ethnic and cultural identities on the other – a process that also finds resonance in a range of empirical studies of Muslim youth identities (e.g. Jacobson 1997). It is important to note though that the political expressions of ethnic and religious identities and attachments are by no means exclusive, concerned only with defensive communal affiliations, but can sit alongside more general commitments to principles of recognition and broader notions of social justice. As we discuss in Chapter 8 such commitments are frequently multiply-scaled, evoking conceptions of political community that are not confined to localities or within national borders.

7
Gendered Roles, Spaces and Political Activism

Introduction

In this chapter, we consider the intersections between ethnicity, gender and political activism among ethnic minority young people, paying attention to the ways in which these shaped political consciousness and activism among the activists with whom we worked. We begin by considering briefly intersections between ethnicity, gender and the political, and how these have been discussed within debates on feminism and feminist politics in the work of black, Muslim and Islamic feminist and politics of recognition literatures. These literatures have focused particularly on distinctive political issues among ethnic minority women – drawing attention to distinctive, and sometimes autonomous, political struggles. We then reflect on the growing focus on gender within the study of race and ethnicity and how this has been traced through political and public discourses, particularly in discourses on raced bodies and sexualities and black, Asian and Muslim masculinities and femininities. We consider how these intersections between race, ethnicity and gender have featured in contemporary academic writings and public discourses on ethnic minority young people – including some of the distinctive ways these have played out in Birmingham and Bradford in recent times.

Cultural theorists have done much to draw attention to the politics of representation and discourses and practices on race, ethnicity and gender, and this approach has, along with feminism, done a great deal to interrogate the processes by which some forms of inequality, conflict, resistance and contestation are regarded as legitimately belonging within the political domain, whilst others are viewed as lying outside of it and thus deemed non-political. In so doing, they reveal the highly

normative content of conceptions of politics and the ways in which the political domain is organised. As we have argued in Chapter 6, however, this focus has sometimes been to the neglect of the ways in which agents themselves explicitly politically engage. In other words, the study of the cultural politics of representation and practice has sometimes been conducted without involving subjects in discussion of their own politics. This is not to recommend, however, abandoning all discussion of 'the politics of politics'. Our concern here is both to pay attention to agents' own sense of their politics and to reflect on the political implications of whether or how agents perceive their own actions as 'political'.

Drawing on our data, we focus on the following: firstly, young people's responses to representations of race, ethnicity, religion and gender within the public domain; secondly, how such representations shaped their own political action and thirdly, the creation of political groups that engaged with, and mobilised around, a politics of race, ethnicity, religion and gender. In relation to the latter, we pay particular attention to the gendered spaces in which young people developed and engaged politically, the impact of these on young people's political consciousness and the creation and transfer of cultural capital in shaping political activism and mobilisation. We find that such gendered spaces were significant among both young women and men within our study.

Feminism and the politics of ethnicity and race

There has been a strong theoretical and empirical focus within feminist literatures on the gendered nature of politics and how this has been underpinned in liberal democracy by the distinction between the public realm of politics and the private realm of personal, domestic and moral relations. Feminism has challenged this distinction by politicising the private domain of domestic relations and roles and challenging the exclusion of women from the public domain (Pateman 1989; Evans 1997). Feminist literatures on women's political participation and activism have drawn attention to the ways in which the political domain, agendas, roles and forms of activism have historically been, and in many ways remain, highly gendered. For example, in addition to research into the contemporary under-representation and impact of women within mainstream political institutions in the UK such as Parliament (Celis and Childs 2008; Childs and Evans 2012; Lovenduski 2012), there are studies of women's political participation and activism suggesting distinctive patterns of engagement and concerns (Spence

1998; Vromen 2003; Norris and Campbell 2004; Harrison and Munn 2007; Bolzendahl and Coffé 2009).

Many of these issues have particular application to ethnic minority women in relation to their visibility within the public domain and the gender politics of their social and cultural roles as wives, mothers and daughters (Yuval-Davies 1992; Brah 1996). There has, however, been a strong challenge to the ways that many feminist accounts have interpreted the experiences and concerns of ethnic minority women – particularly by black, Muslim and Islamic feminists. This critique has centred on the failure of feminism to address the invisibility of ethnic minority women in the public domain *and* within the feminist movement on the one hand (Knowles and Mercer 1992; Afshar and Maynard 2000) and the distinctive political issues that they face on the other, for example, in relation to the operation of immigration law, social security or racism in the workplace (Knowles and Mercer 1992).

A growing critique of feminism made by black feminists emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, and among Muslim and Islamic feminists in the 1990s and 2000s, arguing that mainstream feminism had ignored the inequalities experienced by black and ethnic minority or Muslim women and erroneously claimed a universalism based on white (middle-class) women's experiences. As we discussed in the previous chapter, this critique was driven by a concern to challenge the elision of differences between and among women – particularly in relation to experiences of racism and racialisation. Thus, black feminists accused feminism of ignoring problems of racism in their analysis of gender relations, taking little account of the ways in which black women's oppression stemmed from both sexism *and racism* (Carby 1982; Mirza 1997; Collins 1999). As we noted in the previous chapter, this challenge was underpinned by a critique of the notion that ethnic minority women experienced a 'double burden' of disadvantage – with gender overlaying racial disadvantages – in favour of approaches that understood the distinctive issues arising from intersections of race/ethnicity and gender (Yuval-Davis 2006) producing 'specific and varied patterns of inequality and discrimination' (Mirza 2009: 3). Thus, as Brah points out, whilst gender (and class and sexuality) is experienced through 'race', it is important to recognise that processes of racialisation and the ways in which race and gender intersect differ across groups are 'historically specific' (1996: 105) and that this constructs black and white men and women (1996: 105).

Some of the key themes that emerged from this critique centred on questioning core aspects of western mainstream feminism's central

concerns, such as the focus on: women's exclusion from the workforce, rather than the necessity and conditions of ethnic minority women's entry into the workplace (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992); the family as a key site of women's oppression, rather than as a source of support, solidarity and resistance for women against racism (Maynard 1994: 14; Brah 1996; Afshar et al. 2005); and the presumed opposition between men and women's interests and alignment of interests across women regardless of their experiences of racism and the alliances that black women might need to make with black men (sometimes in opposition to other women) to challenge these (Carby 1982). Finally, black and Islamic feminists criticised feminist analyses of the experiences of black women as themselves racist and ethnocentric. Afshar and Maynard (2000) argue that whilst feminism has been successful in challenging masculinist knowledge within the academy and the public domain, it has been less open to interrogating the Eurocentric epistemologies of much of western feminism. This, so far as Afshar and Maynard (2000) are concerned, points to an incomplete epistemological critique on the part of feminism. They argue that feminism needs to be much more sensitive to the cultural practices that different groups of women engage in and value.

The recognition of intersections between gender, ethnicity and 'race' has become more central to contemporary feminist understandings of women's experiences (Benhabib 2002; Squires 2008). As we previously noted, the study of 'intersectionality' has become a key analytical frame particularly in the study of social identities and inequalities (Yuval-Davis 2006), drawing attention to the interactions between race, ethnicity and gender (as well as other social identities based on age, sexuality or disability). These issues have not been straightforward, however, particularly when issues relating to cultural practices clash with conceptions of women's equality, as witnessed in confrontations between feminists, secular anti-racists and Muslim women over the wearing of the niqab and hijab in the UK and France in recent times (Joppke 2009; Bassel and Emejulu 2010). This question of how feminism recognises and addresses cultural and religious difference is taken up by Malik (2009) in her discussion of how feminism should evaluate claims from minority women which clash with feminist commitments to principles of autonomy, liberty and equality. She argues that: 'Those who want to defend universalism in the form of concepts such as female autonomy need to take seriously the challenges posed by cultural and religious difference' (2009: 2616). Nevertheless, she suggests that whilst the universalist claims of feminism have been successfully challenged, notably

by poststructuralist feminists, such challenges incur the problem of how oppressed women can develop emancipatory projects as *women*:

> One by-product of the increased sophistication in our understanding of 'difference' has been a splintering of international feminist alliances and inertia in tackling the vicious misogynist practices that continue to harm women. (2009: 2616)

These issues in many ways echo the debates we discussed in Chapter 6 concerning the impact of the focus on hybridity and complex identities on the study of racialised inequalities, with the problems this raises for the identification of group identities, the inequalities experienced by racialised groups and the prospects for the formation of political projects that perspectives focused on difference, complexity and hybridity can support in the face of these continued inequalities. As we suggested there, in relation to such tensions, we find it useful to draw on Brah's (1996) distinction between difference as experience, social relation, subjectivity and identity – which makes clear that identities, although multiple and changing, do achieve coherence, continuity and stability through articulation and mobilisation. Significantly for our own approach, Brah argues that 'political mobilisation is centrally about attempts to re-inscribe subjectivity through appeals to collective experience' (1996: 124). These appeals are based on discourses of difference, these can vary enormously, but they invoke differences based on 'social relation' that speak to 'shared economic or political circumstances' (1996: 125).

The gendering of race and ethnicity

The dynamics of gender have featured strongly in recent times in studies of race and ethnicity, which have become increasingly concerned with the gendered forms of representation, exploitation and racism that mark articulations of ethnicity, race and racial practices. These literatures have pointed to ways in which both masculinities and femininities have been racialised. Such issues have been explored in literatures on colonialism, for example, which have drawn attention to the preoccupations in colonialist ideologies with the bodies and sexualities of colonised men and women (Said 1978). Nagel's study of *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality* (2003) scrutinises the depictions, fantasies and fears, rules and regulations, desires and disgust, beliefs and myths, appetites and aversions and violence concerning race, ethnicity and sexuality in

colonial and contemporary practices. She points to the varied and raced perspectives on gender and sexualities in processes of conquest, domination, hyper-sexualisation, eroticisation and consumption of raced bodies that characterise colonisation, nationalisms, war and tourism. In many ways, she suggests, the images of black bodies and sexualities of the colonial imagination have been reproduced in contemporary representations and practices.

These intersections have become increasingly important in the study of race and ethnicity in recent years. A number of studies have pointed to the ways in which raced notions of masculinities and femininities have conditioned the representations and experiences of particular groups. Here, we draw on two prevalent themes within the literature concerning the focus on black and Muslim masculinities in 'crisis' and the construction of ethnic minority women as relatively more oppressed by, and submissive to, group cultural practices.

The theme of black masculinities emerged as significant in studies of race, where it has been argued that public and state discourses on black masculinities have been preoccupied with themes of crisis and dysfunctionality, manifested in debates on black boys' educational underattainment (Sewell 1997), gang culture (Alexander 1996) and crime (Pryce 1979). Such themes have been re-worked in the present time, according to Alexander (2004), with clear parallels between discourses on black youth in the 1980s and Asian/Muslim youth in the present period. She suggests this has resulted in a fundamental shift within academic writing on youth identities in the ways in which Asian young men feature, arguing that:

> Where Asian young men were previously largely invisible – certainly in academic discourse – the assumed heirs of patriarchal privilege and 'community', they are now the hyper-visible embodiments of a racialized dysfunctionality. (2004: 535)

This is manifested in crisis narratives on Asian and Muslim young men in relation to education, crime, gangs, masculinity or inter-generational conflict, as the following quote by Lewis (2006) regarding young Pakistani men demonstrates:

> Within the large Pakistani communities in cities and towns such as Birmingham, Bradford and Oldham, there are worrying trends of youth disaffection, with significant educational underachievement translating into high unemployment among sections of young

> males, violence against women, and dramatically rising levels of criminality, especially the drug trade. (2006: 167)

In addition to generalised discourses of 'masculinity in crisis' that have been linked to white working class and black men (Hopkins 2007), often connected with the restructuring of the workplace and consequent failure to find cultural roles, discourses on Muslim young men are also tinged with fears about religious fundamentalism and violent extremism. As Alexander points out:

> The figure of 'the gang' draws upon common sense ideas of Asian masculinities as collectively dysfunctional and as newly dangerous – most notably in its links of Britain's Muslim communities with religious 'Fundamentalism'. (2004: 532)

Lewis also notes this distinctive context to debates about Muslim youth:

> Of course, such expressions of social dislocation are not confined to sections of Pakistani youth. However, they have to be located in a context of the rising mistrust and polarisation of Muslim and non-Muslim communities that preceded 9/11, but that has been exacerbated by it. (2006: 167)

Dwyer et al.'s (2008) study of identities among young Pakistani Muslim men takes issue with the notion of religious fundamentalism as a common and undifferentiated aspect of Muslim young men's identities. Whilst they found that 'religious identification, as a Muslim, a British Muslim or a Pakistani Muslim, was relevant for all' their informants, they noted that 'how this religious identification was articulated varied considerably' (2008: 130). For some, the distinction between ethnic and religious identification was important and their religious identity 'was understood through collective practice and observance' (ibid.), whilst for others collective practice and observance was less important, rather they identified with Islam as an expression of 'protest masculinities' in opposition to stereotypes of 'effeminate' Asian masculinity (ibid.) – thus such expression should be seen in the context of longstanding representations of Asian men. The key point here, so far as Dwyer et al. are concerned, is that 'Islam is articulated and practised in multiple ways. The religious views and experiences of these young men challenge popular media portrayals of Islam as only fomenting fundamentalism and terrorism' (2008: 130–1).

Whilst a running theme of representations of black and Asian/Muslim young men has been of a dysfunctional, threatening (hyper) masculinity, many representations of ethnic minority women have tended to cast them as women without agency. Heidi Safia Mirza argues that there has been a highly limited and limiting repertoire of representations of black women, which have included:

> dutiful wife and daughter, the hard (but happy and grateful!) worker, the sexually available exotic other, the controlling asexual mother, or simply homogenized as the 'third world woman' (Mohanty 1988). In her representation, she is without agency, without self-determination, a passive victim, waiting to be inscribed with meaning from those who wish to gaze upon her and name her. She is an object, not the subject of her story. (1997: 6)

More recently, Tomalin argues that representations of Asian women in the UK as passive have contributed to their invisibility in many domains, including media, policy and academic:

> [W]omen have been marginalised from accounts and debates about the British Asian diaspora, recognition of this lacunae has given rise to a forms of writing from within the media, as well as from policy makers and academics, that attempt in a rather simplistic fashion to 'redress the gender balance'. However, there is a tendency here across these genres to employ colonialist narratives that essentialise women as passive victims of their culture who need rescuing by the progressive values inherent within western secular liberalism. (2010: 1)

This is despite the histories of political activism among Asian women in relation to labour disputes, antiracism, women's and immigration campaigns throughout the 1970s and 1980s – a point also raised by Avtar Brah's (1996) work which draws attention to the self-organisation and mobilisation of South Asian women within the workplace (of which the 1976 Grunwick strike that was organised and led by South Asian women is a notable example). Moreover, such activism often took shape when other political organisations had failed to articulate Asian women's concerns. As Brah (1996) also shows, South Asian women were prominent in a wide range of campaigns concerning the impact of immigration controls, inadequate protection for Asian communities against racist attacks, and the targeting of black and Third World and working-class women for the administration of Depo-Provera contraceptive drugs.

Tomalin suggests that the inattention to women's activism continues – notwithstanding attempts to 'redress the gender balance' – and she attributes this to the lack of attention to women's agency, alongside the attribution to the over-determining role of (static conceptions of) culture in shaping women's lives. This has given rise, she suggests, to highly problematic state policies and practices concerning Asian women, particularly in relation to issues of single-sex/Muslim schooling, 'forced' marriages and veiling practices. In these areas, she suggests that women have been silenced, or included in highly essentialised ways that posit women, Muslim women especially, as 'having problematic lives due to "religion"' (2010: 18).

Such representations have featured particularly intensively in anxieties about Muslim women's dress, and especially in relation to the wearing of hijab (Joppke 2009; Mcdonald 2006). As Ryan (2011: 1046) argues: 'Media discourses often focus on female attire to present Muslim women as either passive victims of traditional hierarchy or as cultural outsiders stubbornly refusing to engage with British society'. Dwyer (1999) points out that dress for all women is imbued with sexual signification, but that among Muslim women, issues around Islamic dress codes and the veil are often read as reinforcing 'dominant racialised discourses of difference' (1999: 9), in ways that represent them as particularly culturally oppressed, with the wearing of such garments as indicative of their submissiveness. Arguing that for Muslim women, 'dress is a powerful and overdetermined marker of difference' (1999: 5), she suggests that such significations ignore the agency of women who wear hijab, as well as the range of meanings that they attach to it. Dwyer, and other scholars (Ruby 2006; Tomalin 2010), identify many (sometimes contradictory) meanings attached to hijab by women who wear it, with the hijab variously worn as: an act of resistance (to secular government, parental authority or racist society); an expression of personal piety or spiritual engagement; an act of solidarity (Afshar 2008); a way of expressing and exploring (rather than concealing) sexuality; or as a means by which women negotiate entry into public domains such as employment, education or political activism. The latter meaning echoes Mushaben's (2008) research on young Muslim women in Germany, for whom wearing the hijab was at once a claim to full participation within a range of public spheres within German society as German Muslims, as well as within mosques and other specifically Muslim spaces.

In recent times, government initiatives have recognised, and sought to address, the relative lack of visibility of Muslim women within public domains, and this was driven significantly by the community relations

focused approaches to counter-terrorism that developed under New Labour (McGhee 2008), where women came to occupy a particular role and visibility. In part, this attention arose from the increasing focus on Muslim women within contemporary debates about Muslims in Britain: as Ryan (2011: 1046) argues 'public discourses about Muslims are heavily gendered'. With reference to government's counter-terrorism strategy, this was expressed in moves to include women within PVE/Prevent initiatives and local and national consultations with Muslims – for example with the establishment of the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG) in 2008. Nevertheless, these initiatives presumed quite specific, and limiting, gendered cultural roles for women. Katherine Brown (2008) points out that whilst the PVE agenda stressed the inclusion and representation of Muslim women, its model of inclusion rested on the assumption that the role of Muslim women was important in providing a restraining and moderating influence on 'out of control men', and Brown warns that this assumption harks back to long-standing constructions of Asian women. She argues that approaches that presume that women are inherently moderating forces are flawed since they ignore women's own politics and the possibility that women may also express radical views.

In this respect, there are apparent continuities between conceptions of Muslim women that were evident in New Labour's counter-terrorism policies and earlier overtures towards Muslim women following the riots in Bradford of 1995, where women were offered limited opportunities for inclusion within the consultations that ensued, confined to roles where they were seen as mechanisms for domesticating out of control boys – rather than being recognised as possessing political perspectives or interests of their own (Burlett and Reid 1998). Burlett and Reid argue that by the mid-1990s, young Muslim men in Bradford were a politicised group who were highly critical of the mechanisms for representation in the city, which they regarded as inadequate and not representative of young people (1998: 274). Such criticisms gave way to a range of initiatives in the aftermath of the riots to include young Muslim men in local governance processes in the city. But, Burlett and Reid point to the neglect of women's perspectives in such initiatives, despite the fact that there had been a long history of political organisation among Muslim women in the city:

> Many members of the Pakistani Muslim community attribute the events [of 1995] to a manifestation of young men expressing their frustrations as a disempowered and disenfranchised youth. This has

> led to calls for the inclusion of these young men in future political mechanisms as an independent group of representatives. In comparison, little or no attention has been paid to the role of women in the aftermath of the uprising. Many Pakistani Muslim women were concerned with the issues of democratization and participation in decision-making processes long before June 1995. Women's organizations, for example, have been actively working to strengthen the position of women within the community and wider Bradford society since the 1970s. (1998: 271–2)

Looking later to the disturbances of 2001 in Bradford, similar narratives of male frustration were expressed, and many of the debates about the riots invoked a number of gender themes about frustrated Muslim young men (see Hussain and Bagguley 2005), again with relatively little attention paid to the role of women during or subsequent to those disturbances. Such arguments highlight variously the invisibility of Muslim or Asian women, or their inclusion within political and public arenas in very narrow terms – as exemplified by the rationale underpinning the engagement of Muslim women within counter-terrorism strategies. These reveal some of the difficulties that many women (whether as Muslim or ethnic minority women) have faced in being recognised as political agents. Data from our study show the strategies by which women have responded to such lack of recognition and to claim a place within public spaces, in some cases by creating 'alternative public spheres' that enabled women to come together to define their own politics, as well as to mobilise to claim inclusion within the public domain where the interests and voices of women can be articulated and heard. In relation to this mode of activism, we pay particular attention to the critique and strategies developed by activists within the Saheli women's group in Birmingham that not only set out to reposition Asian and Muslim women within local political structures but also set out to refashion the political, social and economic trajectories of young women by transferring social and cultural capital in order to 'fast-track' their entry into the public domain and to challenge gendered/raced and religiously-based exclusions and marginalisation.

Interestingly, we found parallel strategies being deployed by some Muslim young men in response to the crises discourses on Muslim men that we outlined above. Thus, the WBYI from Bradford demonstrates the important of gendered spaces for developing young men's social and cultural capitals – in ways that mirrored the personal and political significance of such spaces for the young women we encountered in Saheli.

In our discussion of our data below, we set out: how activists across our sample perceived intersecting dynamics of race, religion and gender as they are articulated in the public realm and how they saw them as shaping the economic and political chances of young people; how perceptions of these differences shaped respondents' own political subjectivities and activism; and how the creation of gendered spaces enabled young activists to respond to these to re-articulate those differences, and formulate strategies to challenge prevailing discourses on ethnic minority women and men, and to enable young men and women to enter the public domain.

Politics of race, religion and gender discourses

Many of the themes concerning masculinities and femininities outlined above have figured in recent times in Birmingham and Bradford with respect to black, minority ethnic and Muslim young men and women. Thus, we see particular anxieties about black young men in Birmingham expressed in debates on educational attainment and 'gang culture' (Beckford 2004). Attention in Birmingham on African Caribbean youth and gangs has long been framed by anxieties about social dislocation linked to life in the inner-city (Beckford 2004), although this intensified shortly before our study began, prompted particularly by the killings of two young women in the Aston area of Birmingham in the New Year in 2003 who were bystanders in a gang-related shooting. Subsequently, the issue of gang-related violence featured strongly in Birmingham, and there were many mobilisations among black groups to address gang-related violence – and the factors producing and sustaining gangs – and our study worked with one Birmingham group engaged with these issues: Young Disciples. A running concern among groups in the city working with gang members and bereaved families, however, was the lack of facilities and resources for young people living in areas such as Handsworth, Aston and Lozells, where many of Birmingham's African Caribbean population are settled. Many of the groups and respondents we met in the course of our fieldwork in Birmingham and Bradford voiced criticism of the ways in which ethnic minority young men and women were represented in public discourses and within institutions, with many articulating the view that these produced, rather than simply reflected, particular gender roles. For example, as we noted in Chapter 6, the issue of black boys' educational attainments was discussed in a focus group of African Caribbean women FE students in Birmingham, who related it

to the role that prevailing representations of black boys played in reinforcing educational disadvantage, suggesting 'at the moment, there's, young black boys are, are under-achieving', whilst pointing to the ways in which representations of black boys contributed to this, suggesting 'a lot of them probably are under-achieving but when they're being stereotyped and then living by the stereotype. And the legacy is living on'. Coupled with a lack of amenities and support, such stereotyping, they went on to argue, perpetuated the effects of labelling: 'and in turn, they get themselves into trouble, they get picked up by the police officers, you know, they get labelled, and they start living by that label.'

Resonating with our observations above about academic, government and media discourses on Asian and Muslim young men, comparable issues of labelling and stereotyping of Muslim young men were cited by many of our respondents as producing similar (self) limiting effects. As we noted in Chapter 4, one woman respondent from the BKYP voiced her frustration about the labelling of Asian boys in school, citing this as a politicising experience that went on to inform her youth mentoring and campaigning work.

Many expressed concerns about the stereotyping of Asian women. Picking up the themes discussed above, many Muslim women expressed their frustration and resentment at widespread perceptions of them as 'having problematic lives due to "religion"' (Tomalin 2010: 18). For instance, one Muslim woman MYP from Bradford disputed the idea that religion was the salient limitation that women faced. Echoing much research on the significance of religion among young Muslims in the West, she distinguished between religion and culture, suggesting that the limitations that women faced were predominantly cultural in nature:

> [L]ike around Bradford […] what the challenges are, right, is about, first of all with gender, you, you'll get women not, perhaps, not being able to participate as such, do you know what I mean? Like I said, in Islam, right, it's not the case […] if you look at Islamic history, […] the majority of women were scholars and things like that, and if you look at prophets' wives, you know, they were politically active and […] engaging in society and, you know, and war, and things like that, and … but […] about culture though, it's non-religious and then, you know, women are not being engaged as such, they're not being allowed to participate in society.

Echoing the observations of Tomalin and others, many activists cited the focus on marriages as a cultural practice that was assumed to demonstrate the passivity of Asian women – regardless of the experiences and perspectives of women, as one Saheli member commented:

> I think over the last few years it has been especially like with marriages and stuff, everybody assumes that if you're Asian you're going to get an arranged marriage straight away, or you're going to be forced [into] marriage, and they think that we're more inclined to be that, so they generalise us and they stereotypicalise us as well in a way.

Similarly, many complained of what they saw as the 'over-emphasis' on veiling in public discourses on Muslim women, a point noted by Bhimji (2009), and expressed a desire for choices about whether or not to veil to be less loaded with expectation, anxiety or visibility – resonating with Dwyer's remarks concerning the over-determination of hijab as a marker of difference: as one Saheli member commented:

> I don't wear the headscarf but certain people who do, you know, what does it symbolise and stuff? And there's not a huge depth to it, I think it's like you know, a part of your religion, you practice it, you don't practice it. It doesn't mean that you're a, you know, you're a terrorist in waiting or anything like that […]. And I think the way they perceive us is we're sitting around kind of always talking about these issues, these big huge kind of debates and stuff, but it doesn't happen! You know, when you're forced to you will do, but nobody sits around and debates these huge issues on a daily basis, we don't have time you know!

Many respondents were highly conscious of the contradictory public perceptions of veiling, which alternated between viewing it as evidence of Muslim women's passivity or as a troubling indicator of their potential threat to British society and security. As one Saheli member reflecting on the hyper visibility of veiled women within a highly securitised social context commented, on the one hand, veiling was associated with oppressive cultural practice:

> So it's really surprising me as well in that way that, OK the media shows us all, you got to marry, they're gonna do this to you, they're gonna to do that to you […] just cos you're, […] wearing a scarf …

On the other hand, wearing a scarf risked the wearer being regarded as a security threat:

> It was like my Mum's wearing a scarf they're gonna lock her away, they're gonna give her questions, 'cos that's what they did to my cousin. No, we had that no part in that [9/11], no fine, carry on! […] So where do people get their information from? [Laughs].

Such awareness of the distorting ways in which the interactions between race, ethnicity, religion and gender shaped perceptions of ethnic minority young women and men were also important in impelling some activists towards political and public participation. The assertion by Brah that political mobilisation is centrally about attempts to re-inscribe subjectivity through appeals to collective experience (1996: 12), based on 'shared economic or political circumstances' (1996: 125) resonates with accounts by some activists of their mobilisations in response to experiences of limiting discourses on ethnicity/religion and gender. For example, one member of the BKYP discussed her decision to become involved in a variety of media interviews following 7/7, suggesting that she felt it important that women's perspectives were heard on these issues given the over-representation of men within public forums and discussions on the issues. As we noted in Chapter 4, the impact of 7/7 was also an important politicising moment, which crystallised her desire to enter the public domain in order to challenge stereotypically gendered constructions of Muslims:

> I think now like as a Muslim women, […] coming from a […] black background, it feels more important […] that we are seen to be out there and being active, because […] they're always thinking about the Muslim community secluding itself from everyone else, and isolating itself, and especially Muslim women being oppressed and being subjected to their fathers and tied to […] their religion. Whatever the nonsense they have said […]. I think that there are a lot of assumptions made about me and people like myself and it was important and thinking back on it, that I did get involved in challenging things and that I did have an opinion and […] I was assertive, without being too aggressive and I think yeah, Muslims have opinions too.

Gendered spaces and mobilisation

Another important strategy that some groups engaged in to counter damaging and limitation perceptions of their capacities and roles was

to engage in creating gendered spaces in which to reflect on and counter these. Such spaces were redolent of the creative potential of Fraser's (1997) 'subaltern public spheres', that describe spaces that act as 'counter-publics' where marginalised groups can self-organise and marshal responses to counter exclusion, away from the supervision of dominant groups. We found such spaces to be significant for women and men within our study, in developing a political consciousness and political skills that enabled young people to enter wider public arenas. In this section, we focus on two groups that mobilised such spaces to address racialised gendered representations and practices: the Saheli women's group in Birmingham and the WBYI working with young men in Bradford.

Saheli is a women's group based in Balsall Heath, Birmingham. The group formed in 1998 out of an initiative by the Balsall Heath Forum, in the wake of a residents' action to prevent prostitution in the local area. Its membership was largely, but by no means exclusively, composed of women from the local Pakistani/Mirpuri community, with significant presence of women of Indian, Yemeni and other heritages, and it was established with the aim of enabling women to have an impact on the responsiveness of local services to women's needs and to have a voice within their community. It achieved charity status in 2002, and established a board of trustees, who engaged in fund-raising to support the group's activities. The group sought to empower women through the provision of a political, social, mental and physical space to develop women's confidence and skills to act outside of the domestic arena, to become fully active within their communities, local areas and broader political arenas, and to develop collective agency in campaigning on issues in relation to the local state or other statutory agencies. As one member explained:

> [C]oming to Saheli Meetings, we then go to other community meetings within the wards, sub-wards and that, and have our say in local decision making, so I think it's developed everybody, and I think we all share our knowledge and experience and we are kind of lucky that we can attend and you know, so we are grateful that we can then pass on information that we have and benefit other women within the area.

The group used a range of strategies to encourage and build women's confidence in participating in the public realm, such as organising BMX biking courses, overseas trips, discussion events, talks by imams or MPs, and leadership training programmes. In particular, mentoring played an important role in building the group, enabling participation across

a range of domains and in transferring social and cultural capital from older to younger women. One aspect of Saheli's mentoring approach was the 'Future Leaders' programme, which was based on working with women who had not been previously engaged in local decision making structures. As one Saheli project worker explained:

> [W]e're doing our 'Future Leaders' programme at the moment […] Basically we've got some funding and I'm going to put together a programme and we're looking for participants and I've got a list of women who are kind of aware of local decision making structures but don't, have never really kind of engaged as such […] and what we'll do is we'll put together a programme […] to suit them, find them mentors, give them training on lobbying, campaigning, media training, all of that will be part of the programme. So hopefully at the end of the two years we'll have a pack of women who are really engaged, really informed, and can go attend meetings and be confident and participate and you know, we're even thinking future councillors and stuff, cos the whole process needs to change!

Saheli founders placed a particular emphasis on developing the confidence and skills of very young women, often below the age of 16, which they did by negotiating with parents and building trust with them, to enable young women to join the group and its activities, with Saheli acting as a portal to wider publics. As one member of the group explained:

> I mean Saheli as such is fine and stuff, but the Board meetings at District level, we really want to cut in, you know, bottom up approach and kind of get younger women to a place where they're confident enough, have the capacity to kind of engage with that level. I mean Saheli's, to engage with us, it's fine but like, we don't want to limit them just to Saheli. There's so much more to do!

In this way, Saheli women envisaged a core aim of the group as 'fast-tracking' younger women into the public domain, so that the lessons learnt and gains achieved by the women in the group benefitted younger generations of women. Another long-standing member of Saheli expressed the aims of the group vis-a-vis younger women as a highly personalised, nurturing approach to achieving collective progress for women:

> [I]t's like yeah 'look at this, this is what you can achieve', 'this is who you can meet', 'this is what you can do'. So seeing somebody actually

> thinking 'I would like to do that', and I think what made [a Saheli founding member] happy once when one of the girls goes […] 'I've got a cousin she's really interested and she's really wanting to do it.' She goes: 'Is she between 14 and 16?' […] 'yeah, no problem'. And the look on her face was just like, she's just unbelievably happy! Even we take these little things for granted, like horse riding or going biking: it means a lot to us because we're not used to doing things like that. Because the kind of opportunities weren't there for us, little things like that. And see it being an opportunity now for the girls and, we've got that opportunity to say 'When we were your age we didn't do that' [Laughs], 'count yourselves lucky!' We sound like old people now!

Through Saheli, women have become involved in range of participatory governance initiatives, including consultations, community forums, the local strategic partnership and West Midlands Police's community forums, as well as in political protests. For example, Saheli constituted itself as a presence in ward meetings with the Council, where women developed consciousness, confidence and critique to stand up in these arenas and challenge elected representatives, officials and Council policies (e.g. by organising women-only hustings at local election times). Indeed, Saheli has developed a strong public profile at community, ward and city levels, by mobilising women's participation in public forums – enabling the inclusion of women who had been relatively absent in local or community forums.

Whilst Saheli members were actively involved in various participatory governance initiatives, they were, as we discussed in Chapter 5, critical of what they saw as the lack of meaningful impact of much of this activity. As we noted in Chapter 5, the group felt they were 'endlessly invited to consult', and were suspicious of the tokenistic nature of the consultations they experienced. Nevertheless, they regarded the critical skills developed from such participation as important where these were seen to assist in consolidating the collective political identity of the group and enabling them to challenge gender and ethnic stereotypes. Thus, one member of the group reflected positively on how Saheli were being sought out for consultation by central government and other public bodies on account of their knowledge and experience at the grass roots:

> [W]e're consulting on topics that are really relevant and stuff. So, I mean that's really, that's great. You know that people are coming to consult us as a grass roots kind of organisation. We're not very big, but somehow we, you know we've gotten involved with some quite high profile consultations and I think it's just the start really.

> I think there's so many more organisations out there that we need to identify with, and central government need to be clever, get them involved 'cos they really know what's going on on the ground level.

However, as another member of the group made clear, part of the success of Saheli in its efforts to create avenues for the participation for younger women lay not only in enabling them to participate in public consultations, but also in speaking out at such events to hold public officials to account, particularly where the terms of their inclusion were perceived to be tokenistic, and this was embedded within a broader aim of enabling young women to critically engage with assumptions about Muslim and Asian women. Recalling one particular instance, she explained:

> [T]he girls turned up to one of the equalities consultations they did in relation to post-July 7th [2005], where we had the Head of Equalities […] one of the girls stood up and she said, 'post July 7th I want to know how you as a Councillor can, can I put my faith in you, for you to look after my safety as a young Muslim girl?' […] And he waffled for quite a long time and then when she was leaving the meeting […] somebody asked her 'what did you think about the Councillor then?' and she said, and I quote she said, 'you know if he said to me "I don't know what to do but let's talk and find out how to do it" I would have respected him more, but he talked about lots of things and he didn't answer my question' [laughter]. And she said, 'I'm never gonna vote for him again!' And I thought that was really important because it just shows how a 17 year old girl cannot be fooled by a man who is there, meant to be representing the community but he can see how disillusioned she is, so it's those kind of silly issues that unfortunately as young girls you have to put up with. So for that reason I think it's good […] for girls to get involved because […] they are the ones who are struggling with […] whether I am proud to be Muslim, not be proud of being Muslim, […] whether I want to carry on wearing my scarf […], so it's how you get them to understand that unless they go to these kind of meetings they can never create those changes. And the good thing about the girls is they go because in a sense they are not going on their own.

Importantly, the rationale underpinning the creation of the group has fed through into a number of very tangible local projects with significant long-term implications for the participation and well-being of women in the local area. Thus, one particularly noteworthy

achievement of Saheli was its success in establishing and running Birmingham's first culturally sensitised, women-only gym. The campaign for establishing this facility developed over a number of years, following a health-based assessment of the social and cultural needs of local women, a self-conducted feasibility study, and a successful bid for financial support from Sport England. Despite initial setbacks and lack of support from the City Council, the Saheli gym and activities 'hub' opened in 2006, and has since become actively involved with the local health authority in delivering culturally and gender-sensitive preventative healthcare. Reflecting on the campaign to establish the gym, one Saheli campaigner stated:

> [I]f you look at the gym, the idea of a women-only gym, we were told by the Local Authority it would never work, […] Asian women would not walk through the door, we were mistaken, there was no way they would, they have been here 20 years and the women haven't been to the doors yet so why would they come to a women's only gym? The other thing they always said to us was that there was no way anybody would ever come to a women-only gym. I could go on and on about all the things that people told me would never happen, but through having stuck at it, I will be honest with you, there was a time where I did actually wanna give up, […] we have 500 women who have registered to take part in the Centre, we have over 60 plus attendances every day: and Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays for women and out of the 60 who come every day, 55 have probably never been in a gym ever in their life, [...] Doctors now actually say, 'well you should go to the gym across the road' you know.

As with participation at public events, there was a sense expressed by members of Saheli that the availability of a women-only gym not only served the immediate aim of improving the health and wellbeing of South Asian women but also had a beneficial effect in helping to transform entrenched cultural attitudes towards women's roles. As one member of the group put it:

> Yeah and they want their wives to go and, you know, get fit and healthy, […], and I think that's really changed in the area. […] even the older generation […], are now realising their health is important and they need to look after themselves. So they are accessing these kind of services where in, maybe five years ago, they would have never've gone to a gym; never worn jogging bottoms and trainers. So I think

> it's all been an educational process for a lot of people. Simple things like, you know, just wearing a T-shirt. Some people have never worn a T-shirt in their lives, and getting over those barriers are really big for these, you know, the elder generation. I think they've come to terms with it and they're moving with the times as well, so, I think, which helps move the services along and helps pulling more people as well.

As such, the gym and associated spaces established by Saheli for – often younger – ethnic minority women occupied an important position at the interstices of culturally inscribed feminine roles on the one hand and heightened public participation on the other. In a sense, Saheli can be seen to provide a physical space that was simultaneously a symbolic 'Third Space' (Bhabha 1994; Soja 1996) that subtly and sensitively modified rather directly contesting 'traditional' or customary female roles, adding new dimensions to these roles by making available pathways into mainstream and alternative public domains.

Through such initiatives, Saheli aimed to develop women's voice not only vis-à-vis the local state but also within their own communities. Indeed some members recalled that the very founding of Saheli as a space for women to meet was perceived as a challenge to established community and gender relations:

> [W]hen we first got together it was some people's opinion that we were to break up marriage issues, we are here to split families, that's why women are together etc. etc., but we have always stayed awake on those kind of political issues.

The Saheli focus group discussion referred at length to the subtle interplay between stereotypes about Asian women as well as cultural norms as limiting factors on young women's self-perceptions and opportunities for broader public engagement, and how this provided a key rationale for the establishment of the group:

> [T]hey don't think, like from our culture, our background, that we are not promoted into doing things like that, it's all about looking after things like home, looking after your family and now they have got that opportunity to do that and we are helping them to do that it's building up more and basically there's more to life than just staying at home looking after your family, even though they haven't forgotten that, the underlying concept is that there is more opportunities out there.

In a follow-up interview, one member of the group discussed further the structural effects of gendered roles in limiting women's participation – a view that resonates with Vromen's (2003) analysis of gendered patterns of political and community participation among the activists she studied:

> I think, within this community just women of a certain age, [...] mid-thirties maybe, did have some education but then married at an early age, or married early 20's, have families, children, and it's been difficult for them to get back into the job market, or they never really had a job anyway but, but there's so much more that they want to do. [...] and then they get bogged down with everybody saying to them 'Oh you know you've got children, you've got commitments at home, there's no time for you to go out and do other things', you know extended family, there's so much other pressures and from the community itself and that it's, they'll never, you know, take that step until there's kind of a movement of women taking those steps.

Saheli organised to provide such a movement, and to achieve its aims by subtly modifying practices and expectations in relation to women's roles, for instance by negotiating with parents and families to enable very young women to participate in its activities. Adopting this approach, Saheli measured its successes in relation to the impact of Saheli women in changing both outside and community attitudes towards the entry of young women into the public domain, as one activist reflected:

> [A] lot of parents do see now [...] their children can make a valuable contribution in other areas and [...] in politics [...] those kind of areas are, like, taboo because women are ... should be seen but not heard in some communities within Birmingham. So I think that's kind of broken barriers and people see their girls, *young* girls, talking at conferences and that, and I think they're proud of, you know, what they've achieved and that they can do that when they themselves are quiet, they wouldn't do that ...

In this respect Saheli's approach corresponds with feminist positions articulated by black, Asian, Muslim women which challenge some of the assumptions within feminism regarding the nature of the family. Black feminists, as noted above, have challenged the notion that the family exists as *the* site of women's oppression. They pointed instead to the multiple sites of oppression experienced by black women and to

the ways in which the family can offer support in resisting and providing a haven from racism (Brah 1996; Carby 1982). More recently, the desire to articulate family relationships according to different cultural models has been promoted by Islamic feminists (Afshar et al. 2005), who see family structures and practices as key to identities that women express, and argue for the recognition of women's agency in renegotiating their family roles on their own terms. Brah in commenting on the significance of home and family life for Asian women argues that the depiction of Asian families as sites of cultural and gender oppression is a highly limited reading of the nature of these spaces:

> At home, Asian women combine with other female kin and friends to create a dynamic and lively social and cultural life. These female cultures are not devoid of contradictions, tensions, rivalry or intergenerational differences that may spill over into conflict, but they are constitutive of structures of support and space within which gender-specific activities, including leisure, may be constructed and performed. They are a means of negotiating and/or combating hierarchies of power in the household and in the wider community. These cultures are the arena where diverse and heterogeneous women's identities are played out. (1996: 82)

Our study of Saheli demonstrates the often creative, rather than necessarily antagonistic, ways in which women negotiated with families to come together to enable women's activism – and in ways that sought to enhance the capacities of the community as a whole. The creation of a women's space as a mechanism to achieve this was important to its success: illustrating Brah's (1996) arguments concerning the importance of gendered spaces for women's mobilisation, one Saheli members commented:

> I was asked a question on whether we should have a group just for us, does that create different boundaries? Well I'm sorry, if we didn't have that group in the first place, if we don't have the Saheli … you would never see us … But it seems like, thanks to the Saheli and Nabila and the Yemeni Women and Children's Society we'll be hopeful that people don't know what to do with us!

In lots of ways, the processes of nurture, consciousness-raising and skills building that were exemplified in Saheli were also at work in relation to a men's group we worked with in Bradford – the WBYI. This initiative was established in 1991 and is based in the West Bowling/B5

area of Bradford. The youth initiative works predominantly, but not exclusively, with Pakistani Muslim young men, the majority of whom were aged between 13 and 25. The aim of WBYI was to provide facilities and services across five key topic areas: employment, 'diversionary activities', sport and recreation, education/CV writing and basic skills acquisition. Significant for the dynamics of the group was the role of older male youth workers and former participants in WBYI in training, mentoring and supporting younger men coming through the initiative. The group was keenly aware, however, that within the terms of many funding streams such a gender focus might be seen as illegitimate. Nevertheless, it was clear that the evolution of the group as a space for men was very significant in raising the educational and career aspirations of the young men involved, and in fostering a sense of their political efficacy and ability to enter into the public domain.

A significant element of the work of WBYI addressed the effects of disadvantage experienced by young Muslim men in relation to education, employment and the criminal justice system, and the group was active in local regeneration and other initiatives to address the exclusion of Muslim young men from higher education and the labour market. As one respondent explained to us: 'there is always going to be that kind of underachievement of some of the lads here because I don't think there's enough positive role models in this area', and he cited this lack of established trajectories of achievement among older men as restricting the possibilities for young men in the area. This perception underscored WYI's emphasis on opening new paths through encouragement, practical support, training, mentoring and role models for younger men.

Many respondents from the group reflected on the specifically gendered nature of their experiences of labour market exclusion or educational disadvantage. Thus, one WBYI participant reflected on the structural inequalities that Asian men in particular faced in the labour market, referring to an occupational 'glass ceiling', alongside a lack of resources for training, skills and employment in the local area with acute affects for Asian young men. The focus group reported a clear perception that there was an asymmetry between Asian and white young men's labour market opportunities with one respondent suggesting that a key issue for the group was opening up the range of options available to Asian young men:

> [A] lot of these lads are not getting in, into building and construction and trades, whereas their white counterparts might leave school without an education, but can get into apprenticeships and they can get into it, so we are having to work in new ways and look at other options.

In addition to encouraging young men's career aspirations into a broader range of occupations, a key aim of the group was to mentor young men to be able to act on and mobilise in relation to local policy-making processes – for example, in relation to the planning of amenities and the regulation of spaces in the local area, often through community-based regeneration initiatives. One notable example of the latter was the role that the WBYI played in the redevelopment of a local cricket ground, the Bowling Old Lane Cricket Club, which had been in danger of falling into disuse and disrepair. Mobilising younger men into the regeneration of the club as both a sports and community facility, this initiative simultaneously forged links between the older, white membership of the club and a younger, South Asian new playing and voluntary membership (and see Farnell 2009) both regenerating the club and instilling a revived sense of local community.

WBYI furthermore engaged its membership in discussing and reflecting on political issues relating to 'race' and the impact of counter-terrorism policies on Muslim youth. The group sought to raise the political 'awareness' of its youth membership, by providing a space for young men to talk about issues that played out in their everyday lives. As one respondent, contrasting his experience with other youth initiatives focused on training or recreational activities for young people commented, his involvement with WBYI 'was the first real experience of, you know, a community group or a voluntary organisation […] even civil society if you like', and this sentiment was echoed by many members of the group as a significant aspect of WBYI's engagement. Nevertheless, during the focus group it was suggested that in many ways, the creation of a political space for Muslim young men to discuss the issues that concerned had become increasingly difficult and fraught since 7/7:

> [T]hese young lads [through the WBYI] are exposed to ideas and experiences which are political, […] and they are done in a balanced way […] we used to hold workshops on political themes, we used to hold them and invite speakers […] it's like relevance as well, what people want on the Pakistan question, they want to know what's going on, do a workshop on Palestine, do a workshop on diversity, risk and so and so, we used to do that, whereas *now* I think it's a bit harder to do some of those now, I think some workers are … people who don't want to branch out and this that and the climate of: you might be propagating this, or you might be encouraging this, so some people are just playing it safe, they're just playing it safe, so other people can't accuse them of anything.

Like Saheli, WBYI focused on developing men's sense of their own efficacy to challenge and change their own circumstances and collectively organise, and following a model that resonated strongly with that pursued by Saheli, its structure was characterised by the transition of young men from being recipients of support from the group to becoming mentors and youth workers themselves: transferring the gains and cultural capital they had acquired through their experiences at WBYI to younger men. Like Saheli, this was based on a highly personalised model of building, sometimes quite slowly, relationships between younger and older men, based on shared experiences. As one respondent, who had been mentored through WBYI and subsequently became a mentor himself, explained: 'what do you do with people that are on like that verge of self destruction? […] first of all you need to build that relationship which could take two or three years' and went on to comment on the difficulties of engaging in this way – both in terms of the time investment and the emotional commitment that it entailed. In this way, the respondent marked out the distinction between the personalised approach and shared histories and experiences between men involved in the WBYI and more professionalised models of youth and community work where emotional involvement appeared to him to clash with professional values. By contrast, he reported that he, like other mentors in the WBYI, had 'grown up with these lads', and had 'been to school with these lads'. In many respects, the evolution of young men's involvement in the WBYI from recipients of support to becoming role models and mentors can be seen as a form of 'subpolitical' action. As another mentor commented:

> I think as a person, as an individual I don't think I can make that change on a bigger scale'. […] whereas with my skills as a youth worker I can make a difference on a smaller scale, where I live […] I have my own politics in a way.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have developed some of the themes raised in Chapter 6 concerning the emerging focus on of intersectional – and particularly gendered – ethnic and religious identities in recent years, and how this has entailed a more nuanced understanding of changing group-based politics. Importantly, in both Chapters 6 and 7, we have carried often rarefied debates about 'essentialism', 'anti-essentialism', 'hybridity' and 'intersectionality' into the field of practical politics, to

capture empirically as well as theoretically how the political engagements of ethnic minority young people reflect the combined effects of multiple forms of oppression and their transcendence, including racialisation, gendered discrimination and increasingly Islamophobia. In this context, we have noted particularly the ways in which statements by our respondents clearly demonstrate that black, ethnic minority and Muslim young men and women were highly aware of the pathologising effects of gendered racial and Islamophobic discourses, and their critical responses to these discourses is an inherent part of their politics and activism. Indeed, we have seen that for many of our respondents, their political biographies were formed in important ways through engagement in challenging stigmatic representations and in rejecting the destinies these discourses seemed to presume for them. Corresponding, many of their actions can be seen to have focused on carving out a presence for multiply-stigmatised young people in the public domain, as a means of generating and mobilising a powerful set of political counter-narratives.

Against this background, we have sought to show that the creation of gendered spaces and sites were of considerable importance to particular groups in particular settings. For women's groups especially, such spaces were profoundly important in providing a firm basis from which ethnic minority and Muslim young women could challenge gendered inequalities on their own terms. Importantly, as we saw in the case of Saheli, the power of such spaces to enable women to overcome racially inflected gender oppression was dynamic and multi-lateral, directed transformatively, albeit sensitively, towards communally ascribed roles and constraints no less than towards wider public discourses and structures. Conversely, the significance of gendered spaces for men is often neglected. However, in our work, as in the case of the WBYI, such spaces emerged as highly significant in facilitating young men's entry into the public domain and in shaping both their personal political biographies and wider social and community perceptions of Muslim young men.

8

The Political Geography of Ethnicity and Religion in Young People's Political Engagement

Introduction

So far, many of the interventions this book has made into debates surrounding the political participation of ethnic minority young people have been set out according to a temporal frame of reference. This reflects the principal orientations of these debates towards concern with the apparent continuities, shifts and changes over time that can be identified in how young people politically engage. Hence in Chapter 1, we began by showing how much of the public concern expressed in relation to the political engagement of ethnic minority young people has intensified through crisis narratives on the secular decline in levels of electoral turnout. Whilst it will be apparent that we do not accede to the equivalence that is often established between falling electoral participation and 'political apathy', our critique rests upon an investigation of alternative forms of participation and how these relate to more conventional modes. Furthermore, an integral part of this critique rested upon the use of a 'political biographical' approach – set out and applied particularly in Chapter 4 – as a way of examining the diverse forms of political action in which activists engaged – including group based, institutional, networked, virtual and everyday forms activism. In Chapters 6 and 7, we developed our analysis of the significance of identities based on ethnicity, race, religion and gender in shaping activists' engagement across these repertoires of action, relating this to the changing character of cultural theory as it relates to debates on black identity politics, from the beginning of the 1990s to the present.

In this chapter, we set out to show that there is also is an inherent spatiality to the issues we have addressed that is significant as a factor accounting for the political participation of young people of ethnic

minority heritage. There are multiple ways in which this spatiality manifests itself, and can already be seen to underpin the discussions in the preceding chapters. In Chapter 5, for example, we saw how 'place' mattered in relation to the ways the local authorities in our two case study areas developed divergent models of state-sponsored youth participation, in part because of the need to respond to different local contexts and concerns; whilst in Chapter 7, perhaps more productively, we saw how two gender-based organisations in both Birmingham and Bradford had developed strategies for engaging and articulating the needs of men and women in their local surroundings.

The contribution of this chapter is its attempt to bring spatial considerations such as these more distinctly to the fore. In doing so, we invoke the geographical concepts of place and scale to organise an analysis of the localised and often territorial ways in which ethnic minority young people politically engage, and how these engagements relate to a multiply-scaled ethical vision that is global in its reach. Significantly, as we mentioned in Chapter 4, this globalised political sensibility is not confined to the transnational and diasporic connections arising from ethnic minority young people's familial ties and heritage, but is underpinned by a broader engagement with political issues and development around the world – facilitated particularly by the internet and other ICTs that contribute to both the 'death of distance' and the possibilities for DIY action.

As we discuss in more depth below, the concept of scale is keenly contested, not least amongst political geographers, who caution against its unguarded use to define autonomous or 'nested' spatial realms – most commonly the scales of the local, the national and the global (Marston 2000; Mansfield 2005; Ansell 2009). Whilst we take such critical observations onboard, we also find scale to be an extremely valuable organising concept in our analysis, not least because of the ways in which our respondents themselves constructed – and collapsed – relations of proximity and distance in their responses to political events and processes in different spatial settings.

The remainder of the chapter is organised into three sections. In the first, we critically engage with the political geographical literature on children and young people, exploring some of the distinctive ways in which geographers have sought to capture the spatiality of young people's political identities. Whilst this body of work holds out potential for evaluating the articulation between global geopolitical events and the local, everyday lives of young people, we argue that with regard to politics, this research has been largely focused on political attitudes

and perceptions, with much less attention being devoted to the ways in which young people's heightened geopolitical awareness translates into political action and spatial practice. These observations provide the critical point of departure for the two sections that follow. In the second section, we examine the political 'cognitive mapping' (Jameson 1991) conveyed by members of our sample, focusing particularly on the ways in which their representations of space reflect perceptions of racialisation and the effects of institutional neglect. Whilst we show how the concerns of young people addressed in this section are inherently multiply-scaled, we also discuss the ways in which 'the local' functions as a tangible scale of critical political engagement in its own right. In the third and final section, we pursue these representational geographies further through a case study of the MJM in Birmingham, to consider how perceptions of global and translocal issues and events were mediated by the values (notably the faith values) of our participants, to inform and animate their locally focused yet globally resonant political action.

Placing youth politics: values, action and the politics of scale

As numerous commentators have remarked (Philo and Smith 2003; Evans 2008), it is only relatively recently that children and young people have attracted the interest of human geographers. Prior to the 1990s, geographers, as other social scientists, had implicitly construed children and young people as less worthy or legitimate foci of research than adults on account of their assumed lack of social and political competence: too often, children and young people were characterised as 'human becomings rather than human beings', which tended to negate their distinctive identities and correspondingly distinct sets of issues and concerns (Holloway and Valentine 2000: 763). In recent decades, however, alongside developments in cognate disciplines, a focused geographical discourse on children and young people has emerged, which as Evans (2008: 1659) remarks, builds on the premise that children and young people are 'important social actors whose experiences of spaces and places may vary from adult experiences'. Research themes that have opened up in this area are diverse, and have focused on such key issues as the spatiality of youth identities and youth cultures (Skelton and Valentine 1998; Aitken 2001), the geographical dimensions of life-course transitions and inter-generational relationships (Hopkins and Pain 2007), and the scalar geography of young people's religious belonging (Hopkins

2007; Vincett et al. 2012). Arguably the key event in the 'coming of age' of the sub-disciplinary field of children and young people's geographies was the launching in 2003 of the designated journal, *Children's Geographies*, which in the course of a decade, has risen in standing to become the focal point of geographical research about children and young people's identities, serving to bring these important themes decisively into the disciplinary mainstream.

This burgeoning of interest in the spatiality of children and young people's lives has yet to produce more than sporadic treatment of political subject matter, with the result that political geographical engagement with young people is somewhat underdeveloped in the emerging literature (Skelton 2010). As Philo and Smith remark (2003: 103–4), this is somewhat surprising in view of the paradigm shift that has recently taken hold in political geography, which has seen the field transform from one primarily concerned with the quantitative examination of electoral geographies to a much wider interest in the spatial dimensions of political identity formation, campaign mobilisation and social movement participation – topics which have all been addressed in some detail in the foregoing chapters. Nevertheless, in recent years, there has been a number of contributions by geographers which suggest that a distinctive geographical discourse on young people's politics is beginning to take shape. A key aim of the current chapter is hence to engage with and extend this emergent geographical discourse by reflecting on the significance of *place* as both the conduit and focus of ethnic minority young people's political identity formation and engagement.

Political geographical discussion of children and young people shares a common critical starting point with research in other social science fields, notably the ways in which state-centred participation initiatives aimed at young people have tended to constrain understandings of youth politics in accordance with adult-centred perspectives, resulting in a failure to create opportunities for meaningful participation and involvement in decision-making processes at different spatial scales (Matthews et al. 1999). Elaborating these concerns, much of the critical focus of geographers in the late 1990s and early 2000s concentrated specifically on the institutions of formal youth participation and state-driven models of 'citizenship induction' developed under New Labour. Work by Hugh Matthews and collaborators (Matthews and Limb 1998, 2003; Matthews et al. 1999), for example, interrogated the emergence and modus operandi of youth councils and forums in England and Wales, showing how such structures tended to be tokenistic, forestalling full recognition of the diversity of participative modes engaged in

by young people on account of narrow, adult-centred constructions of 'the political' (Matthews and Limb 2003: 19). In a similar vein, work by Weller (2003) and Gaskell (2003) provided trenchant critiques of New Labour's 'active citizenship' and 'Respect' agendas in terms of their restrictive and stigmatic characterisation of young people's concerns. Weller, in particular, took the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in England in 2002 as a moment to examine spatial variation in constructions of 'citizenship', which varied significantly between the didactic, state-sponsored constructions prevailing in the classroom and the more active, experiential constructions of playground and community spaces, which were adapted and circulated by young people themselves. Research in this mode reached broadly similar conclusions to those we set out in Chapter 5, with the important caveat that our research also revealed a racialisation of state-driven models of participation, particularly when, as in the case of the BKYP, these were cross-cut by concerns emanating from New Labour's community cohesion agenda (see also O'Toole and Gale 2014).

More recently, building in part on points of mutual crossover between political geography and political sociology (Holloway and Valentine 2000; O'Toole 2003), political geographers have begun to broaden both the empirical and conceptual scope of their inquiry into children and young people's politics, with questions being productively posed over how the key geographical concepts of place, space and scale can usefully serve to operationalise a broader understanding of 'the political' as it relates to the lives of young people. Skelton (2010), for example, challenges the relative absence of young people from established political geographical agendas, which, she argues, reflects the institutionalisation of a conceptual binary between capital 'P' politics (denoting formal, institutional politics and processes) and lower-case 'p' politics (denoting informal, personal and micro-level politics). An increase in concern with lower-case 'p' politics has been highly generative in terms of opening up new research vistas in the field since this has facilitated engagement with the wide range of political repertoires enacted in young people's political involvement – and there are, as we discussed in Chapter 4, parallel developments in political science and political sociology. However, as Skelton suggests (2010: 147–8), political geography's continuing commitment to this formal and informal political distinction, which accords primacy to the former over the latter, has hampered full appreciation of the distinctiveness and dynamism of young people's politics, which tends to straddle both formal and informal political domains – a tendency which has been amply shown in the foregoing chapters of this book.

Against this critical backdrop, recent developments in the related fields of political geography and children and young people's geographies have begun to explore how young people articulate political views and awareness that engage with both formal and informal political processes, and correlatively, with issues that resonate at multiple spatial scales. Skelton (2010) for example, reveals how Montserratian youth engaged in a Youth Council debate over the right to political franchise of Montserratian émigrés, skilfully combining the formality of debate in its formal setting with a pronounced aesthetic of linguistic play from the urban youth culture in which they are steeped. Other work in this vein has shown how the differential embeddedness of particular youth cultural groups makes for particular forms of cross-scale political views and attitudes, reflecting experiences of both disadvantage and enablement that arise from overlapping forms of social and political belonging. Thus, Hopkins (2007) explores the local lives and political views of young Scottish Muslim men of Pakistani heritage, showing how their immediate experience in Scotland not only distinguishes them from other British Muslims in terms of identity and ethnicity but also gives them access to forms of 'ummatic' experience that act as an important cipher of both their local and their global political perceptions. Similarly, Horschelmann (2008) explores how young German people's reactions to the Iraq War brought geopolitical events within the compass of local lives, to better understand how 'young people's positioning in relation to international politics' is both 'geographically and historically situated' (2008: 587).

In the following section, we take up these themes in relation to our own research findings, beginning with a discussion of the continued importance of 'the local' as a focus of political engagement in its own right, before moving on to consider how consciousness of 'the political' at multiple scales amongst our respondents brought political processes in different parts of the globe into touch with the local. As stated in the introduction, our contribution to these emerging geographical debates is our focus on political action and engagement, rather than solely on political attitudes and awareness.

Place, territory and mobility

As noted above, a key consideration in this chapter is the way in which a wide range of extra-local concerns expressed by our respondents were refracted through 'the local', not only informing their political subjectivities but also shaping their actions and engagements. However, it is also the case that for many 'the local' itself, expressed in terms of the

relationships between areas within the two cities, was a focus of concern. A crucial issue in this context was the uneven urban geography of socioeconomic deprivation. As we discussed in detail in Chapter 3, an important shared characteristic of the two cities in which we conducted our research was the over-representation of ethnic minority groups – and particularly Bangladeshis and Pakistanis – in electoral wards within the worst quintile of deprivation (see Table 3.5). This link between patterns of deprivation and the location of minority ethnic communities formed an important component of the 'cognitive geography' of many of our research participants, and in key instances, informed the focus and trajectory of their political engagement. In the view of a participant in the focus group conducted in the Concord Centre in Sparkbrook, Birmingham, the areas of the city could be sharply delineated in terms of the amount of investment they receive, and correspondingly, the extent of the social disadvantages such as drug use and petty crime they witness. In his view, this uneven geography of investment and opportunity could be likened to the breaking of a biscuit:

Respondent 1: [I]f you go to west of Birmingham, Aston, Lozells, and, and there's been plenty of money been pumped in there but Sparkbrook is just, like, it's on the side […] Where you can see, looking at the stats, Sparkbrook actually comes at the top ten, of crime and drugs. So there is an issue here.

Respondent 2: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: It's like a biscuit – man, you get me? You break it, all the crumbs fall off, all other places get the bigger pieces, we get the crumbs.

Many young activists expressed concern about external representations of their neighbourhoods as sites exemplifying the pathologies of inner-city living, such as urban disorder, crime and gang violence. This emerged as a recurrent theme of the Young Disciples focus group, particularly in relation to the limiting role that external perceptions of areas such as Lozells in Birmingham had on young people's social and spatial mobility:

> [O]ur area is categorised as ghetto, like, when I fill in application forms I hate the fact that I've got to put down Lozells, 'cause I'm thinking, well, when I apply for a job, they're gonna look on the area and say, "Well, is this the area that such and such happened to? Do you want us to have a person in our work environment … ?"

> You know, you don't know how you're being perceived, 'cause of the area you live in.

Similarly, a member of the MJM commented critically on the social problems characterising the inner city ward of Small Heath to the south east of Birmingham, and how these tended to overlap to create an overall pattern of economic, social and institutional neglect. Notably, he singled out the police for particular criticism, on account of what he saw as their failure to prevent drug dealing and drug-related crime in the area:

> What needs to be done in Small Heath? The rubbish for starters, we've got rats everywhere. Rats, rubbish, drugs. I could spot about a hundred drug dealers on my road. I could tell you where they live and everything and I just don't understand how the police can't find out.

In developing his argument, the respondent gave his perceptions of Small Heath an important generational dimension, distinguishing them sharply from those of his parents and the wider first generation of British Asian settlers in the city:

> In the parks in my area it's a bit like all drug dealers, you'd see like needles all over and, again, I wouldn't want my kids, if I do, I do have kids hopefully, growing up in that kind of situation and stuff. My parents don't kind of see that, 'cause again they, they're a bit like, "Oh, it's heaven", they're in this like … little heaven when, and I know a lot of the Asian parents that have come over from back home they kind of see it as heaven. They've kind of woken up a bit to the new houses, like Sutton Coldfield or something, but it's still like Small Heath because it's a Muslim community. They don't wanna move out because they think that all these non-Muslims are against us, so we don't wanna move in to like Solihull because these non-Muslims they don't like Muslims.

Significantly, such critical distinctions as these between younger and older generational views of the divided ethnic and social geographies of Birmingham and Bradford were not expressed as stand-alone observations. Rather, they tended to feed directly into young people's more critical political perceptions of their residential areas, which showed acute sensitivity to the spatial unevenness of local political accountability

and varied forms of institutional control. For example, a young Muslim respondent in Birmingham, who was also a member of the MJM, was critical of what he saw as a factor underlying why different areas exhibited such radically different socioeconomic and environmental characteristics:

> [T]he area that I went through, the streets were more clean and I got off the bus, and I was thinking, "wow, this place is nice", even though I go home, and it's a total mess. You know what I mean? And that's, again that's the council's fault and … it's just that the environment that you live in, I think, is just totally different. And the people that you elect, like, for example, in, in a more, kind of, richer area then, they'll probably know the role of their councillors. They'll know who, if there's something wrong, they'll know who, who can deal with this kind of problem […] They know who their councillor is and that councillor knows that these people, if I don't look after them, are gonna kick me out.

If awareness of the uneven socioeconomic geography of the two cities was important in underpinning critical attitudes to the failed accountability and neglect of elected members of the respective local councils, our respondents were also acutely aware of how, in other ways, public institutions could be highly interventionist in their areas, creating unwanted forms of spatial control and occasionally territorial conflict. Arguably the most important instance of this, as already discussed in Chapter 6, was the spatial practice of the police, whose presence in areas of minority ethnic concentration was often perceived to be heavy-handed, if not outright intrusive. As one member of the focus group at the Concorde Centre in Birmingham commented:

> *Respondent 1*: You always got a police patrolling in the area, looking for someone to pick on. That's always a big issue.
> *Respondent 2*: It's certain officers that people have seen, and they know that they will only target kids from Sparkbrook, whether they're in Sparkbrook, in city centre …

Similarly, a respondent from the WBYI in Bradford, who at the time of the research was a trainee school teacher, recounted in detail how the police, without provocation, had begun tailing him after he had completed a school placement. Deciding to change his route home to see whether he would be followed, it became clear to the respondent that

the decision of the police to pursue and stop him could only have been based on prejudicial grounds. As he recalled:

> Basically I was driving my car, at night, I went to visit a school where I was doing one of my placements […]so the police in this car, they were looking at me suspiciously. I ignored them. They sort of took a detour, and sort of went past me again, it was becoming obvious to me that they, you know, they're trying to suss me out, and later on after I'd visited the school which […] again they went past me, looking at me in a suspicious way, I just deliberately took a different route than I normally would just to work out, you know, whether they would follow me and lo and behold they sort of went around a different way and cut me off, all sirens going, I didn't even get out of the car, and the woman police officer had her face at the screen bellowing at me "Get out of the car!" […] That day I flipped because of the way I was treated, bellowed at, and before that, like I says, you know, the way that I was followed and I'm looked at suspiciously and a bit of a taunt me and stuff, I just flipped and I says, "Look, why have you done this? Is it because I happen to have a beard? Is it because I have a sporty looking car? Is it because, you know, which of the two is it?" I asked them straight. "Is it because I'm a Muslim or is it because I have a sporty looking car and you think I'm a drug dealer?"

Re-scaling youth politics: global moral visions and spatial practice

As we noted in the introduction to this chapter, whilst recent research interventions by human geographers have begun to map out the political and spatial imaginaries of young people, including those of religious and minority ethnic backgrounds, only rarely has this developing research explored the link between the global reach of young people's political views and forms of political action and engagement. As such, whilst exploring the modes and repertoires of political action among our respondents, in our research, we were also keen to track how political engagement, in both form and focus, was shaped by the multiply-scaled, and often highly geopolitically astute, global moral visions our respondents held. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 4, one of the most striking commonalities between respondents' views of 'the political' was their sense of frustration and even suspicion of politics at the national scale, which transcended the specific domains in which

different respondents participated. The 'Peace Walk' organised by the BKYP MYPs presents an alternative to an Iraq War demonstration, condensing international, national and local scales into a locally configured response:

> [P]eople saw us as the 'Asian youth club', people from the Council, they viewed us as that, and that kind of caused a barrier, I mean the example I'm thinking of is probably is that, we were talking about the Peace Walk which we tried to do in Bradford and, basically we were stopped all the way because the Council had passed a motion saying 'we support the troops in Iraq' and therefore we can't let you do this, and the young people, the kind of consensus was we wanted to do something and therefore we were just told 'finito', we can't do it, and that kind of caused a barrier.

This initiative, which some members of the group looked back on as one of their most successful, had an explicitly spatial dimension in terms of the local Council's attempt, supported by the local police force, to canalise the route the Peace Walk could take through the city:

> [A]nd then kind of, the whole financial barrier, the whole kind of controlling the space, the whole police permission, that kind of all came into the thing, and I think that kind of woke us up a lot, in terms of, there's us guys thinking 'OK, we've got the power, we're the voice', well actually you haven't because the Council controls where the money goes, and what you can do.

Whilst this experience gave rise to considerable frustration on the part of the MYPs, the Peace Walk was in many respects a critical political success. This was not least because of the way in which it simultaneously combined, through political spatial *practice*, issues and concerns connected to several spatial scales. On the one hand, the MYPs worked in open, yet tactical, opposition to the local Council, avoiding the embargo placed on staging an anti-war demonstration by re-branding the event as a Peace Walk. On the other hand, they were able to manifest political opposition to a decision, at the national government level, to participate in what was perceived as a geopolitically violent and illegal event at the global scale. A full understanding of this action on the part of the MYPs thus necessitates an appreciation of the inherent scalar logic of these young people's politics, which cannot only be interpreted through the lens of the local.

Islam, trans-nationalism and alternative public spheres

In this section, we develop further the theme of how placed-based politics have come to be multiply-scaled in a review of the emerging research literature on Muslim youth identities and political imaginaries, teasing out the ways in which these are presently taking shape in the context of globalisation. Particular reference is made to the role of new ICTs in transforming the public expression of aspects of faith, the emergence of global Islamic movements and the impact of these developments for the identities of young Muslims living in diaspora.

As noted in the discussion of changing 'grammars of action' in Chapter 4, a key element in the evolving political awareness and action of Muslim youth has been the emergence and use of new media, which has facilitated a global intensification of the promulgation of Islamic knowledge, and in expanding public deliberation over matters of Islamic tradition and belonging. Building on Benedict Anderson's (1983) classic analysis of the relationship between print capitalism and the spread of nationalism, several analysts argue that the increasing prevalence of the internet, enabling not only the consumption but also the production of knowledge and information, acts as a conduit for the emergence and multiplication of alternative 'public spheres', including the means of imagining a global Muslim 'public sphere'. In Jon Anderson's words:

> Opening the social field to new spokes-people and new discursive practices not only challenges authority long since thought settled to interpret what religion requires, but also blurs boundaries between public and private discourse and fosters new habits of production and consumption tied to media, and particularly to new media. (Anderson 2003: 887)

In this way, 'electronic communication' is 'moving Islamic discourse into the marketplace and aligning its practices, range of choice, and alternatives both metaphorically and literally with additional means to service these demands' (Anderson 2003: 889). Importantly, in terms of our case-study, Jon Anderson regards the intersection between new media and Islam as having significant implications for the engagement of young Muslims (Anderson 2003: 891). Thus, there are numerous instances in which electronic media are being used to develop and/or sustain new forms of religious networking and group formation, particularly among young people. One example is the Forum of European Muslim and Youth Organisations (FEMYSO), a federation of Muslim

groups within the European Union that aims to be 'an international network which can facilitate in providing services and global links to youth organisations', and which explicitly fosters a 'European identity' among young Muslims in different European societies. This organisation incorporates the use of a website, as well as an online newsletter with electronic subscription, to support its activities (FEMYSO; http://p9445.typo3server.info/home.0.html, accessed 2 November 2007).

Other authors question the implicit normative assumption at work in this type of account, that is, that the expansion of the 'Muslim public sphere' through use of telecommunications media is an inherently desirable phenomenon. For instance, Peter Mandaville (2007) argues that although globalisation has promoted debate on the meaning and nature of the authoritative in Islam:

> the mere fact alone of more people being able to serve up a wider range of ideas about religion – that is, a widening of the public sphere – does not in itself produce more pluralistic (in the sense of being more tolerant or open-ended) knowledge' (2007: 102).

Nevertheless, he suggests that, just as it cannot be assumed that a global expansion of 'Muslim politics' generates more 'tolerant', 'progressive' strands within Muslim thought, neither can it be crudely assumed that such expansion entails a greater tendency to embrace 'politically extreme idioms of Islamism', noting in this context the rise of distinctively progressive Muslim youth organisations (2007: 112).

These debates are taken up and developed further in Kevin McDonald's (2006) work on contemporary global movements. McDonald takes issue with accounts that see global Islamism as an inevitably defensive reaction to processes of globalisation in the era of late modernity. Specifically, his arguments take the form of a challenge to Manuel Castells, who, in his writings on the rise of the 'network society', characterises the many global Islamic movements that have emerged since the Iranian revolution as defensive responses to the totalising effects of global information networks: as 'cultural communes' that seek to stand outside of globalised networking logics. Whilst McDonald accepts much of Castells' argument concerning the rise of the network society, he suggests that contemporary articulations of global Islam and identification with the umma are manifestations of alternative, rather than culturally defensive, global movements. From this perspective, new forms of commitment to Islam are not straightforward entrenchments of tradition that are opposed to the erosive effects of modernity and

networking, but in fact utilise and express the logics of the network society. In this context, he underscores how, in the identities of young Muslims in particular, consciousness of globalised Muslim experience dovetails with a new emphasis on personal piety that registers as social, religious and political engagement in local contexts (McDonald 2006: 184–208). Following Kepel, he cites this as an example of 're-Islamicisation from below' (2006: 184). For some young Muslims, particularly those living in diaspora, identification with the Muslim umma becomes a key modality in which identities are renegotiated, with forms of personal piety providing a source of challenge to familial and communal 'traditions' (2006:192–6).

In the British context, this argument is supported by ethnographic research, which has shown an increase in the importance of religion in the identities of young British Pakistanis, with the suggestion that faith identifications are increasingly seen as distinct from, and more significant than, ethnic affiliations (Jacobson 1997: 239; Mirza et al. 2007). Importantly, such distinctions are by no means exclusive to the UK, but have also been observed in Muslim diasporas in other European societies (on similar developments in France, see for example, Bouzar 2001; Bowen 2004; Grillo 2004). The recent resurgence and differentiation of Islamic identities, in Britain and elsewhere, has developed in tandem with the global expansion of telecommunications networks and informational exchange, and not necessarily in reaction against it. This raises important sociological questions about how faith in general and Islam in particular is expressed at the level of 'the global' and 'the local', as well as about the implications of these changes for patterns of participation in the existing institutional arrangements of (secular) democratic societies (on this, see particularly Bowen 2006). These intersections between globalisation and Islam have particular implications for young Muslims who are engaged in the on-going negotiation of diasporic identities, whilst increasingly animated by global events such as the Iraq War and the publication of cartoons of Muhammad in Denmark and elsewhere in late 2005. For many respondents, their political sensibility was underpinned by their awareness of a broader global community of the umma, as one MYP from Birmingham explained:

> [S]omething about Islam is that everyone feels you, you're connected with it, it's called the brotherhood, so if there has been an injustice against Muslims on the other side of the world, Muslims here will care about it, and then […] obviously, the foreign policy of our country has meant that youths feel just as much as adults or their parents

> and we do care about that and I think that's something that, I mean, it's so topical, but it's something that really affects us […] the feeling that, it's a war on Islam.

The themes of local and transnational allegiance and an emphasis on faith that is distinct from culture can be clearly discerned in the activities of the MJM in Birmingham.

The MJM comprises an organisational core of young Muslim men who met at a Further Education College in Birmingham, and who came together as an organisation when two of them were expelled from the college in late 2005. We examine how the Movement combined new 'grammars of action' with more conventional political modes to realise simultaneously global and local sets of political concerns. In particular, a 'glocalised' political sensibility fused members' global 'ummatic' identity with local community engagement, helping to forge an alternative (Muslim) public sphere that referenced, but was not enfolded within, the political mainstream.

The MJM was organised and led by its youth members, and its foundations lay in a campaign for the establishment of a prayer room for students on the premises of a local college, at which a number of MJM members were students. This campaign brought the activists into confrontation with the college principal, and culminated in the expulsion of two students who had been at the forefront of the campaign for the prayer room. At the same time that they had been engaged in this campaign, the students had also been engaged in college-based anti-war activities, which again brought them into confrontation with the college authorities, particularly in relation to a planned visit of former Prime Minister Tony Blair to the college. Their opposition to this visit was inevitably cited as a factor in their expulsion from the college, and these linkages brought the campaigners to the attention of local anti-war groups, who joined the students in expressing outrage over the conduct of the college. The college campaigns and the students' expulsion began to feature in Stop the War Coalition debates, and was the focus of a Channel 4 feature. Out of these activities, the group began to cohere around opposition to the war on Iraq and Afghanistan, forging links with a range of anti-war organisations, including Respect, Stop the War Coalition and the Socialist Worker Party, although, as we noted in Chapter 4, without becoming absorbed into any of them. Their activities began to diversify around concerns with a range of social justice issues, drawing upon diverse repertoires of action, including local community activism, involvement in protests and demonstrations and e-activism, whilst their

desire to express these remained fore-grounded by a political consciousness that was engaged with questions of Muslim identity and values, and a critique of mainstream political institutions' responses to Muslims in the UK and abroad. To this end, the group engaged with organisations such as the Muslim Public Affairs Committee (MPAC), but chose to form itself into an autonomous group, inspired by Muslim notions of justice. As we shall see though, there was vigorous debate within the group about the role of faith in framing conceptions of 'justice'.

There are important ways in which the perceived inter-linkages between faith and political action threaded through into both the political grammars of the MJM, and their perceptions of mainstream politics. However, in each of their activities, this coupling of faith to politics was open-textured rather than exclusive. Whilst members' commitment to faith galvanised their politics, the programmatic aspects of their engagement countenanced cooperation with non-Muslim organisations, and more importantly, was not solely focused upon 'Muslim causes'.

As noted above, the MJM emerged when two of its future members were expelled from a Birmingham FE College. The issue at stake was that members of the group wanted to establish a student Islamic Society and associated prayer-room on the college premises. The management of the college opposed this initiative, allowing neither Islamic nor other faith societies on the college premises. Later, the college shifted its position to allow a multi-faith, as opposed to a Muslim, prayer facility. As the issue developed, the group began to suspect that the decision of the college was not anti-faith *per se*, but that it had distinctively Islamophobic connotations. As one of the members of the group commented in an interview:

> I mean the college, it was proper … that college is Islamophobic as hell. They actually thought we were, they made it out like we were trying to start an organisation, some sort of HT [Hizb-ut Tahrir] organisation but … we didn't want that, we just wanted a prayer room, really, and a big enough one, they gave us, okay, they go, 'Okay, we won't give you a prayer, we'll give you a multi-faith room', which means that any religion […], okay, we were like fine with that. … but they gave us like, one that was, it's probably like half the size of this room [a small interview room], if not smaller, to pray in and it was a bit … it was a bit dodgy.

It is significant in terms of the subsequent orientations of the MJM and its members, that the case for opposing the college's policy was supported through the use of rights-based arguments as opposed to particularistic

religious claims, and was distinguished from more religiously separatist campaigns of Hizb-ut-Tahrir based on college campaigns for prayer rooms for exclusively Muslim use (Husain 2007). Specifically, the group began to circulate an unofficial college newsletter, which, as well as carrying articles on current affairs topics such as the Iraq war and Anglo-American foreign policy, also contained articles that were critical of the college's decision on faith societies. One of these, entitled 'God Can't Come to College', began by observing that the college was 'refusing to allow any religious societies to be formed on its premises, be they Muslim, Christian or Jewish, despite the fact that most other higher education facilities have them'. The piece went on to bolster its argument through reference to the Human Rights Act, although not article 9 on freedom of religion and conscience, but article 11 on freedom of association. The article continued:

> So what exactly is the real agenda behind this blatantly discriminative policy the College has in place and are they aware that they are in breach of the Human Rights Act of 1998 article 11, which states that everyone has 'the right to freedom of peaceful assembly? [...] Whatever people's opinions are about religion it doesn't change the fact that Britain is a country that allows individuals to practice and express their beliefs, and by the looks of things this College expects people to just shut up and leave their religion and God at the College entrance, or just simply shut up and leave the College.

The second (and ultimately final) issue of the newsletter contained a further critique of the college on the grounds of its restrictive security arrangements. Subsequently, two of the students responsible for producing the newsletter were suspended 'with immediate effect for an indefinite period' and later expelled. They were joined by others in a public demonstration outside the college grounds to protest at the action of the college. It was at this point that the group came together as the MJM. Whilst locally focused, the demonstration was multi-organisational and multiply-scaled: as well as enlisting the support of students from a local university, the action was also supported by national organisations in the form of the National Union of Students and Stop-the-War Coalition, the latter with an internationally focused agenda.

The issue of how faith values and perspectives were expressed in the activities of the MJM was inherent to the decision over the most appropriate name of the group. Indeed, the decision to call the organisation the 'MJM' was not unanimously agreed upon amongst the membership,

in that some members clearly felt this could be taken to imply too narrow a focus on Muslim interests and concerns. The emphasis they intended – and thus the reason the name was adhered to – stressed the idea of Islamic notions of justice being drawn upon and mobilised in a movement that construed itself as having a more broadly 'progressive' political agenda. As was commented by one member of the movement during the focus group discussion:

> Yeah, it's … it's called the Muslim Justice Movement, but it's for everyone. Everyone is supposed to be involved, it's not just for Muslims and there was a bit of a talk about the name and it being a bit too exclusive […] That's the, the only part I agree on in the name.

The view that the movement should be oriented towards an inclusive notion of justice, and that this should be harnessed to the political activity of the group, was most clearly expressed in the way they approached anti-war campaigning. On the one hand, the group clearly felt that the texts of Islam – including the traditions of the prophet Muhammad (hadith) – enjoined them to political action over the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. As one individual put it:

> [I]f you don't get involved it's a bit like … you're just staying quiet while like millions or hundreds of thousands are getting killed around the world. And it's like a crime in itself, you just don't get involved. And if you don't speak out, islamically we're supposed to speak out, if, our prophet, peace be upon him, he said that if you see something wrong you either fix it with your hand, and if you can't do that you fix it with your mouth, you speak out against it and if you can't do that then you hate it in your heart, and that's like one of the traditions [hadith] of the prophet, and, well, I'd like to say I'm trying to fix it with my hand or my mouth, I mean, I can't exactly go over there and do anything about it, so with the mouth it is then.

On the other hand, referring to the coordinated anti-war effort of the Stop The War Coalition and the Respect Party, this interviewee also welcomed the ways in which Muslim and non-Muslim organisations had coalesced in their opposition to the Iraq War, not only on account of the mobilisation itself but also because of the promise this cooperation seemed to hold out for social relations more broadly:

> It's nice to be involved in all non-Muslim groups and it's just nice to know non-Muslims as well, because we live in like a largely Muslim area and I don't know many non-Muslims as well, and it's a nice feeling to

> know that there's actually non-Muslims out there and they're not all against Muslims, whereas Muslims that don't go out protesting and don't see none of this, 'cause the news don't show the protesting […], the non-Muslims kind of think 'Oh no …', the Muslims kind of think that, 'Oh, it's all non-Muslims against us', but if they actually went to these protests and seeing that there's more non-Muslims than Muslims, you get about a hundred Muslims at a protest and about a thousand, two thousand, three thousand non-Muslims. They seeing that, that the British people are actually behind them, there'd be kind of a whole different point of view from them. It kind of changed my view.

Indeed, it is clear from other statements made by members of the MJM that inter-group mobilisation and alliance-building were not simply harnessed on pragmatic grounds, but because they cohered with a 'universalistic' conception of justice that extended well beyond Muslim interests alone. For instance, elaborating upon his anti-war stance in relation to the conflicts in Iraq and Lebanon, another member of the group revealed clearly how his political concerns were not restricted to the Middle East, but corresponded to a much broader ethical and geographical world view. This encompassed a concern with poverty in, and lack of fair-trade arrangements with, Africa, as well as a broader focus on the relationships between globalisation and (neo-) imperialism:

> I mean, it's like the Iraq war happened, campaigning against that, then the Lebanon war happened again, you know, and, and it does seem to be happening all around the Middle East, but […] I think that, you know, more kind of attention should be given to the conflict in Africa and, and the poverty, and why these kind of things are happening. Why, they say that they give debt relief, but what about fair trade you know? They've, they've got the rights to, kind of, extract their own resources and […] do trade, you know, rather than, Western companies coming in and taking their resources, […] so those kinds of things, also we might, kind of, start campaigning for, you know, getting involved in any war that really happens, I'm basically against it, you know … globalisation kind of imperialism and those kind of things […] And just as much as any bombs going off in, in Baghdad also, you know, I don't want them happening in, in London as well.

A key consideration in this linkage between commitment to Islamic values and engagement in the public realm was the perception that

the political terrain on which the group engage has fundamentally changed. Thus, their expressions of personal piety and identification with Islam ran alongside a consciousness of how the situation for young Muslims had been altered by 9-11 and the July 7th bombings:

> The Muslims, yeah, the Muslim youths, the Muslim youth, 'cause they've always been talked about, the Muslim youth and this and that and, you know. So, like, they're like this and they're like that and we're like, 'Are we?' [laughter] I don't think we are, you know what I mean? […] And some of them are like, that doesn't represent my views, some of them are, you know, it's, it's the opposite end of, some of them are, I don't really care, why is he talking about this and that, you know. He's, he's on, on the news, for example, somebody saying that, they're getting all extreme or radical and this and that, those kind of things. And […] I can't even know about all these kind of situations. The other one's like, 'No, I'm not, […] I'm not radical or anything like', those kind of things, like, he has […] his own political opinion. […] but definitely … it's now from that group where they don't have any, that they're being forced almost to get an opinion on […] the situations that are going on at random.

Similarly, the significance of these events in driving a more globalised political consciousness was discussed by a Saheli member, who talked about her preference for engaging with local and international issues, rather than national issues. She located her international concerns very directly within the changing context wrought by events such as 9/11:

> I think globally, I find it so much more interesting […] there's probably more problems now that we are forced to talk about it nationally a lot more now than we would have two years, say three years ago. As opposed to pre-9/11 onwards than you know, what happened then like internationally.

Like the MJM members, her international consciousness was connected not only to issues relating to 9/11 and the ideological ramifications of the 'war on terror', but also, as for many other respondents, to broader issues of international relations, development and social justice, as she went to explain:

> [A]nd like from a developing point of view I find that so much more kind of exciting! There's a lot more change and it can be so much

> more productive, and it's not about kind of forcing a Western kind of perspective on those developing countries and stuff. It's about kind of helping to facilitate […] And I find that great. I mean I think personally speaking that's where I'd like to go further than this, at Saheli, do more international work and stuff.

This concern was replicated in the broad range of global issues, campaigns or organisations that activists were involved in. In many cases, these were clearly underpinned by a political consciousness that was shaped by a concern with Muslim values or identification with a broader Muslim community, for instance in the case of an MYP who had been carrying out voluntary work for Islamic Relief, but these were typically not confined to a concern with Muslim issues or societies. Thus, the MYP's volunteering with Islamic Relief extended to a broad range of humanitarian work, and sat alongside her membership of Amnesty International, and her everyday commitments to ethical shopping and environmentalism. There were numerous instances of activists expressing concerns with global issues such as the international terms of trade, debt, development, humanitarian and emergency relief, or the maldistribution of resources globally. Many had been involved in the Drop the Debt and Jubilee 2000 campaigns. A telling instance of such concern with global issues arose when our BKYP respondents collectively elected to donate the payments we had offered them for their participation in a focus group towards Tsunami Relief. There were many instances where concerns with global issues were clearly not confined to identification with societies resulting from diasporic attachments, but underpinned by a broader concern with unequal global social relations – a concern that is neatly captured in this reflection from a Saheli member:

> [W]hy people aren't getting food and water, it's just such a basic requirement and stuff. You know even basic food, rice, whatever, just so that they can survive, and these people are dying of starvation when other countries are throwing away food. Why can't, you know, people just wake up and like tackle some of these really basic issues that can be sorted out? I mean it's not like you know, you don't need a higher being to sort out these issues, it can be done but people just are selfish and they don't care about. I mean you know, you've got your Fat Cats, they don't care what's going in the global environment. It's a shame.

Glocalisation and alternative (Muslim) public spheres

A key consideration in relation to the development and on-going activities of the MJM is that the Movement reflected the changing relationships between the scales of the 'global' and the 'local'. This is evident from the activities of the Movement in two intersecting ways. Firstly, from the point of view of their faith commitment and the orientation towards social justice to which this gave rise, the members of the MJM perceived clear lines of continuity between a range of local issues and global processes and events (the Iraq War, poverty in Africa and so forth). Secondly, the MJM made extensive use of new communication media not only as consumers but also as producers of networked information – as we discussed in Chapter 4, this was manifested in blogging, website construction and discursive forms of action pursued through 'narrow-casting' alternative messages about Islam to counter representations within mainstream media.

The perceived continuities between the scales of the 'global' and the 'local' were expressed in the MJM's combination of different repertoires of action, which included providing social and welfare service to people at the local level, and taking a stand against UK foreign policy:

> It was the war, it was the war on Palestine and everything, but … we'd start off from sorting out everything in our little communities because they reckon that the government is not doing anything. So, if it's just like … a woman that just needs her shopping done, we'll just get it done for her. We'll go to shops and, like, if she hasn't got transport we'll help her out. It's just, it started off with little things like that, that was the idea and that is still the idea. That we'll start off and when they need us for a protest, um, Anti War Coalition, what Anti War Coalition do is they call us up and then we'd go down with them in their coaches.

Similar linkages were made among other respondents in our sample, as one young woman from Saheli reflecting on the local and global connections that underpinned her activism reflected:

> I felt I was being attacked locally, as a Muslim woman, because of what was happening on September 11th and then they go and do it and attack me internationally, by attacking a country that has my brothers and sisters. […] So, they attack me locally by telling me that I could be a terrorist, and my brother was stopped and searched. He

> was like 14, and […] he always walks like back from mosque … never been searched, never. But after the September 11th he was stopped, searched, delayed. He was scared, 'cos it's never happened before and he came home and he was like, he had this piece of paper in his hand saying that he's been stopped and searched and he said all his mates were, and that got me really angry! And when Iraq happened, it was almost like "Oh my God, so they're trying to do it internationally as well." So it felt like they were attacking Islam and Muslims […] So – that's why I got active and used the first demonstration I went in was in College. And then I went in one to London. […] so that's the only reason an international issue became an issue for me, because it was a local one as well.

In terms of the engagement of the MJM with different forms of global media, the focus group discussion revealed the keen critical sense each of them had in relation to the normative positions and 'trustworthiness' of different media outlets. In this context, the group made a series of counter-positions of different news stations, including the BBC, Sky, al-Jazeera and a range of Asian and Arab channels, which did not simply cast the group in the role of discerning media consumers, but underpinned their website and blogs, in which they set out what they saw as an alternative, less biased account of events such as the Iraq war and the conflict between Israel and Lebanon in July 2006. As they made clear during the course of the focus group, an important component of their action takes place at the level of discursive politics, through an inherently global medium:

Respondent 1: 'That's … what we see as our only effective means for doing something. … But in, in order to, … to draw people to come and protest with us, or to take on board the issues that we are trying to portray, and to let people know about, it's, it's difficult because it's hard to defeat the logic behind what Bush and Blair are doing over in the Middle East. And, and the whole war on terror. The … whole lot, we have to defeat the logic of the war on terror before we can get the real points across. Because they, like he said, they portray it as like a clash of cultures. Bush would say, you know, 'they hate our values, that's why they are doing this', you know, and 'they don't like our way of life' and all that crap.

Several: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah'.

Respondent 1: 'But it's, … it's not that. They don't like your actions, what you're doing, your government. They, they mix up the issue, and so when the public see it, the few individuals can see it for what it is, but the rest of them they just … so when we are protesting Lebanon, you know …'

Respondent 2: 'Extremism is going on over there! [laughter]'

Respondent 1: 'They don't wanna, they don't even [debate] the issue. Talking about Palestine and Israel, you know, the standard conception that you have of Palestine and Israel, is that these 'terrorists' [are] terrorising the Israelis. And that's, that's the common understanding. … so […] we have to defeat the logic behind these stories'.

The website of the MJM (http://mjmuk.org/links.php, accessed 2 November 2007, although no longer maintained) set out the group's intention to use their web page as a nexus for linking local and global concerns as they affect Muslim groups:

> This site will be updated with news from around the world that concerns Muslims here in the UK and abroad. Ranging from your local communities all the way to politics, the scope will include anything which affects us large or small.

In the political imaginaries of the MJM membership, there is no contradiction between forms of political action expressed at these different scales. In this context, the operative terms 'Muslim', 'communities' and 'us' is instructive, in that their use implicitly transcends distinctions of space, with these linkages facilitated by the availability of new technology that allow the collapsing of spatial scales.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have drawn extensively on the ideas of place, space and scale as developed in geographical literature, to reveal the significance of place and locale as conditioning elements of the political awareness and actions of ethnic minority young people. In particular, we have seen that young people are critically aware of the uneven ethnic and socioeconomic components of the urban geographies framing their lives and opportunities, and that such awareness is articulated as one important

constituent in the extent and nature of their political engagement. To this extent, we have seen that the local scale – experienced, for example, in terms of socioeconomic deprivation, institutional neglect and forms of spatial control – continues to be an important locus of political action and engagement, with much community activism taking shape at this scale. However, we have also seen in this chapter that there was a marked tendency among our respondents for issues of concern at the local scale to become conjoined – at the levels of both political consciousness and political action – with concerns at other scales.

This combination and conflation of scaled political action was apparent among many of our respondents, and particularly so among young Muslims. Importantly from the point of view of the emerging literature on Muslim youth identities – both within geography and other social science disciplines – 'the political' is being re-imagined, with new forms of political action opening up to link the public articulation of Islamic practice with a concern for principles of justice and notions of democratic accountability. The parallels between expressions of global Islam among young Muslims and other global social movements are recognisable and made possible through shifting relations between scales and communication flows that have been enacted by globalisation. In this context, the significance of our discussion of the MJM is that it constitutes an example of organisations that are both responsive to, and expressive of, aspects of the changing relationships between the scales of the 'global' and the 'local'. As this chapter has attempted to show, it is clear that faith identities serve to animate engagement at these levels and in ways that are not exclusively tied to Muslim issues, but connected to wider principles and campaigns for social and political justice. In the current climate, marked as it is by public concern over young Muslims' political engagement, it is important to recognise that the intertwining of faith and politics can find expression in a range of political responses – and not simply in violent extremism or political disaffection.

9
Conclusion

In recent years, ethnic minority and Muslim young people have become increasingly visible in a variety of public debates that frequently rest upon hyperbolic claims concerning these groups' political disaffection and – in the case of Muslims – their tendency to be drawn towards forms of political extremism. As we discussed in Chapter 1, however, neither of these claims are particularly substantiated by robust empirical data. What information there is on the interaction between age, ethnicity and religion as factors underlying differences in political participation is patchy at best, and certainly insufficiently robust to support the crisis narratives that currently prevail in relation to ethnic minority and Muslim young people. Moreover, available data are limited not only in their degree of detail and disaggregation but also in the underlying conception on which they rest. All too often, claims about the limited extent of ethnic minority young people's political engagement rest upon an unduly narrow definition of 'the political', which is invariably restricted to participation in the political mainstream. Against this background, a key concern of this book has been to furnish insights that intervene empirically and theoretically in these debates by operationalising a much broader understanding of political participation and engagement.

In this context, the research on which the book rests has revealed that between disaffection and extremism there is a wide range of forms of political participation and action, which are often expressed outside of the terrain of mainstream politics. In order to address the ways in which ethnic minority young people do engage, we argued that analysis should address four areas of social and political transformation: changing patterns of political participation; changing modes of governance; shifting conceptions of identities and ethnicity; and the significance of

different scales of activism enabled by new information communication technologies. The remainder of the chapter is organised around these four areas in order to reflect on how we have intervened in each; we conclude by identifying an agenda for pursuing these interventions in further research.

New grammars of action

We opened by suggesting that crisis narratives on ethnic minority young people tend to focus primarily on electoral non-participation and (relatively rare) instances of political extremism – paying too little attention to the range of forms of activism between these poles. We argued that an analysis of repertoires of action requires us to take a broader conception of 'the political', addressing engagement within and outside of mainstream political institutions and electoral politics. In this respect, we link our study to a broader set of literatures that suggest that declining levels of electoral participation sit alongside increasing levels of engagement in other forms of political participation – including issue-based campaigns, social movements, everyday lifestyle politics and online activism. Drawing on Beck's (1996) concept of 'subpolitics', we highlighted the sociological importance of forms of political engagement outside of mainstream institutions. We found that 'subpolitical' activism was evident among our respondents as a means of expressing their political concerns, manifested in actions such as political shopping (e.g. 'buycotting' Fair Trade), voluntary activity (e.g. volunteering for charitable organisations, such as Islamic Relief, or as mentors), career choices (e.g. working in an Asian women's refuge or as a youth worker) and discursive political action (e.g. blogging to challenge perceptions of Muslim youth in mainstream media and public discourses). Thus, our study found plenty of evidence of (often intensive) activism that was located outside of mainstream political arenas.

Conceptually, we argued for the utility of seeing these developments not simply as additions to an increasing battery of repertoires of political action but as underscored by different kinds of political subjectivity that find expression through a preference for more immediate, personal, direct, hands-on, everyday forms of activism. These kinds of subjectivities, expressed in forms of subpolitical activism constitute what we term, borrowing from McDonald (2006), 'new grammars of action'. We suggested that even where activists were engaged in institutional politics, they did so in ways that suggested reluctance to assimilate to 'civic-industrial' grammars of action. Our example of MJM activists who

canvassed for Respect in the 2005 election, without joining Respect, is illustrative of this shift in grammars of action.

Our findings concerning the significance of forms of action outside of mainstream political arenas raise some difficult questions, particularly in relation to whether the evacuation of these arenas should be seen as a democratic problem, given the myriad ways in which young activists do politically engage outside of institutions such as Parliament. As our discussion of governance indicates, the role of the state in shaping ethnic minority and Muslim young people's lives remains significant. Our data show that activists were often very conscious of the role of state policies in their lives, which sometimes found expression in fatalism about their capacity to effect change – as some of the views that emerged among the Youth Disciples evinced. Yet, many activists were engaged in responding to the implications of state policies, but this was often through channels that cohered with our portrayal of new grammars of action, particularly in forms of network governance. For example, the members of Saheli participated in consultations with the local state and statutory agencies, but did so very much along the lines of Bang's (2004) 'expert citizen' or 'everyday maker' models of engagement, where engagement with the state was through membership of horizontal, fluid organisational forms, where grammars of personalism and friendship were crucial to the group's development and practice, and where engagement with those institutions was with a view to the achievement of concrete goals and projects (Bang 2009). We do not suggest that the asymmetry in engagement in mainstream relative to more informal politics is irrelevant in democratic terms, but the possibilities for connecting ethnic minority young people with mainstream political institutions rest, we suggest, in the capacity of those institutions to adjust participatory opportunities to these flatter, more networked, personalised, DIY grammars of action.

Much of our argument concerning the significance of new grammars of action could be applied to young people generally, and in many ways, our respondents' politics and concerns reflected their identities and positions as young people. Yet, we are mindful of arguments about the dangers of decontextualising contemporary forms of political subjectivity, particularly in relation to the significance of salient social differences, based on ethnicity, race, religion or gender, and in relation to the contexts within which young people are politically active. We suggest, however, that the significance of social identities to forms of subpolitics need to be located in relation to broader understanding of changing conceptions of ethnic and religious identities, as we discuss below.

Participatory governance

Our study has drawn particular attention to the implications of changing forms of governance, and in particularly the dispersal of governance functions into a range of networks, partnerships and participatory forums. This, we suggest, has pluralised the sites of political participation. Significantly for our study, participatory governance initiatives have frequently targeted ethnic minority and Muslim young people for inclusion. We argue that this emerges as an important, if contested, arena for the political engagement of ethnic minority and Muslim young people.

Within the literatures on governance, there is extensive debate about the participatory and democratic significance of such forms of governance. A strong theme of this literature argues that participatory forms of governance exemplify highly managerial and disciplining tendencies, underpinned by the contention that these are often less concerned with enhancing citizens' capacity for substantive participation, and more with co-opting citizens into governance to supply solutions to complex policy problems that are not soluble by recourse to bureaucratic expertise alone. Furthermore, Foucauldian-inspired analyses posit participatory governance as a mechanism for producing self-governing citizens (Beaumont and Nicholls 2008). Our research concurs with the view that offers of participation emanating from many participatory initiatives are often limited or tokenistic – with processes and practices of consultation, and logics underpinning youth participatory forums, emerging as particular areas for critique and topics of highly critical reflection among our respondents. Nevertheless, we argued for a practice-based assessment of such initiatives that enables analysis of the ways in which ethnic minority and Muslim young people respond to these initiatives. Taking this approach, we find numerous instances of young people exercising agency in modifying or challenging the structures they encounter, to forge more autonomous, youth-focused political agendas. As our discussion of the BKYP shows, the MYPs set in place a series of modifications and challenges to the institutional logics of the parliament. Following Cornwall and Coehlo (2006), the parliament could be seen at the outset as an 'invited space', which, through the agency of the MYPs, became a 'claimed space' that was consequently significantly more responsive to the concerns of young people. Furthermore, we suggested that practice-based assessment of such initiatives should also attend to the possibilities for (even constrained) participation to play a role in the creation of new, critical political subjectivities and new/alternative public spaces. As

we noted in Chapter 4 in our discussion of the development of a participatory habitus among the activists that we met, many of the BKYP activists' political perspectives and trajectories had been shaped by their experiences of working with other MYPs to challenge or modify the parliament's structures and practices – sometimes in confrontation with the Council. Furthermore, and importantly, the BKYP established a political space for young people across the city, of different ethnic and religious heritages, to come together and articulate a political identity and agenda that had not hitherto existed. We noted that in the current climate of austerity, initiatives such as these, particularly those that fall under the remit of local Youth Services departments, are typically in the front line of local authority public spending cuts. As yet, there is little indication of how the Coalition envisages mechanisms for the local engagement of young people in the absence of such initiatives.

Changing cultural politics of identity

Underlying the questions addressed so far in this conclusion concerning the breadth and creativity of the 'grammars of action' engaged by young ethnic minority people, and the implications of such engagement for the viability and legitimacy of mainstream democratic institutions in the longer term, are further, fundamental, questions over how, and under what conditions, the identities of young people of ethnic minority backgrounds emerge and shape their political engagement. As we saw in Chapters 6 and 7, there is an on-going debate in the social sciences over how to conceptualise the patterns of change in Black, ethnic and religious identities that have been observed in advanced capitalist societies of the post-industrial north over the last three decades. As we saw in Chapter 6, coterminous with the dismantling of heavy industry in these societies, which had historically been a key locus of employment and related political identity formation for members of post-migration ethnic minority groups, has been the emergence of new arenas of struggle and new opportunities for social and political self-expression linked to the economic, cultural and technological processes associated with globalisation. The political changes associated with these structural shifts are what McDonald (2006) seeks to capture in terms of what he describes as shift from 'civic industrial' to 'new', more immediate and more personalised 'grammars of action', a characterisation we have adopted at various stages of our analysis.

As we observed in Chapter 6, however, there has been a curious decoupling of debates about the changing politics of identity from

concrete political processes and actions: as political economic change has led to earlier questions over the intersection of race and ethnicity with social class to recede from view, emergent modes of ethnic identification and cultural expression have been captured above all in terms of the ideas of 'new ethnicity', cultural 'hybridity' and 'intersectionality'. Whilst we find power and value in these terms, our contention, which we set out in Chapter 6 and further developed in Chapter 7, is that these notions have become reified in academic debate, to the extent that they are no longer articulated in relation to the sensuousness and actuality of struggle. Building on the insights of Modood (2000) with regards to how changing forms of minority identity continue to be informed by group-based politics and mobilisation, a key argument of our work is that cultural theoretical debates over identity need re-envisioning to bring them back into touch with political action. As we show in our discussion of patterns of gendered racialisation and the importance of gendered spaces in Chapter 7, 'hybridity' and 'intersectionality' are important terms, but their descriptive content and analytical power are not constant or guaranteed and require on-going empirical evaluation. Here again, a key argument of the book rests upon bringing practice-oriented assessments of politics analytically to centre-stage.

Place, space and scale

If recent globalising forces have been key to the emergence of new 'grammars of action', as well as related changes in ethnic – and increasingly, religious – identity, this is in part because of the ways in which technological changes – particularly the emergence of ICTs with instantaneous global reach – have facilitated new, globally extensive forms of political consciousness on the part of our respondents. As we saw in a number of chapters, and particularly Chapters 4 and 8, political awareness and related political action on the part of our respondents has made explicit connection between apparently disparate global processes and geopolitical events such as the Iraq war, on-going conflict in Palestine–Israel and entrenched economic inequality between the global north and south. As we have also seen, though, concern with such topical issues has not come at the expense of more localised concerns, but has conjoined with them to create simultaneously global and local – or 'glocal' – political engagement. As a means to capture this hugely significant pattern within our findings, we found it useful, in Chapter 8, to draw upon the geographical lexicon of 'scale'. As we saw in that chapter, 'scale' is a highly contested notion in the geographical

discipline, with some authors giving it an objective, ontological status to capture the putative 'nesting' of spatial processes at 'local', 'national' and 'international' levels, and others being careful to restrict its use as an organising, epistemological concept only. Side-stepping this contestation to some extent, our application of 'scale', as well as the related terms of 'place' and 'space', sought to emphasise how young people themselves act according to an internalised scale logic, doing the work themselves – often according to highly articulate normative premises – of establishing connections between proximate and more distant issues. One powerful instance of this, discussed in Chapter 8, was the decision of the BKYP to publically manifest their opposition to the US-led and UK-backed invasion of Iraq in 2003. As we saw, the Labour-controlled Bradford Council blocked their attempt to stage an anti-war demonstration, which the MYPs saw as an infringement of their autonomy to act as democratically elected youth representatives. As such, their decision to organise a Peace Walk consciously combined and collapsed several spatial scales: simultaneously, the Walk amounted to a tactically shrewd circumvention of localised political constraints, through which they were able to express in local space their disaffection with a national governmental decision to participate in an unpopular geopolitical conflict without the backing of international law. It is noteworthy that this action was cited by several MYPs as one of their more significant achievements during their period in office.

Nor were the MYPs of the BKYP alone amongst our respondents in sharing and putting into practice this global moral vision. Throughout the book, we have encountered numerous instances in which heightened awareness of global issues became threaded through the actions and engagements of young people in their immediate local environments. Although by no means exclusive to this group, we have seen particularly how Muslims amongst our respondents – both men and women – sifted their responses to global and local political processes through a pronounced commitment to religiously inscribed moral values. In the case of members of the MJM, this also encompassed openly critical attitudes to the role of ethnically derived customs and practices amongst their parents' generation, which they saw as both 'un-Islamic' and as tending towards political quietism. Whilst this had obvious ramifications at the local scale, its implications were again multiply scaled, signifying a shift of moral orientation away from the diasporic ties of familial homelands to encompass much wider regions of the globe. Importantly though, the global political concerns of our Muslim respondents were not limited to the interests of Muslims alone: whilst

many of them articulated what has been termed an 'ummatic' political consciousness (Birt 2009), it is significant that commitment to Islam provided our respondents with a concern for social justice that was genuinely universal in its reach and application.

Developing the research base

In locating our empirical research and findings in relation to these four overlapping areas of social and political transformations, our aims have been twofold. Firstly, we have sought to contribute data to a topic that has received a great deal of, often fraught, public attention but which has often been conducted without recourse to adequate data or evidence. Based as it is on qualitative methods, our research is necessarily small-scale, in which suggestive trends and issues are revealed, but it does not permit the analysis of broader patterns or comparative analysis. Survey research would provide an invaluable perspective on the scale and extent of different modes of participation, but such research has hitherto generally been constrained by both a lack of analysis of the intersections between age, ethnicity and religion enabling comparisons across groups of young people, or between younger and older cohorts, and by narrow conceptualisations of political participation. We argue that this more finely grained analysis is necessary for a more nuanced understanding of political participation that pays attention to the dynamics of age, gender, ethnicity and religion.

Secondly, and relatedly, through this research we have set out to identify the parameters of a more developed conceptual framework for the study of political participation among ethnic minority young people. Our reconceptualising of the nature of political participation alerts us to the significance of the varied repertoires and modes of activism among ethnic minority young people – which can be obscured by a conceptual focus on forms of mainstream and electoral participation alone. It has highlighted the ways in which young people have become enmeshed in increasingly dispersed governance structures, which have also expanded the terrain of political participation – particularly at the local level. In so doing, we highlight the importance of paying closer attention to the logics, and importantly *practices*, of participatory governance – that may reveal different outcomes to those necessarily articulated in institutional designs or policy discourses. The importance of identities in underpinning political activism is highlighted here, in ways which show the significance of the increased complexities of ethnic (and religious) identities as well as the enduring power of group experiences.

The dynamics of, and tensions between, these interactions between political activism and identities, we have argued, has lacked a thorough grounding in empirical research and we suggest this topic stands in need of on-going study. Finally, our research highlights the fluidity of activism between scales – and particularly at the level of the local and the global. The limited significance of the national in the concerns and activism of ethnic minority young people is clearly not a manifestation of political apathy, but we suggest it provides some important critical insights into the democratic and participatory limitations of political institutions at this scale, and potentially reveals some of the ways in which these might be enervated, which would provide fertile ground for research, creative participatory initiatives and evaluation. In particular, the experiences of the activists in our study demonstrate grammars of action that are founded in: a preference for hands-on, direct forms of activism; a tendency to mobilise in horizontal, loosely organised groups or networks rather than vertically integrated institutions with highly formalised regulation of membership or activity; engagement with concrete projects rather than abstract debate; personalised (rather than individualised) modes of interaction that do not require activists to submerge their identities into formal organisations; a commitment to a politics of difference that is not separatist or inimical to concerns with universal rights or concepts of social justice; and above all a politics founded on the scope for activists to make a difference.

Notes

1 Politically (In)different? Political Engagement Among Ethnic Minority Young People

1. Indeed, in the Cantle report in the appendix reviewing the responses to the consultation process by Professor Shirley Ali Khan, it was noted that during the consultation process, respondents were reluctant to engage with questions concerning the impact of theological differences or understanding or knowledge of different faiths – with some respondents either vague on these issues or considering it a non-issue. The report went on to note that after the consultation, circumstances had changed, suggesting: 'The events of Sept 11 have led directly to a much more serious interest in testing the possibilities of cooperation between Islam and the West. Understanding Islam and differences within Islam, has become an imperative for political negotiators and community mediators alike' (Cantle 2001: 62).
2. The EMBES is a survey running alongside the 2010 British Election Study (BES) which focuses on ethnic minority political engagement; for further details see: http://www.sociology.ox.ac.uk/index.php/research/embes-the-ethnic-minority-british-election-study.html.
3. Nor, following Hay (2007), is electoral participation necessarily an indicator of political engagement.
4. The PIDOP project is an FP7 comparative European research project analysing civic and political participation among young people, ethnic minorities, migrants and women, running 2009–2012. For further details see, http://www.fahs.surrey.ac.uk/pidop/index.htm.

2 Changing Political Participation

1. This was down from the figure of 15 ethnic minority MPs for much of the 2005–2010 parliament, following the sudden death of Ashok Kumar, MP for Middlesbrough South and Cleveland East, in March 2010, who had represented the constituency since 1997.
2. The People's Justice Party (PJP) was formed in 1998 from the Justice for Kashmir Party, which became the Justice Party, before becoming the PJP. It was led by disaffected former Labour Councillors and appealed largely to Mirpuri voters through a pro-Azad Kashmir stance combined with local commitments to issues such as schooling. It won some seats from Labour in inner-city wards and disbanded in 2006 when it formally merged with the Liberal Democrats (*Birmingham Post* 13.3.06). It was reformed by those disillusioned by Liberal Democrat party politics, and fielded candidates in the 2007 and 2009 local elections.
3. Salma Yaqoob stood again against Roger Godsiff in the newly created constituency of Hall Green in the General Election of 2010, but failed to unseat him.

4. Councillor Ayoub Khan (Liberal Democrat councillor for the Aston ward) who held the Local Services and Community Safety portfolio.

4 Grammars of Political Action

1. Specifically, they campaigned for Salma Yaqoob, who stood as the Respect candidate in the Small Heath and Sparkbrook constituency in Birmingham in the 2005 General Election, coming a narrow second to the Labour candidate with 27.5% of the vote. Salma Yaqoob was later elected Respect Councillor for the Sparkbrook ward in the 2006 Local Council Elections.

5 Participatory Governance

1. The concept of a 'Bradfordised' Citizenship Education programme was aimed at addressing specific issues of ethnic integration and community cohesion. This was expressed as an 'Enhanced Citizenship Curriculum' which was adapted from the National Curriculum to make Citizenship Education more relevant to the local Bradford context. Four key themes were established as central to the Enhanced Citizenship Curriculum, including (i) identity and community; (ii) diversity and cohesion; (iii) responsibilities, rights and respect and (iv) equality. At school level, this included teaching on concepts, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills necessary to promote racial harmony; local, national and global 'communities'; issues of 'cohesion' and 'diversity'; 'responsibilities' and 'human rights'; international relations; refugee and asylum seekers; crime and its causes; and the youth justice system. It was intended that units would be added on the Holocaust, genocide and Islamophobia. Our information on this comes from an interview with personnel from the Community Cohesion team within Bradford Vision.
2. This is a reference to the deaths of Charlene Ellis and Letisha Shakespeare in the local area on New Year's Eve in 2003, in which the two young women were victims, as bystanders, of a drive-by shooting connected to an on-going conflict between two local gangs.
3. This refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK in 1991, in which Article 12 calls for children's views to be heard in relation to 'all matters affecting the child'. This Convention forms an important frame of reference for standards frameworks, including in England *Every Child Matters* and *Hear by Right*, which reinforce the notion that children and young people should be included and consulted in relation to services and policies that affect them (Tisdall and Davis 2004).
4. A severe limitation on the MYPs' ability to represent their constituencies was the lack of resources available to support constituency work or for the administrative servicing of the Parliamentary meetings and sessions, a task that had to be carried out by the MYPs themselves (as part-time volunteers, in addition to their other employment, education or training commitments).

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