Sense of Belonging in a Diverse Britain

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Dialogue Society
Workshop Proceedings:
Sense of Belonging in a Diverse Britain
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Workshop Proceedings:
Sense of Belonging in a Diverse Britain

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Preface

The Dialogue Society’s Birmingham Branch and Coventry University’s Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, organised a peer-reviewed workshop titled ‘Sense of Belonging in a Diverse Britain’ inviting papers from scholars and relevant practitioners who wish to share and explore ideas and research findings concerning the sense of belonging in contemporary Britain’s diverse society. The Dialogue Society sees a broad and seemingly reasonable consensus that a sense of belonging is vital for a thriving and peaceful society, and accordingly wishes to contribute to illuminating its character and effects, as well as exploring how a sense of belonging can be cultivated.

‘Sense of belonging’ is a phrase often heard in discussions of the social cohesion and, in particular, instances of its breakdown. Following the urban disturbances of summer 2011, commentators across the spectrum speculated about how rioters could have come to feel so little sense of belonging to their local area that they could loot and torch their local shops and incite such fear in their communities. The Reading the Riots research undertaken by LSE and the Guardian cited a sense of alienation as a widely-shared characteristic of the rioters, with barely half feeling ‘part of British society.’ The same questions about sense of belonging, or the lack of it, have been asked in the wake of terrorist attacks in which young British people brought up in Britain have murdered fellow citizens. The need to belong is also frequently cited as a key driver of gang membership.

The social problems and crime associated in public discourse with the lack of a sense of belonging are not the preserve of ethnic/cultural minorities. In this workshop, we invited contributors to shed light on the nature, causes and effects of a sense of belonging and of its absence in minority and majority communities alike. We sought to examine the impact of a lack of sense of belonging, both in extreme cases such as crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as in a more general context. We have a particular interest in contributions exploring how the absence of a sense of belonging might be addressed.

In our call for papers, we invited researchers and practitioners to to address questions such as the following:

- Do we need more clarity about British values in order to promote a sense of belonging in British society? If so, who identifies those values, and how?
- Has ‘state multiculturalism’ encouraged or undermined a sense of belonging?
• Where in British society are we seeing a lack of sense of belonging?
• Is the cultivation of a sense of belonging best served by paying more (affirmative) attention to cultural difference, or less?
• Does a strong sense of belonging to a particular cultural group tend to enhance or undermine people’s relationships with the wider community?
• How do we achieve a healthy balance between celebrating diverse identities and cultivating a sense of common belonging to Britain? How can families and communities keep their distinctive heritage alive while cultivating a sense of belonging where they are?
• What factors - social, political, economic and/or cultural - encourage a sense of belonging in British society?
• What are the most significant barriers to feeling a sense of belonging in Britain?
• How far does immigration status (including citizenship) affect people’s sense of belonging?
• What is the role of sense of belonging, and/or the lack of it, in gangs, urban disturbances and ‘home-grown’ terrorism in the UK?
• How does a lack of sense of belonging impact people’s lives, aside from the cases of those involved in crime or antisocial behaviour?
• How do traditional British symbols such as the Union Jack function in British society (to encourage and express belonging and/or to exclude from belonging)?
• ‘United’ Kingdom? In an age of devolution, and as Scotland debates an independent future, is it to ‘Britain’ that British citizens feel they belong?
• How far does Britain’s foreign policy affect the sense of belonging of British citizens with roots abroad?
• What role can/should the British education system play in instilling a sense of belonging?
• What effect, if any, do faith schools have on pupils’ sense of belonging to the wider community?
• What is the role of the third sector in encouraging a sense of belonging among diverse communities?
• The controversy of citizenship tests: what must a person know in order to belong in Britain?
• How far is the lack of a sense of belonging a (neglected) problem within majority communities? How can the problem be addressed?
• What can be done, by parents, schools, or voluntary organisations, to help young people negotiating complex identities to grow up with a secure sense of belonging?
• How far does faith shape where, and to whom, British citizens feel they belong?
• Does nationalism necessarily involve placing limits on who can belong?
We are delighted to make the workshop papers available in this proceedings publication in which some of those questions and issues above are tackled. It should be noted that the ideas expressed in this volume are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Dialogue Society. The papers presented here are draft papers that were submitted and printed prior to the workshop.

The Dialogue Society would like to express its thanks to the workshop’s editors who reviewed all submissions at abstract, full paper and revision stage and to the organising committee, in particular Mustafa Demir, Miranda Bain and Victoria Bisset.
Pluralising National Identities: Lessons from Theory

Nasar Meer

We take the view that identity is not a thing, a badge, but a process; it is not so much a noun (identity) as a verb (identity with); and that it is less a matter of being than doing. [...] The problem of conventional studies of national identity is treating it as a “thing”, an immutable badge affixed to people by virtue of birth or citizenship or ancestry. (Bechhofer and McCrone 2009, 193)

The fact of pluralism, to borrow a phrase from the philosopher John Rawls, emerges as self evident in a world comprising nearly seven thousand languages, five hundred ethno-cultural groups, and innumerable religions spread across nearly two hundred recognised sovereign states. By definition, therefore, pluralism is an inescapable feature of human societies, and ‘can neither be wished out of existence nor suppressed without an unacceptable degree of coercion, and often not even then’ (Parekh 2000, 196). National identities have long struggled with reconciling cultural pluralism with an idea of collective membership. In one respect this is odd because the intermingling of cultural (including religious and ethnic) diversity is as old as recorded history. On the other hand, it may well be anticipated that unsettling established social and identity configurations creates challenges, something that is no less apparent in modern polities.

In recent years national identities have enjoyed a renaissance with much discussion centering on their capacity to promote unity, or minimally prevent disunity. This chapter will discuss how the theoretical issues concerning the emergence and content of national identities engage with empirical questions raised by the fact of pluralism in modern nation-states. This requires us to take series of distinct steps. The first part of this paper will therefore outline an idea of pluralism as a social and political concept. The second part pulls this through to an account of nations and nationalism, including the difficult question of where ethnicity sits in relation to national identity. The third part concentrates on the question of identity within this configuration. The concluding section brings these three fields together to note their implications for understanding pluralism.

**The Force of Pluralism**

The way pluralism is conceived obviously has implications for understanding its relationship to national identity. Minimally, we might build on the distinction Isaiah Berlin (1991, 10) put forward between pluralism and relativism. While the latter flattens out our capacity to make value judgments, according to Berlin, the former retains this capacity but anchors it in an ability to imagine and empathise with that which is different to us. He elaborates:

> Members of one culture can, by the force of imaginative insight, understand… the value, the ideals, the forms of life of another culture or society, even those remote in time or space. They may find these values unacceptable, but if they open their minds sufficiently they can grasp how one might be a full human being, with whom one could communicate, at the same time live in the light of values widely different from one’s own, but which nevertheless one can see to be values, ends of life, by the realization of which men could be fulfilled.

We could call this a philosophical pluralism, which is different to how pluralism is sometimes understood as a set of political approaches. The political approaches I have in mind are not purely theoretical, though they take in theory, and often centre on a description of multi-party politics and the relationship these have to the broader polity. Typical of such accounts is Bentley’s (1948, 208) conception of organized groups which form a link between the governed and representative government; in his terms: ‘when the groups are adequately stated, everything is stated’. In Berlin’s statement, in contrast, pluralism endows us with a certain insight into real and imagined cultural differences, ways of life and forms of social organisation. This insight is not neutral, that is to say that it is not without judgment on our part, but is nonetheless able to register a utility in different approaches. Other philosophical readings of pluralism go further. For Bhikhu Parekh (2000, 167), for example, the value of pluralism lies in how cultures other than one’s own have something to
teach us, such that members of minority cultures should be encouraged to cultivate their moral and aesthetic insights for humanity as a whole. He offers the following explanation:

Since human capacities and values conflict, every culture realizes a limited range of them and neglects, marginalizes and suppresses others. However rich it may be, no culture embodies all that is valuable in human life and develops the full range of human possibilities. Different cultures thus correct and complement each other, expand each other’s horizon of thought and alert each other to new forms of human fulfillment. The value of other cultures is independent of whether or not they are options for us... inassimilable otherness challenges us intellectually and morally, stretches our imagination, and compels us to recognize the limits of our categories of thought.

To seek out the opportunities that pluralism affords, Parekh’s reading emphasises intercultural dialogue in a manner that can help to remake ideas of common membership and belonging. These implications, however, go against the grain of how the identity of national communities has been understood in the west since the mid-seventeenth century. According to Walzer (1997, 25) the ‘nation’ has typically reflected how ‘a single dominant group organises the common life in a way that reflects its own authority and culture’. This is a source of concern amongst those who have argued that minorities will ‘feel crucially left out [when] the majority understand the polity as an expression of their nation, or agreed purpose, whatever it may be’ (Taylor 2001, 123). To be sure, much of what is encapsulated in applied pluralist thought raises this concern and critiques ‘the myth of homogeneous and monocultural nation-states’, especially when it advocates the right of minority ‘cultural maintenance and community formation, linking these to social equality and protection from discrimination’ (Castles 2000, 5).

A related implication of pluralist thought concerns the extent to which the non-private ‘civic’ realm represents the particular communal interests and values of a dominant group, as if these were (or ought to be) equally held by all. Advocates of pluralism unite in their conviction that a blanket reliance on difference-blind individual rights cannot sufficiently register the inevitable partialities that are contained in such things as public institutions, and which favour majority cultural norms. Hence Charles Taylor (1994, 43–4) characterises the ‘supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles’, that are sometimes said to underpin public institutions, as reflecting ‘one hegemonic culture … a particularism masquerading as the universal’. These can include those principles that inform a society’s laws, its values and dominant practices, and which are presented as the natural order of things when in fact they are an extension of the majority group’s culture. This is an ever present tendency, according to Morris (1997, 194), because the Westphalian
European nation-state has grown up around an ‘ideal’ of cultural homogeneity, established and reinforced through the state controlled acquisition of literate culture, alongside state control over entry and the acquisitions of citizenship: thus the nation represents territorialized cultural belonging, while the state formalises and controls legal membership.

Understanding the relationship between pluralism and national identity is therefore partly related to the emergence of the modern state, and relies especially in grasping the role that nationalism has played (and continues to play) in this configuration.

**Nationalism and the State**

While the state can take a dynamic form (and so is not a monolithic entity), the mass state is a product of modernity in so far as it came into being during a period of relatively rapid social, economic, political development from the end of sixteenth century onwards (Gellner 1983). One of the things this led to, and which is crucial for an understanding of nationalism, was the emergence of a political body – a government and wider bureaucracy – with enough authority to govern over a given territory, and in turn expect people in that territory to owe their allegiance to it (in contrast to, say, owing allegiances to a monarch or other ruler) (Smith 1986). The point is that the state bases its very legitimacy (the very right to rule over populations) on being able to represent the people in it. While citizenship describes this relationship between people and the state, a relationship that grants certain ‘rights’ (such as voting, legal protection and free education) as long as citizens adhere to certain ‘duties’ (e.g. obey the law, pay taxes, even participate in jury service if asked or undertake national military service where this is mandatory), the modern type of state is also meant to be made up of people who share a similar language, culture and history. This is what makes it a nation-state, and an important part of a nation-state is a sense of national identity: an identity that reflects some of the characteristics shared across other people in their country, and which differentiates them from people in another country. The criteria of national identity, however, are not always easy to list and often end up being intuitive and psychological. Hearn (2006, 6–7) registers this and places it amongst other ways of conceiving nationalism (including nationalism as identity, ideology, a social movement, and historical process). That is to say, nationalism as a feeling in a manner that is intuitive, can be psychologically charged, or is at least emotionally ‘non-rational’ (ibid.). This, however, is not the only way of thinking about nationalism, and to take in a broad perspective it would be fruitful to begin with the first part of the concept – that of the nation.

‘What is a nation?’ asked the French writer Ernest Renan in the late nineteenth
century. Renan could not understand how it was that Switzerland, which had three languages (French, German and Italian) and a variety of religions, could be a ‘nation’, when Tuscany (a region of Italy), which was much more homogeneous, was not. He wondered therefore how the idea of national identity differed from that of a nation. Renan’s answer was that nations are not ‘eternal entities’ – by which he meant that they have a beginning and an ending. Like another French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, he argued that a nation is a large-scale solidarity, one made up of a desire to continue a common life:

A nation is not therefore about objective criteria such as ethnic, linguistic, geographical bonds, but instead a belief in a common past as well as an ability to ‘forget’ which means that national identities are actually an outcome of imagined shared history. (Renan 1990, 16)

So Renan emphasises the importance of a ‘will to nationhood’ that seeks a consensus (on historical memory) on which to rest present-day consent through a ‘daily plebiscite’. This is the aim, and societies may well fall short of it, but nonetheless appeal, in Renan’s terms, to consenting participation in a ‘discourse on society that performs the problem of totalizing a people and unifying the national will’ (Bhabha 1994, 160–1). Importantly, Renan makes a conceptual contrast with ethnicity, in a manner that has political implications that take us back to Hearn’s definition discussed at the outset. Calhoun (1993, 229) elaborates this in his observation that a ‘crucial distinction between ethnicities and nations is that the latter are envisioned as intrinsically political communities, as sources of sovereignty, while this is not central to the definition of ethnicities’. That is not to say that conceptions of the nation cannot (or do not) significantly overlap with ethnicity, that they are not, à la Hobsbawm (1991, 4), ‘different, and indeed non-compatible, concepts’. Nor indeed should this suggest that all nations have sovereignty, but it is instead to open up the ways in which the ethnic basis of nationhood is often disputed. Those who hold this view are often grouped as ‘modernists’, and a trailblazing account was provided by Ernest Gellner’s (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*. For him

[i]t is not the case that the ‘age of nationalism’ is a mere summation of the awakening and political self assertion of this, that, or the other nation. Rather when general social conditions make for standardised homogeneous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading ethnic populations and not just elite minorities, a situation arises in which well defined educationally sanctioned and unified cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit with which men willingly and often ardently identify with (ibid., 55).

It is important to remember, however, that there are a variety of positions amongst modernists who may otherwise find agreement with Gellner, and who offer a different historical timing of the emergence of nationalism, as well as its key
influences. Perhaps a key distinction concerns whether the creation of the modern state gave rise to nationalism (Gellner’s position as above), or whether a modern cultural movement gave rise to a mass identity. A highly influential elaboration of the former view comes from the Benedict Anderson (1991) in his book *Imagined Communities*, which has emerged as a central account in its field. Anderson argues that nationalism emerged in Europe in the eighteenth century and created nations as ‘imagined political communities’ that are both ‘limited and sovereign’ (ibid., 6). By this he means two things. First, it is imagined in so far as all members of even the smallest nation will never meet each other, and yet in the minds of each lives an image of their connection to each other. In this regard nations ‘only fully realise their horizons in the mind’s eye’ (Bhabha 1990, 293). Second, it is ‘limited’ because each nation has finite borders beyond which live other nations. Third, nations are ‘sovereign’ because they were created in an age of modernity when the ideas of rule by monarchies seemed less rational. Lastly, he argued that regardless of the actual inequality the nation is always conceived as a deep and horizontal comradeship. The latter passes over an often ‘turbulent and contested history’ to give an emphasis to ‘tradition and heritage, above all on continuity so that our present political culture is seen as the flowering of a long organic evolution’ (Schwarz 1986, 155).

It is crucial, however, not to confuse the term *imagining* with *fabrication* because Anderson argues that just because we imagine our social and political order as a ‘national’ one, this does not mean it is not ‘real’. What he says is that ideas can become a powerful basis for social action. Indeed, it is worth bearing in mind that Gellner’s (1983) position was also alive to this distinction. For the latter

The idea of man without a nation appears to impose strain on the modern imagination. A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears. All this seems obvious, though, alas, it is not true. But that it should come to seem so very obviously true is indeed as aspect, perhaps the very core, of the problem of nationalism. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute to humanity, but it has come to appear as such (ibid., 6).

Anderson seeks to illustrate this with reference to his discussion of the relationship between national vernaculars and identity. To this end he identifies the emergence of the printing press – giving rise to what he called ‘print capitalism’ – as something which did more than anything else to allow pluralities to imagine themselves as a nation. Why would this be important? Well, first, it allowed for the development of commercial book publishing on a wide scale at a time when there was a serious decline in the use of Latin as the main European script. This meant that more and more regional languages – or ‘vernaculars’ – were used and provided the basis for a national language. This was particularly evident in the circulation of newspapers in which news stories were simultaneously consumed by an increasing number of
reading masses who began to share the same language, and the widespread availability
of these in the same language allowed the reader to have much in common with
their co-reader. One implication is that these newspapers contained a ‘calenderical
symmetry’ – by this he meant that because the date was at the top of newspapers it
placed everybody in the country in the same time frame. The important thing to
notice here is that he argues that nations and states are the result of a recent cultural
artefact (so nationalism creates nations not the other way around).

Ethnies, Ethnicity and Boundaries

Not everybody shares the view that nations and national identities reflect relatively
modern imagined communities, however, and detractors often point to what they
see as a key flaw in the modernist augment: why does nationalism persist in the
modern (and modernised) world of plural societies? The most prominent opposing
view comes from a cluster of work around ‘ethno-symbolism’ which says that pre-
modern ethnic ties have been important in creating ethnic cultures that forge a
nation. For example, in his book *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, Anthony Smith
(1986) argues that modernists, in their determination to reveal the invented or
constructed nature of nationalism, ignore the continuing persistence of myths,
symbols, values and memories over time, and the significance that these things
can have for large numbers of people. He argues: ‘the “roots” of these nations are
to be found, both in a general way and in many specific cases, in the model of
ethnic community prevalent in much of the recorded history of the globe’ (ibid.,
x). More precisely, he argues that modern nation-states have emerged out of a
complex mixture of social and ethnic ties all the way back from pre-modern times.
He calls these ‘ethnies’ which he says modernity has transformed but not erased. In
so doing he seeks to link ‘the consequences of modernity with an understanding of
the continuing role played by cultural ties and ethnic identities which originated
in pre-modern epochs’ (Smith 1995, 47). The analogy he makes is that when it
comes to thinking about nations we should regard the modern era a scroll that has
been re-used and on which are recorded the experiences and identities of different
ethnic cultures in the past: the earlier influencing and being modified by the latter,
to produce layers of collective cultures which we call ‘the nation’. In Smith's view
this would explain which populations are likely to start a movement of nationalism;
what the content of this would be (role of memories, myths and symbols in
languages, public holidays, sacred sites); and most importantly why nationalism is
able to generate such widespread national appeal.

This requires some further consideration of the relationship between the ethnicity
and national identity. Etymologically, ethnicity it is derived from the Greek word
‘ethnos’ (or ‘ethnie’ in plural) meaning a nation conceived as a unity of persons with
common ancestry. Interestingly, in Greek usage, according to Ibrahim (2011, 12),
it also expressed a negative inflection in so far as ‘foreign barbarians were the ethnea, while they [Greeks] would commonly refer to themselves as a Genos Hellonon or ‘the family of Hellenes’. Perhaps the most relevant legacy in ideas of ethnicity from the Greek lineage was the distinction, and often conflation, of the ethnos with the demos. The former is an ethnic polity made of one or more ethnic groups. In contemporary language this may range between an assimilationist social order that reflects the majority ethnic group, and a pluralistic social order that accommodates, and so affords recognition, to plurality and difference. The demos, meanwhile, is a polity organised around features democratic participation, state-hood and citizenship. As noted, there is a tension with the insider–outsider status that recurs across formulations of both the ethnos and the demos and these categories are often understood to be mutually constitutive. This is both because and despite how in the wider scholarly discussion of ethnicity in debates about groups and communities, ‘it is almost de rigueur now in academic discourse to view ethnicity as socially and politically constructed’ (May 2001, 19). How did this become so?

In an early account of ethnicity, Max Weber (1978 [1925], 389) proposed that:

‘we shall call ‘ethnic groups’ those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or of both, or because of memories of colonisation and migration … it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exist.’

For Weber ethnicity therefore meant at least three things. First, it referred to the fact that common descent is less important than a belief in common descent. Second, the potential bases of this belief in common descent are multiple, varying from the physical resemblance to shared cultural practices to shared historical experiences, and so forth. Finally, an ethnic group exists wherever this distinctive connection – this belief in common descent – is part of a foundation of community. Despite the broad influence of Weber on social science, this early constructivist account was to some extent offset by what would come to be known as primordialist readings of ethnicity. There are perhaps three main strands of this latter tradition. The first is often sourced to a German romanticism that precedes the Weberian formulation, and which in particular reacted against the dominance of rationalism in modernist thought by emphasising the role of inherited language, and in particular aesthetic features, in the alleged uniqueness of cultures (see Jenkins 1997). This informs one strand of the discussion around the idea of nationalism. The second strand is more modern and adopts a socio-biological approach, and so portrays ethnic groups as extensions of self-choosing kinship groups, in a continuing process of human evolution (van den Berghe 1979). The third strand, despite some characterisations, associates ethnicity least with biological inheritance but instead conceives it as deeply rooted in primary and secondary socialisation. This reading
is especially found in the works of Geertz (1973) amongst others, who undertook empirical research in post-colonial societies. He argued that civil relationships, forged through democratic participation in public life, are often limited in societies marked by strong ethnic ties because they cannot overcome ‘the assumed givens of social existence: immediate congruity and live connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular … community, speaking a particular language … following particular social practices’ (ibid., 259). In being a ‘given’, of course, the explanatory role of why ethnicity is diminished, and this point is important because it also speaks to the role of cultural difference which as we see below is not static, and does not always correspond with ethnic identity, and so should not be over-emphasised in a conception of ethnicity.

One significant challenge to Geertz came in the work of the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrick Barth (1969), whose reading of ethnicity is arguably the foundation of the dominant contemporary formulation. Barth’s argument revolves around two key points. The first is that the most valid thing to measure when studying ethnicity is how groups categorised themselves, namely how groups self-identify to one thing or another. This explicitly critiques some anthropological traditions which emphasised focusing on the cultural content of groups (cf. Levi-Strauss 1994). The subjective dimension of recognition – an internal self-awareness – is therefore more important for Barth than the objective definition of the group which is designated by an external party. Second, and in shifting the emphasis away from the possible characteristics of a group, that is taking us away from definitions of groups as heralding displays of particular traits or compromising particular behaviours in the classical anthropological sense, Barth (1969, 10–11) argued that we should focus upon the ‘boundaries’ between groups, and how these boundaries become sites of identity maintenance. By boundaries he did not mean that we should think of ethnicity in terms of ‘separate people’s, each with their culture and each organised in a society which can legitimately be isolated for description as an island to itself’. We should instead seek to understand how

ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories. ... The features which are taken into account are not the sum of the objective differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant (ibid., 10, 14).

One interesting influence of this reading formulation is expressed in the work of Tariq Modood who shares something of this in his view of ethnicity, but also departs from Barth in emphasising the dialectical relationship between ethnic self-definition and group pride. In his research, this is evident in the projection of
positive images and demands for respect, in a way that is capable of challenging negative attributions. Paradoxically, the vehicle for inclusion can sometimes invoke and repudiate the differences that have been denied inclusion in the first place. Key to this ‘ethnic assertiveness’, however, is the recognition of a groups’ mode of being rather than its mode of oppression. In other words, ethnic groups’ identities should not be constructed beyond them by focusing on negative attributions alone.

What this view advocates is the space within plural societies for ethnic minorities to draw upon internal resources to resist the external constraints of racial discrimination in creative ways. The methodological implications of listening to these internal voices is not only relevant to ethnographic work, however, but can be adopted in large-scale survey design. For example, in the ten-yearly Policy Studies Institute survey into the conditions of ethnic minorities in Britain, Modood et al. (1997, 291–338) investigated the question, ‘How do ethnic minority people think of themselves?’ Recognising the situational and contextual nature of the question, they worked on the understanding that expressions of ethnicity entail ‘not what people do but what people say or believe about themselves’. Thus self-description is central to ethnicity, which includes expressions of what might be called an ‘associational or communal identity’, as well as cultural practices. Contrasting this with a designated ethnicity according to country of origin or heritage, they found that while people with African Caribbean ethnicities maintained that skin colour was the most important factor in terms of their self-description, for people with South Asian ethnicities it was religion that proved most important. Although they looked at various dimensions of culture and ethnicity such as marriage, language, dress – all of which ‘command considerable allegiance’ – they concluded that religion ‘is central in the self definition of the majority of South Asian people’. Thus when they asked South Asian respondents ‘Do you ever think of yourself as being black?’ only about a fifth of over 1500 respondents gave an affirmative answer.

The Bad, the Banal and Dispersal of Identity

You may have already noticed that nowhere has this discussion of national identity dwelt on the obviously bad kinds of responses to pluralism. You only need to think about some of the many conflicts that have scarred Europe in the last one hundred years. The Nazism of Hitler’s Germany and the Holocaust, the Fascism of Franco’s Spain and Mussolini’s Italy, or even much more recently the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Bosnia, are all illustrations of an extreme and terribly violent nationalism. Clearly very few academics would characterise these as other than what they are – racist movements that grasp and exploit part of a national story that supports their political cause. This is true of all the kinds mentioned above, the best known perhaps being Hitler’s fantasy that the German people descended from racially superior ‘Aryans’ who had many mythical qualities but were principally
white and Christian. The reason for not dwelling on these types of nationalism is that they are today much less valid – though they have not gone away – and are difficult to sustain. But more importantly, by focusing on extreme nationalisms we push our own nationalism to the periphery of social life, making it something that happens elsewhere and not here, amongst us. In his book *Banal Nationalism* Michael Billig (1995) argues that we tend to think about our everyday nationalism as ‘patriotism’, something which is good and beneficial rather than irrational or dangerous. Reflecting on his account, Billig (2009, 349) states:

> Banal nationalism attempted to look beyond the dialogues of conscious sense-making towards a psychology of the unnoticed. The flags hanging in the street, or attached to the lapels of politicians, carry no propositional message for the ordinary citizen to receive passively or consciously argue against. Yet, such symbols help us to maintain the everyday world as belonging to the world of nation-states.

He argues that this encourages the view that nationalism has gone away and then returns – that it is a latent force that manifests itself like a natural disaster which strikes spontaneously and unpredictably. This is referred to as the ‘Sleeping Beauty’ syndrome which only sees nationalism as sometimes spectacular but misses its more subtle manifestations and ignores how we all participate in sustaining it for different ends. As Billig (1995, 95-6) describes:

> Rival politicians and opposing factions present their different visions of the nation to their electorates. In order for the political argument to take with the nation, there must be elements which are beyond argument. Different factions may argue about how ‘we’ should think of ‘ourselves’ and what is to be ‘our’ national destiny. In so doing they will take for granted the reality for ‘us’, the national place.

In this dynamic symbols can function as ‘border guards’, and become ‘linked to specific cultural codes and function to identify people as members or non-members of the specific national collectivity’ (May 2001, 61). Thus in *Why the French Don't like Headscarves*, John Bowen (2006) says this is precisely what happens, because even though the Muslim headscarves and mosque are not objectively more visible than other religious difference or the cathedral, they are subjectively shocking because they force French people to think about how being French is no longer – if it ever was – the preserve of white Christians. What the focus on headscarves also highlights is how central gender and women are to our ‘banal nationalism’. If we stop and think about it the nation is often imagined as a big family, and the homeland as a vulnerable woman needing protection – the nasty aspect of this is that rape is frequently used as a weapon of war. Reflecting on this Nira Yuval-Davies (1997) has argued that gender is a key part of nationhood because
women are often seen as biological reproducers of members of ethnic groups and, by extension, as reproducers of national groups. This means that while men are more likely to monopolise its political and military representation, it is women who come to ‘embody’ the nation as such (Meer et al. 2010). In plural societies, however, these latent assumptions are increasingly challenged, as Benhabib (2002, vii) has argued:

Our contemporary condition is marked by the emergence of new forms of identity politics around the globe. The new forms complicate and increase centuries-old tensions between the universalistic principles ushered in by the American and French Revolutions and the particularities of nationality, ethnicity, gender, ‘race’, and language.

The contemporary nature of identities, therefore, can unsettle implicit assumptions surrounding the nation. One illustration of this reading is Zygmunt Bauman’s (1995, 22) argument that identities have ‘the ontological status of a project and a postulate’. He continues: ‘To say “postulated identity” is to say one word too many, as there is not nor can there be any other identity but a postulated one’ (ibid.). This is not the same as saying that identities are a fiction. What it means, as explored in the discussion of nationalism, is that all identities are imagined and often amount to an unfinished conversation. To some extent this is a remarkable insight when we recall that identity is a concept that has been imported into the social sciences.

If we step back from its social scientific usage, we can note Hawthorne’s (2004, 99) description that identity, in its simplest sense, reflects the relationship ‘that each thing has to itself and to nothing else’. This he traces to traditions of thinking about identity in mathematical forms, something that Calhoun (1998) broadens out when he situates the provenance of identity within ‘a technical origin in philosophy, beginning from the ancient Greeks, as well as in mathematics and biology. Aristotle pursued identity in terms of the relationship between “essence” and “appearance”, or between the true nature of phenomena and epiphenomenal variations’ (quoted in Sicakkan and Lithman 2005, 3). What is interesting is that even following its migration into the social sciences, identity has not until relatively enjoyed the centrality it does today. This has changed partly because of a wider set of methodological developments in the social sciences, including the cultural turn and elevation of the subject. As the late Stuart Hall (1992, 275–6) has written, this reflected

the growing complexity of the modern world and the awareness that this inner core of the subject was not autonomous and self-sufficient, but was formed in relation to ‘significant others’, who mediated the subject values, meanings and symbols – the culture – of the world he/she inhabited. ... Identity in this sociological conception, bridges the gap between the ‘inside’
and the ‘outside’ – between the personal and the public worlds. The fact that we project ‘ourselves’ into these cultural identities, at the same time internalizing their meanings and values, making them ‘part of us’, helps to align our subjective feelings with the objectives places we occupy in the social and cultural world.

The development of a critical and visible study of pluralism has been central to developing this understanding, something that has not been universally welcomed. Brubaker and Cooper (2000, 1) deem sections of academia to be in thrall to identity, something that he concludes has regressive outcomes:

the social sciences and humanities have surrendered to the word ‘identity’; that this has both intellectual and political costs ... and tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity).

Part of Brubaker’s complaint is that identity has become a ubiquitous explanation rather than something in need of explaining. In other words, social sciences conflate categories of practice with categories of analysis. Key here is how the study of pluralism often emphasises the importance of group identities. A thoughtful example is Guttman’s (2003: 2) observation that ‘group identities help individuals have a more secure sense of self and social belonging’, not least the ways in which it allows ‘disadvantaged minorities to counteract inherited negative stereotypes, defend more positive self-images, and develop respect for members of their groups’. This is partly the role we can observe ethnicity as playing in terms of self-definition. This does not mean that ethnic and racial groups have singular identities. The objective instead is to register, as Young (1995, 187) describes, the ways in which ‘as products of social relations, groups are fluid; they come into being and fade away’. In this respect we often find that ‘group identity may become salient only under specific circumstances’ since ‘most people in modern societies have multiple group identifications, moreover, and therefore groups themselves are not discrete unities’ (ibid.). One route or means of overcoming this tension is to differentiate between conceptualising people’s identities and processes of identification. This appears to allow social scientists to understand how social and political processes help forge identities, individual and group. To Sicakkan and Lithman (2005, 2) ‘the term “identification” enables one to conceptualise identity both in terms of individuals’ own chosen choices of identity references and of other persons’ identity attributions. That is, individuals can both identify with and be identified as “something”.’ The important point here is that in plural societies processes of identification are rarely straightforward issues of choice, for they often comprise a response (often a challenge) to prior processes of categorisation.
Conclusion

This chapter has explored the relationship between pluralism and national identity, namely the ways in which nations and nationalism have grappled with pluralist forces in their configuration of national identities. In many respects, as Walz (1995, 691) notes, ‘the hard questions posed by political pluralism mostly have to do with its limits’. Where national identities are concerned, however, these limits have a relatively low threshold. The challenge for polities with a commitment to pluralism is to ‘set this point fairly far along the continuum’ (ibid). The possibilities this engender are those in which plural identities nestle in expressions of nationhood in a manner that is not attacked as divisive or disloyal.
Bibliography


Social Cohesion in the New Age of Capital: From Moral Imperative to Moral Panic

Stephen Cowden & Gurnam Singh

Introduction

This paper seeks to enter into a critical debate about the way discourses of social cohesion have become worryingly confused within the present context, which we describe as the ‘new age of capital’. By this we refer to two important strands, one being the on-going impact that neoliberal market reforms are having on vulnerable populations (women, minorities, disabled people, displaced people etc.), not only in the UK but globally. This we suggest is a system that has not only generated huge inequalities in wealth and opportunity, but also, through the exploitation of human and natural resources, has contributed massively to the breakdown of ‘social cohesion’.

The second strand of our argument is related to the way that the breakdown of social cohesion, particularly within the UK, has become seen essentially as an dispositional and ideological challenge, sometimes colloquially referred to as a ‘hearts and minds’ problem. As an attitudinal problem, therefore, social cohesion is seen to be solvable through pedagogical strategies where different groups are compelled to developing a better/positive understanding of each other’s culture (i.e. celebration of diversity). As an ideological challenge, paradoxically, in contrast to the valorisation of difference, social cohesion is seen to be based on ways of inducting or assimilating minorities into a common set of (British) values.

Overlaying the debate on social cohesion within the UK is the apparent unwillingness

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of Muslims to ‘integrate’, coupled with the moral panics surrounding the issue of Islamic extremism, manifest most recently with the so called *Operation Trojan Horse*. This has been referred as a conspiracy by extremist Muslims to ‘take-over’ secular schools in Birmingham with the ultimate aim to Islamicise them (BBC 22.7.2014). We argue that the antecedents of contemporary debates about community cohesion and moral panics about Asian and in particular Pakistani Muslim communities can be linked to 3 key moments: the riots in Northern Mill towns of Burnley, Blackburn and Bradford in 2001 and the publishing of the *Community Cohesion: The Report of The Independent Review Team* popularly known as the Cantle Report (2001); the July 7th 2005 London bombings by home grown British-born Islamist terrorists; and in 2011 the widespread riots across London and other British cities.

The paper is structured in three parts. In part one, to establish a historic and conceptual platform, we engage in a discussion of the political economy of social cohesion, i.e. the wider context within which the idea of social cohesion has developed. This is followed by a discussion of, as it were, the rise and fall of faith based approaches to social cohesion, sometimes referred to as community cohesion. We conclude our discussion with some preliminary arguments for an alternative approach to promoting social cohesion based on a materialist economic analysis underpinned by a commitment to a secular worldview.

**The Political Economy of Social Cohesion**

The origins of the concept of cohesion are rooted very much in the enlightenment tradition of tolerance[^3], in the sense of freedom to hold particular religious beliefs. The more contemporary use of the term comes from the sociological writings of Emile Durkheim, particularly his 1893 work on the Division of Labour. Durkheim was seeking to understand the way large scale social transformation – things like industrialisation, urbanisation, immigration and population growth - impacted on the overall order of society, changing social boundaries and altering fundamentally the way people were able to interact with each other. While Durkheim was far from pessimistic about this, he saw it as crucial that the state needed to conceive its role as far greater that simply the facilitation of a utilitarian exchange of individual interests. Crucially he argued that contractual relationships themselves had a pre-contractual ‘moral’ element, and in that sense it fell to the state to actively foster integration in order to protect society and the relationships it entailed (Dillon 2014, 97).

[^3]: The idea of ‘tolerance’ in the European context emerged as a pragmatic strategy by governments that had failed to enforce religious conformity, particularly in relation to different Christian denominations. From the 18th Century, the idea of religious toleration morphed into a general principle of freedom of thought and belief, which later became enshrined in universal declaration of human rights.
While Durkheim sought to understand social integration as an ongoing project for the modern industrial nation state to address, others have identified the failure of this as evidence of the inherent contradictions within capitalism itself. For example, from a Marxist perspective, one would question whether the state has any interest in social cohesion other than in ways that maximise the productivity of capital. Hence, social cohesion becomes of secondary concern to the needs of the market for cheap ‘reserve army of labour’ – you include people when you need them and exclude them when you don’t!

And so any discussion of the term ‘social cohesion’ must start from an understanding of the way the growth, spread and triumph of capitalism has acted as a massively destabilising force on society, and particularly on the lives of the poorest people. Writing in 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, sought to capture the profound nature of this constant and disruptive change:

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society…Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all previous ones. (Marx and Engels 1848)

These claims have been detailed fully by the historian Eric Hobsbawm, who characterised this period as the Age of Capital 1848-1875 (1988). It was a time in which markets were massively expanding and capitalism was becoming a global system, largely through the incorporation and expansion of colonies in the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia, and the ruthless exploitation of natural resources and human labour. The mounting concentration of wealth which occurred as a result of these changes was accompanied by a level of displacement of populations, the extent of which had never been seen before in history, further accompanied by the domination of Europe and European culture. As a global project and then an imperial system, capitalism has massively accelerated flows of peoples across the planet, initially as slaves and indentured labourers, but as we move through and beyond the 19th Century, as migrant labourers - what Marxist terms would characterise as a new reserve army of labour - and politically displaced peoples. Indeed it is our view that these historic shifts should form the basis for any discussion of social cohesion in the UK.

**Neoliberalism and Social Cohesion**

If we jump to the present, we can see that the process of displacement of people has continued to grow at an even greater pace. There are reliable estimates that suggest, for a wide range of reasons - warfare, persecution, natural disasters and development
projects, that in 2012 an estimated 92.6 million people were forcibly displaced. In addition to this in the same year ‘long-term international migrants - people who decide to live outside their home country for a year or longer - are estimated at 214 million, and internal migrants may number as many as 740 million’ (Remer 2013).

Our argument today is that these figures need to be read not as something which is the inevitable result of ‘modernity’, but rather as the triumph of a ‘new age of capital’, most widely referred to as ‘neoliberalism’. David Harvey defines this as:

> A theory of political economic practices [which] proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (2007, 1)

Harvey has gone on to characterise the way neo-liberalism has come to present its logic as ‘an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action, and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs’ (2007, 3). Within this ‘ethic’, the solutions to the economic and social ills of society are deemed by policy makers to be found in allowing individuals to pursue their own self-interests with minimal restraint or regulatory oversight from state bodies. Cornel West has characterised this more simply and directly as ‘free-market fundamentalism’ (West 2004).

The irony of this constant talk of ‘freedom’ is that this is only a reality for those cosmopolitan elites who benefit from neoliberalism economically; the majority of people experience increased levels of uncertainty. Pierre Bourdieu has characterised this system as a ‘mode of production...based on the institution of insecurity’, as a deregulated financial market fosters an increasingly casualised labour market (2001, 29). Loic Wacquant extends this analysis to describe not just a lack of opportunity, but that:

> The punitive slant of recent shifts in both welfare and justice policies points to a broader reconstruction of the state coupling restrictive “workfare” and expansive “prisonfare” under a philosophy of moral behaviourism. The paternalist penalization of poverty aims to contain the urban disorders spawned by economic deregulation and to discipline the precarious fractions of the post-industrial working class. (2010, 198)

Hence we have a situation where nation states in the West become preoccupied with managing both their own internal ‘dangerous classes’ at the same time as policing their borders to exclude the external displaced victims of neoliberalism. This becomes necessary in the context of massive increases in inequality and displacement of populations across the world. A recent report by charity Oxfam entitled Working for the Few (2014) demonstrated the astonishing figure that ‘almost half of the world’s
wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population’, while the ‘bottom half of the world’s population owns the same as the richest 85 people in the world’. The report goes on to say that:

The massive concentration of economic resources in the hands of fewer people presents a significant threat to inclusive political and economic systems. Instead of moving forward together, people are increasingly separated by economic and political power, inevitably heightening social tensions and increasing the risk of societal breakdown. (2014, 3)

Indeed this report is only the most recent of a whole range of material produced by international bodies like the UN, OECD and by charities like Oxfam and Christian Aid, demonstrating the utterly destructive nature of neo-liberal social and economic policy for social cohesion. Yet it is a distinctive feature of the neo-liberal paradigm of policy making that ‘economic’ questions are simply considered as a given, with the destructive consequences and social distress they bring as about individuals who fail to grasp the entrepreneurial opportunities this system offers. And reflecting this sense of the way economic questions are simply beyond discussion, within the UK policy framework the question of social cohesion has become narrowly focussed, as we discuss below.

Faith and Community Cohesion

This sense in which an earlier socially redistributive agenda associated with notions of social justice has simply been ruled out of the policy equation has another significant consequence within the discourse of social cohesion, which takes the form of a fetishistic focus on questions of religious identity and ‘faith’. In the New Labour years this was identified as a central form of ‘social capital’ (Halpern 2005) which was felt to have great potential in promoting citizenship. This period also saw the state enthusiastically welcoming faith based groups as the solution to these problems of ‘community cohesion’, with political parties almost trying to outdo each other to demonstrate their enthusiasm for ‘doing God’, with numerous religious leaders regularly being feted by politicians. For example, in June 2008 Malcolm Duncan, the head of an influential new Christian movement known as ‘Faithworks’ was invited by then PM Gordon Brown to 10 Downing Street, where

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4 Though the concept of social justice as an idea about people rights to realise their potential in society have their antecedents in ancient Greek philosophy of Socrates and Plato, here we refer to more contemporary meanings most commonly linked to the work of John Rawls. In his book *A Theory of Justice* Rawls proposed that, ‘Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others.’ (Rawls 1971, 30)
Duncan asserted that:

People of faith are making a vital contribution to the United Kingdom. It is impossible to talk about community cohesion, joined up service delivery or strong and sustainable partnerships without understanding this. (Sanderson 2008)

The subsequent Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government’s notion of the ‘Big Society’ followed a strikingly similarly script. At a 2010 meeting between the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles and the Archbishops of Westminster and Canterbury, Pickles was to claim that while ‘some see religion as a problem that needs to be solved, the new Government sees it as part of the solution (‘Ministers Talk Big Society with Faith Leaders’ 2010). And in the same year the then Chairman of the Conservative Party Baroness Sayeeda Warsi claimed that:

... if anyone suggests that this government does not understand, does not appreciate, does not defend people of faith, dare I even say, does not ‘do God’, then I hope my schedule this week will go some way to banishing that myth. (BBC News 2010)

Yet there continues to be strange double movement in this preoccupation with faith, and recent events which are still being played out in Birmingham in 2014 associated with the so called ‘Operation Trojan Horse’, demonstrate this. Here we see demonstrated an entirely disproportionate level of anxiety and a media feeding frenzy around allegations of the undue influence of faith in Birmingham schools in 2014. So where previously the promotion of faith was the solution to the problem of social cohesion, here it feeds a moral panic, which suddenly comes to pose a threat to ‘British values’ and by implication social cohesion. Indeed, the present Secretary of State for Education Nicky Morgan has been so exercised by this that she recently asserted that funding would be cut for any nurseries and pre-schools promoting ‘extremist views’ amongst pre-school children (Adams 2014).

What remains undefined in these somewhat bizarre interventions is the question of what is or is not an ‘extremist view’? For example, would teaching children about the virtues of ‘covering-up’ by the wearing of a ‘jilbab’ and or a full face veil, or suggesting that ‘non believers’ will be sent to hell, or deeming sex before marriage to be sinful, be defined as an ‘extremist view’? Where is the boundary drawn between simple ‘faith’ and ‘religious extremism’, and who are the people deciding this? On top of the almost Monty Pythonesque spectacle of government ministers arbitrating on matters of Islamic theology, there is an altogether more sinister dimension of the question of religious influence in schools. This involves positioning the problem of social exclusion within a discourse of demonising the
other, of a cultural pathology almost entirely associated with Islam. It is in this way that the debate around community cohesion rapidly becomes defined as a matter of ‘security’. And in this process we see policy shifting between ‘soft community cohesion’, in the form of pedagogical interventions, to ‘hard community cohesion’, in the form of coercive forms of surveillance, with alarming speed.

**Riots and the Causes of Social In-Cohesion**

The above discussion forms the basis of our analysis of three events that have, more than any other, defined in very precise terms the contemporary debate surrounding community cohesion within the UK. The first of these events was in 2001, when the UK experienced significant disturbances in a number of northern towns and cities, most notably, Burnley, Blackburn and Bradford. Ted Cantle, a local government officer, was tasked by the then Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett to look at the causes of the riots and possible solutions. The main thrust of what became known, as the Cantle Report was to suggest that a breakdown of community cohesion was as a result of geographical segregation and a separation of lifestyles that was breeding suspicion and a lack of trust between people from different communities. Cantle argued that the towns showed a “depth of polarisation”, with segregated communities living “a series of parallel lives”.

Yet what was missing from this document was any sense of the social context of how this had happened. Where in this discussion of the loss of social cohesion was the discussion of the devastation caused by destruction and disappearance of the industry and employment during the 1980s and 90s, which had once made this area the centre of Britain’s cotton and wool mills. As Kundanani et al note, ‘the textile industry was the common thread binding the white and Asian working class into a single social fabric. But with its collapse, each community was forced to turn inwards onto itself” (2001, 106). With the loss of a sense of interests in common, dynamics on these communities did come to be polarised along ethicised class boundaries. Young Asians, the most excluded of all the many communities, experienced a combination of aggressive policing, as well as being themselves also on the receiving end of attacks by white racist gangs.

Cantle’s work completely failed to offer any contextualisation of the way this combination of mistrust fuelled by geographical and cultural separation had happened, which as Arun Kundanani has noted, through a combination of racism in the allocation of social housing, trapping Asians in crowded poor quality private housing, accompanied by ‘white flight’ from impoverished inner city areas of those cities (2001). Alongside the failure to understand the way segregation had taken root in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, was the impoverished solutions Cantle offered. Rather than thinking about the kind of social and economic policies
needed to rebuild communities with some sort of sense of a common purpose and interest, Cantle’s solutions were for those communities which had themselves been trapped into immigrant ghettos to take an oath of national allegiance, as well as proposing new powers for the police to ‘break drug networks in some no-go areas’ (Cantle 2001).

Another dimension of the narrative of 2001 riots was that ethnic communities were increasingly succumbing to criminality, particularly in relation to the illegal drugs trade, and that the ‘riots’ were indeed a manifestation of such. The then British Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke of them being essentially about ‘thuggery’ and criminal acts, a narrative which was reinforced by ‘community leaders’ who publicly denounced the young rioters as lacking discipline, demonstrating ‘the effects of westernisation and a decline in traditional Muslim values’ (Kundanani 2007). In this first example we see two key ideas coming together to explain the breakdown of community cohesion. The first was a cultural pathology of Asian and Muslim ‘self-segregation’ and refusal to integrate, with multiculturalism held to blame, and secondly the focus on criminality. What was completely absent within this whole discourse was the utter failure by successive governments to address the consequences of post-industrial decline, in these areas and the way these conditions were structuring the lives and life chances of people living in those communities.

This culturalist form of explanation received a massive boost in the subsequent context of the 9/11 and 7/7 bombings. In the context of the clash of civilisations, Muslims had become the new ‘alien wedge’. This was in spite of significant evidence that British Muslims were the most patriotic in Europe, a figure that even the reactionary Daily Mail felt the need to report (Smith 2009). It is in moments like this we see the dangerous times we are living in, where the impoverished discourse of neo-liberal social and economic policies is fuelling moral panics and therefore unleashing a new range of racialised and class based conflicts as a pretext for implementing new and often undemocratic mechanisms of surveillance. Recent analyses of neoliberalism and surveillance suggest that we are seeing the emergence of a system of ‘social sorting’. This, as Monahan suggests, leads to the ‘tendency for surveillance systems to operate as mechanisms for societal differentiation. In other words, surveillance systems assist with discerning or actively constructing differences among populations and then regulating those populations according to their assigned status’ (2008, 220).

Ironically, the growth and development of these Northern textile towns and cities with high concentrations of Asian and Muslim people was due to capitalism’s need for cheap labour in the post 2nd World War period. Ironically, it is sweatshop labour in Asian countries serving neoliberalism that has directly impacted the decline of these very same places.
A recent example of this is the way that following the 7/7/2005 London bombings by UK Born Muslims the whole Muslim community became subject new forms of surveillance, which in terms has continued to fuel the construction of ‘Muslims’ as a dangerous ‘alien wedge’. In an investigation by the Guardian newspaper in 2010, it was found that new kinds of surveillance cameras were appearing in parts of Birmingham with high concentrations of Muslims. Though the police sought to justify them as part and parcel of everyday crime detection, the link with the question of ‘counter-terrorism’ makes it clear that the purpose of these is to keep a watchful eye on the city’s Muslim population:

The cameras appeared at 81 sites without consultation, after being requested by West Midlands police counterterrorism unit more than two years ago. They include around 150 ANPR cameras, 40 of which have been classified as “covert”, and are thought to be concealed in walls and trees by the side of the road (Lewis 2010).

Though one might want to believe we are simply seeing evidence the state being panicked into responding to problems beyond their comprehension, our argument is that these contradictory messages and actions are neither accidental nor confused; they are a direct result of the failure within policy to address the real causes of the increasing levels of exclusion and ghettoisation, which lie in the destruction of those resources which gave people from different communities a sense of a common interest – employment, decent housing and education – the very forces which genuinely offer social cohesion, currently sacrificed on the altar of the ‘demands of the global market’.

The question of social cohesion reared its head yet again after August 2011, when once again riots spread across London and cities in UK. Just as social and economic accounts of the situation in the northern mill towns was either rubbished or silenced, these events were reported in almost all news outlets and responded by the political classes as pure criminality; the ‘feral criminal underclass’ had taken to the streets. Owen Jones, one of the few commentators to question this dominant narrative noted the way ‘complex social problems [were reduced] to supposed individual failings and behavioural faults’. ‘Children without fathers’ was an explanation seized on by PM David Cameron. Jones goes on to note that:

Pervading the backlash was the talk of a “feral underclass”. This was the idea of the Victorian “undeserving poor” taken to a new level: the rioters and their families weren’t just undeserving, they were barely human (Jones 2012)

This sense of the 2011 riots as purely criminal was reflected in the way those convicted were rushed through the courts, with extremely severe sentences handed out. The LSE report ‘Reading the Riots’ produced in 2012 offered a picture
of rioters as excluded people in a day to day struggle for survival, and who felt constantly abused and harassed by the police. This report found that rioters had many political grievances, mostly against the police, but also regarding the removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance, the lack of jobs, opportunities and money. Bennet has argued that while the violence of the riots cannot be condoned, its causes lie clearly in the new forms of exclusion and inequality created by relentless pursuit of a neo-liberal political economy. (2013, 30)

This demonstrates yet again how events which demonstrate the apparent lack of community cohesion, such as large scale rioting, becomes understood in very contradictory ways. Serious academic research, such as that carried out by the LSE which challenges the dominant narrative of ‘feral criminality’, is drowned by a tide of populist rhetoric seeking to turn public opinion against the most powerless in society. As well as targeting specific minority communities, this also now involves pathologising poor working class white communities, who have been badly hit by the austerity policies which have followed the 2008 banking crisis.

Discussion

Though this is not necessarily the case elsewhere, in contemporary UK policy the concept of social cohesion is framed very much in terms of the importance of generating a sense of belonging to citizens in order that community bonds and civic engagement can be strengthened (Home Office 2002).

There is little that we would disagree with in this aspiration of creating a sense of togetherness - after all who wants to live in a society that is fragmented and in turmoil? The problems emerge when discussion turns more concretely to situations where social cohesion has been seen to break down. It is here that we see a strange and often confusing mix of crisis management consisting of reactive and reactionary measures. Alongside this we also see what we would characterise as ‘pedagogic interventions’, exemplified in things such as multicultural education, media representations and government funding for projects aimed at the promotion

6 Look for example at the OECD (2011) report which provides a comprehensive analysis of social cohesion challenges and policy responses across the world. Though neoliberalism is identified as a powerful transnational factor responsible for putting massive strains on indigenous peoples also in fermenting conflict, it is evidence that in some places there is a greater emphasis on a development and social justice.
of cultural pluralism, all of which have their place in a social cohesion strategy. Again while there is nothing necessarily wrong with these, we suggest that on their own they are unlikely to have anything more than minimal sustainable impact. However we would also argue that an uncritical embrace of what one might term ‘celebrations of diversity’ could also lead to quite divisive outcomes.

This is because the real thing that divides communities is material inequality, and therefore it is difficult to believe that pedagogic strategies will have anything but a superficial impact. As we have argued, all the evidence suggests that policy objectives built upon neoliberalism or what we have termed the new ‘spirit of capital’ militate against social cohesion. Whether one looks at the inner cities of most so-called ‘advanced’ western nations, or large parts of the post-imperial world, be it in the Arab world, Indian sub-continent, South America, Africa or the former old Soviet bloc, cohesion seems to be as elusive as ever. The tendency to see social cohesion as a linear phenomenon, or simply an issue of enabling communities to ‘come together’ with mutual friendship and understanding, fails to see the complex socio-political reasons that lead to the breakdown of cohesion, and the crucial importance of processes whereby material and discursive power are distributed. As Jaffe and Quark note, ‘The quality and type of cohesion affects the type of development that occurs, helping to determine in whose interest development proceeds and how the goods and bads of social change are distributed’ (2006, 223).

Against the backdrop of neoliberalism and economic austerity, we are increasingly witnessing an alarming rise in attacks on migrants and minorities of all faiths across the globe, alongside increasing violence against women, often religiously inspired. Furthermore, partly as a reaction to the failing economic policies of neoliberalism, we are seeing a right-wing nationalist backlash against institutions such as the EU and the increasing popularity of a politics of blaming migrants for the economic problems. In such circumstances it is difficult to think what positive steps one might take other than to advocate for a different global order, and though one should not dismiss the value of utopian thinking, at a moment such as this the task is not so much speculating about the future, as urgently as identifying a viable and acceptable framework for developing analysis, policy and social action to defend the oppressed and this is our primary concern.

We have argued that a state that seeks to value ‘difference’ and facilitate integration is certainly more desirable than one that functions to ignore or worst still obliterates

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7 A good example of this is the much criticised PREVENT strategy aimed at funding projects within the Muslim community to prevent the radicalisation of young people. Indeed, a committee of MP’s have argued that the strategy has been counterproductive and has further stigmatised and alienated Muslims leading. See BBC News 30th March 2010 at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8593862.stm
minority cultural identities, but we also think that if you want this, you have to ask the more fundamental question of what it is that divides people. The current state of Northern Ireland offers some salutary lessons here, and they are interestingly enough lessons that only rarely make their way into policy discussion around ‘cohesion’. Despite the Peace Process, Northern Ireland remains deeply divided along religious-communal lines. Yet as several weeks of rioting by working class Unionists in January 2013 in protests about the removal of the Union flag from public buildings showed, a preoccupation with the foregrounding of group identities can actually inhibit discussion of real solutions. When we talk about integration and cohesion, why aren’t we talking about class, poverty, unemployment, gendered violence or the lack of decent education, rather than furthering a preoccupation with religious and cultural identities?

Conclusion

The argument we have sought to present here is that over the past decade we have seen, in debates in the arena of ethnic and community relations, a gradual displacing of discourses of social justice with those relating to social cohesion. Whereas a social justice approach was driven by moral and economic imperatives to address issues of discrimination, deprivation and material poverty, as these questions have been moved off the agenda, policy approaches to cohesion has shifted to moral panics about minorities and their apparent disinclination to integrate into British ways. The antecedents to this shift can be clearly seen in Cantle report into the ‘disturbances’ in Northern Mill Towns in 2001. The whole tenor of the report is captured in the first of 70 recommendations which talks about the need for ‘rights and responsibilities’ of citizens being ‘formalised into a form of statement of allegiance’ (Cantle 2001, 46). The clear message given here is that, despite having lived their entire lives in the UK, these excluded minorities needed to demonstrate their allegiance to Britain. This construction of the issues feeds a moral panic about the way these minorities represent what Young refers to as an ‘alien wedge’ supposedly threatening the basis of English culture and identity (Young 2004, 218). What the 2011 riots showed was the way this same discourse of pathology could be equally applied to those ‘feral underclasses’ within Englishness itself. We conclude that this approach is not only naïve but is dangerous in that its most likely effects is the generation of further mistrust, misinformation and fear – all of the things which it claims to be seeking to eradicate. At the policy level, the neo-liberal cupboard is bare of solutions as long as it fails to acknowledge that one the most important conditions for integration is a sense of security. Tragically, neoliberalism continues to reproduce itself precisely through manufacture of further social insecurity.
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Part 2

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND SENSE OF BELONGING

“Citizen of the World”: Sense or Lack of Belonging?

Bénédicte Chaix

Often quoted, Simone Weil once said: “To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul”. Throughout the decades, the notion of belonging has gradually been considered as a central aspect in the definition and understanding of identity. Stirring reflections on the theme of belonging is also entirely part of our 21st century society and echoes the inextricable relationship between identity and alterity.

Nowadays, the widespread processes of globalisation and internationalisation that seem to be the favourite catchphrases of journalists and politicians have also become key ideas and entered academic discussions. This is both in reference to the spread and connectedness of production, communication, technologies, but also human presence across the world, which has triggered economic and cultural exchanges. Globalisation, the definition of which often remains confused and rather confusing according to its use, has been gradually growing over the decades.

8 Following her Master’s studies at Stendhal Grenoble University in France, Bénédicte Chaix completed 5-year research on Sicilian migration in 2006, which led to a PhD degree entitled ‘Sicilian migration and integration paths (1950-2000)’. From 2004 to 2006 she taught English to Master’s students at Pierre-Mendes France University, Grenoble. In addition to English lectures, she was also in charge of International Relations and University Partnerships, directed student training and research, and was part of examination referees. From 2003 to 2008, she worked in linguistic consulting for the Department of Environmental Research at Palermo University, Italy, and for the Department of Cultural Heritage Preservation at Bologna University, Italy. In 2003 and 2004, she was selected as a scientific referee for Hawaii International Social Sciences Conferences. In 2007 she continued lecturing English in Italy at the Scuola Statale Sandro Pertini, Palermo and French language at the Scuola di Arte del Mosaico, Monreale. In the same year, she was in charge of a Master’s course in translation at Bologna University as an External Professor. From 2007 to 2009, she was a university Professor at Palermo University specialising in French language. She now works in linguistic consulting in the private sector and management, and continues to collect data and conduct research on migration and identity issues.
and has recently led to the contemporary public debate pervading British society
to suggest the gradual alteration of the original sense of belonging as a direct
consequence to the phenomenon which, instead of fostering cultural exchange,
tends to redefine borderlines and create new abstract frontiers that directly question
levels of belonging today.

In an increasingly mobile, fluid and cosmopolitan world, defining identities and
belongings grow more complicated, diffuse and shallow. Through the analysis of
a research conducted on site and surveys made among Sicilians living in Britain
(Chaix 2006), the present paper questions and analyses the conceptual idea of
“citizen of the world” and tries to arouse reflections on what this expression means
in terms of belonging and what it evokes in the Sicilian viewpoint. Taking into
account contextual and cultural changes in sovereign Britain where a common
sense of belonging has always been rather difficult to reach, we will see how Sicilian
migrants position themselves and how some factors, be they social, cultural or
economic, can instil a supranational sense of belonging or undermine both British
and Sicilian belongings taking into account the role of different social influences.

Are we currently losing our sense of belonging, or are we simply finding new ways
to locate ourselves in a changing society? While, in the past, the sense of belonging
was more rigidly defined in terms of traditional markers of social identity, people
are today able to create their own belonging categories which seem to go beyond
the conventional idea of frontiers.

**Belonging: At the Crossroads between Identity and Alterity**

The notion of belonging is a central aspect in the definition of who we are or
think we are or even the society lets us think we are. Although considered as
individuals, our allegiance to particular social, cultural or ethnic groups is most
important in constructing a sense of proper social identity as opposed to otherness.
We thus understand that belonging locates itself at the crossroads between identity
and alterity, inclusion and exclusion. As a consequence to the encounter with the
“other”, social behaviours and definitions can be seen as contextual expressions
that reflect structural realities of the society we live in. Our contemporary society
which constantly grows more multicultural presents particularities which embody
what the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2010) calls “liquid modernity” recalling
philosophical questions regarding “the paradoxes of alterity” as put forward by
Abdelmalek Sayad (1991). In this context, we understand that “the other” makes
“the self” and referring to the “other” and defining alterity actually means giving
a clearer and more accurate definition of what we are and belong to in reference
to what we do not belong. In the process of identity construction, the landmarks
of difference and the emphasis put on otherness lead to the self definition and the definition of one's belongings.

Developing the sense of belonging is an ongoing process which involves inclusion in, or exclusion from a wide variety of reference groups and it may change in time and importance scale. According to life evolution and to the development of social networks, we continually reposition ourselves in a constant process of social interaction and integration.

Social identities are sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others, that is as social object [...], being [...] schemas that enable an actor to determine “who I am/we are” in a situation, and positions in a social role structure of shared understandings and expectations (Wendt 1994, 384-396).

Nowadays, even though socio-cultural pressure still exists, individuals rather tend to choose the category they want to belong to according to their own propensity and inclinations. People today feel free to select from a wide range of categories, groups or lifestyles to which they identify or opt out of other ones contributing to shaping new chosen social belongings. The example of the birth and immediate heyday of social networks clearly embodies the need for worldwide social belonging and large scale group recognition. For the young generation of Sicilians for whom migration has been a choice mainly linked to pull factors, identity representation obviously evolves beyond migrant status and objective frontiers. Belonging rather reflects personal identity which puts cultural characteristics, belongings and personal aspirations onto future planning together. This allows us to apprehend that the sense of belonging is no longer a fixed idea, but has rather become a contextual and fluctuant concept which is said to be “fluid”, that is to say in constant evolution and subject to innumerable variables which make it complex and changeable. Thus, identity and alterity definitely appear as Stuart Hall defines to be ‘inextricably articulated or knitted together’ (Hall 1992, 309).

In the meantime, the industrial and computerised society of the 21st century has recently raised fears that we may lose our sense of original identity with growing and pervading internationalisation and globalisation as well as our sense of shared values and standards that are the mirror to community belonging. Indeed, globalisation, which has to be seen as a contemporary phenomenon, has political, economic but also socio-cultural dimensions (Croucher 2004, 10-22) and refers to inter-connectedness across national boundaries. This situation of increased flows of services through traditional as well as recent-born conveying channels has made the definition of citizen more complex and the relationship between citizenship and state sometimes shallow. While identity appears clearly fluid and malleable,
globalisation might alter the specific characteristics of the community of citizens now seen as capable of evolving and adapting to modern reality.

The intensification of worldwide relationships involves a change in the way we understand geography and experience frontiers. The idea of frontiers refers to many a context and representation. In a basic and concrete way, frontiers intend physical separation (Herberich-Marx and Raphael 1989). We can talk about natural frontiers coinciding with geological territory construction and conventional frontiers coinciding with created geographical borderlines. The vision of the concept of borderlines has been evolving throughout the decades – from demarcation line to contact zone and proximity area. This evolution inevitably arouses questions on the definition of identity since frontiers are linked to the other in the separation they establish towards the exclusion/inclusion to lifestyles and identification to societal system with proper values. Frontiers are the first means of drawing attention on the difficulty to comprehend space. Shall we be linked to our original territory or are we able to go beyond borderlines and integrate onto a new territory? Such questions prove the difficulty of national and even European politics to understand frontiers and the possibility to consider a supranational identity.

Taking this context into account, it appears mostly interesting and relevant to reflect on the significance, dimension and depth of global belonging.

**Citizen versus Citizen of the World**

**The Meaning of Being a Citizen**

To be a citizen goes beyond the mere political significance. It can be assessed on different levels. The recognition, expression and political significance of citizenship are complementary between one another and contribute in defining the idea of citizenship. As Catherine Wihtol de Wenden sustains in her research on European citizenship, nationality legally gives birth to the status of citizen as individual and participant to the society he lives in. One can thus understand that the citizen is legally involved in the city life bearing and expressing legal rights and duties. In other words, to be a citizen means being a member of a political community often known as nation-state with societal rights and responsibilities. The conception of citizenship appears to be a complex and polysemic notion which can be used to refer to a form of membership in a political community, or an active commitment in the public sphere. Bernard Poche also mentions that ‘citizenship is the sharing of the topos’ (Poche 1992).

Originally speaking, the word ‘citizen’ of Anglo-Norman derivation had been used throughout the Middle Ages; in most cases, it meant city dwellers endowed with certain rights and privileges and was virtually a synonym for burgess or freeman.
However, as early as the 14th century, the term came to name the inhabitant either of a city or of a country as a whole. The 16th century saw a turning point with the important role of the American Revolution that somehow revived the Republican and Machiavellian tradition of citizen-soldiers where citizenship and political liberties were intertwined. Besides, the 1789 French Revolution also reinvigorated the term in Britain and contributed to spreading the word and also the concept of ‘citizen’ across the Channel. Both the American and French revolutions provided a great impulse and inspiration to the British reformers and republicans through the materialisation of political principles and emergence of constitutions. The Declaration formulated by the French National Assembly was enshrined by Thomas Paine in a book which took the same title Rights of Man, outlining the course of the Revolution and proposing a reform of the British system of government. After 1789, a citizen explicitly designated a member of a Republic and appeared in many a political writing where its use widened and referred to the Republic. The European 20th century definition of citizenship as put forward by T. H. Marshall emphasizes political, civil and social rights as the three key points of citizenship (Marshall 1973, 65-122). The definition of Herman van Gunsteren summarises the accepted western idea on the subject:

Citizenship has three aspects, namely, that citizens have a say in political decision making; [...] and a guarantee of minimum socioeconomic conditions of existence. Citizenship is a matter of emancipation, of successively realizing these three aspects of political, legal and socioeconomic participation for all people who find themselves on the territory of the state (van Gunsteren 1998, 13-14).

Eventually, in modern Britain, both the decolonisation period and the real beginning of post colonial immigration triggered changes in citizenship. Britain opted for an open, universalistic definition of nationality and citizenship for Commonwealth nationals, as expressed through the 1948 British Nationality Act. Nowadays, progress towards multiculturalism and the question of multicultural citizenship both seem to be questioned.

Since the 2001 Cantle Report, one has witnessed an evolution in the use of ‘citizenship’ as a mode of incorporation or indeed integration of immigrants in Britain, notably through the setting up of integration measures and community policing initiatives. The key aim was to break the polarisation of communities and erase exclusion. The Report promotes a meaningful concept of citizenship through an oath of national allegiance for a better societal inclusion questioning both citizenship and national identity. The ongoing debate over “Britishness” in the United Kingdom illustrates the questions and debate triggered by the integration of “minorities” in a multiculturalist framework. Attempts to introduce elements
of participatory democracy testify to a will to renew the meaning of citizenship in contemporary Britain. The extent to which recent political reforms and pressure for further reform have led to a change in the British conception of citizenship certainly needs to be assessed, analysed and taken into consideration.

In the era of new 21st century lifestyles, web belongings and new group identification trends, citizenship seems jeopardised and somehow redefined. Whether legal citizenship used to intend the belonging to British society through a mixture of *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*, citizenship understood and expressed as a form of “belonging” has today acquired new levels and meanings. According to the British Attitude Survey in 2005, a clear decline of 8% appears in the use of the term “British”, suggesting a loss of identification and significance of Britishness as a marker of belonging. It appears that citizenship goes beyond the legal designation and bears a cultural ideal that evolves together with society. Internationalisation and cultural globalisation through growing communication technology clearly challenge traditional notions of the way citizens are defined and included in the societal sphere. Is this context, what does it mean to define oneself as “citizen of the world”? Is there any explanation of this phenomenon? Is it to be considered a “normal” evolution of our world or is it a way of contesting proper traditional belongings? Is there any place left for supranational belonging like European belonging? European citizenship as defined by the Maastricht Treaty invokes a supranational recognition of European citizens in comparison to non-European citizens which divides the idea of citizenship from nationality.

Today’s debate over citizenship, globalisation and immigration status reflect familiar tensions in European political ideals which have expanded to include the idea of a communitarian citizen with macro-level social rights. Citizenship now clearly goes beyond the idea of national-citizen since we can easily mention local, economic, social, cultural belonging. Conceptions of the citizen are important because the blurring of boundaries engendered by globalisation have consequences, not only for the states and territories, but also for the individual citizen. Reflections on the matter prove that the issue is highly complex; globalisation seems to challenge citizenship which may have to be reconfigured.

**Citizenship in Britain: a Kaleidoscopic Reality**

The question regarding belonging in Britain presents some particular aspects deriving from the status of a multinational kingdom. Indeed, the conception of Britishness in the United Kingdom is highly influenced by, on one side, regional identities because of its different parts composing the Kingdom with their own and strong cultural backgrounds to which individuals identify, and on the other side by multicultural identities mainly deriving from colonial heritage. As the
contemporary Italian philosopher Maurizio Viroli writes: ‘To talk about nation means talking about unity: ethnic, cultural, linguistic and historical unity.’

First, regional belongings have evolved in time towards cultural conflicts and pre-existing regional identities reflecting the multinational characteristics of the United Kingdom have striven towards a common identity pattern at the supranational level with the Royalty as common basis. The actual lack of a common British identification, symbolised by the recent independence issue in Scotland, paves the way for other belonging patterns embodied by regional identities.

There is hardly any awareness of being ‘British’ in the sense of people consciously possessing such an identity. Most English, Scots and Welsh people identify with their own respective nationalities (Kavanagh 1990, 13).

This analysis provided by Kavanagh in the 1990s reflects the diversity of British cultural identities that influence the British definition of belonging. The absence of an ID card on the British territory also testifies the recognition and acceptance of a multicultural state where, however, religious and regional questions remain a delicate and thorny matter which culturally, politically and territorially divides the different communities. As Kavanagh mentions, while ‘London is the centre, the rest of the country a series of peripheries’ (Kavanagh 1990, drawing a clear emphasis on Englishness. As early as 1844, Disraeli defined Great Britain as a two-nation island in reference to the strong regional gaps and inequalities dividing it. The Scots for instance feel far more Scottish or even European than British, as a whole, unified identity pattern. This behavioural evolution in terms of identification towards a supranational pattern can be interpreted as a form of cohesion inside a culturally divided Britain and as the possibility for a kind of supranational unity.

On the other hand, the multiracial essence of Great Britain is clearly reminded by the British Nationality Act of 1981 which refers to three types of citizenship and thus questions the definition of British identity with the introduction of different citizenship extensions or restrictions as follows: British Citizenship given to who enjoys the right of jus solis (under reserve), the right of parenthood jus sanguinis or the right of entrance and residence in the U.K.; British Dependant Territories Citizenship; British Overseas Citizenship given to the British subjects of the colonies. We understand that the notion of nationality in Great Britain is intertwined with the idea of citizenship since the British Nationality Act gives birth to the different types of citizenship. This recalls the ideal vision of a British society with multiracial and kaleidoscopic aspects. At the very heart of the United Kingdom, the concept of Britishness remains much complex with a geographical and territorial dimension,

9 For further information, also read The Parekh Report on The Future of multiethnic Britain (2000).
as well as a historical or even racial one leading to the question of inclusion/exclusion. In Great Britain, the recognition of diversity in itself is reflected by a particular consideration towards race relations and ethnic minorities which makes Great Britain the last model of community organisation (Windisch 2000, 20). The increasing literature on this theme mostly agrees that the old Britishness, perceived as an overarching identity, has collapsed. Nonetheless, to go as far as referring to the ‘death of Britain’ may be exaggerating. To invoke David Cameron, British society may be seen as a “broken” society, echoing Michel Wieviorka’s discussion of a fragmented society (Wieviorka 1996).

Notwithstanding, taken this context into account, young Sicilians, as part of a white European minority group, manage to counteract the conception of “other” citizens as it is perceived in Great Britain, since the others mostly refer to the major coloured minority groups. The 1971 law indeed reinforced this idea of Britishness based on geopolitics through the establishment of a clear distinction between British citizens of the United Kingdom emphasizing the place of the real British identity and blacks, Asians or others. It seems that young Sicilians actually go beyond the British conception of citizenship and strive towards world belonging as a means of negating their status as foreign entities. It can be understood that the ideal of a supranational belonging allows to differentiate oneself from minority gatherings which are often subject to a culture-based, and even sometimes an appearance-based, discrimination. Going beyond national belonging means, for younger Sicilians living in Britain, the possibility of choosing one’s belonging according to what they want to identify with or according to what they think they identify with.

**The Idea of ‘Citizen of the World’: The Case of Young Sicilians in Modern Britain**

Although researchers and intellectuals might differ on the subject, the idea that citizenship exists in relationship with globalisation sounds plausible at different levels for miscellaneous reasons. First, the movement of people across national boundaries to live and work calls into question societal organisation, but also and above all leads to reflect on issues like national identity, belonging and rights inherent to polity membership. Secondly, the hallmark of globalisation is precisely the existence of transnational organisations that go beyond national dominion and somehow makes citizenship a complicated and thorny matter. Although globalisation has now become a common phenomenon in the history of nation states, several aspects like the democratisation of travels towards eased and rapid movements, or computer and technological communications which facilitate capital flows and increase interconnectedness of individuals, ideas and culture to an unprecedented extent, contribute to intensifying globalisation and putting some pressure onto
citizenship and therefore inevitably present them in an inextricable relationship. In our modern world, growing globalisation implies a new and internationalised evolution towards global citizenship. Global citizenship intends the commitment to supranational allegiance. However, global citizens are not legally recognised and it can be defined as an “associational” status which is different from national citizenship and stands as a wider dimension in the choice for the place to live in and the society to identify with. As Richard Falk mentions, ‘traditional citizenship is being challenged and remoulded by the important activism associated with this trans-national political and social evolution’ (Falk 1994, 138).

Traditional ties between citizen and state are withering and we can witness the emergence of the cosmopolitan vision. Cosmopolitanism, an expression deriving from the Greek word *kosmopolites*, meaning the citizen of the world, has recently been used to describe a wide variety of important views in moral and socio-political philosophy. The idea of cosmopolitanism is that citizens are all part of a single community that goes beyond national, cultural or political affiliation. As Martha Nussbaum emphasizes, the idea of “cosmopolitanism” alludes to the Greek philosopher Diogenes who mentioned that he was a citizen of the world so as to define his origins in terms of the rather universalistic ideal of shared common aspirations and aims: ‘When anyone asked him where he came from, he said, “I am a citizen of the world”’ (Nussbaum 1995, 21).

Apart from the political line of national reference, cosmopolitanism tends to focus onto moral norms or cultural expression to which the city-zen identifies himself. In any case, the universal community of world citizens functions as a positive idea or ideal to be cultivated as a form of global integration and inclusion, and can also be seen as a way of contesting or denying societal and cultural patterns. Indeed, younger Sicilians living in Britain evolve away from their traditional cultural background. Widely speaking, the city, with the embodiment of the representative London which embraces all identities, allows them to free themselves from the original nest. In the mental representation young Sicilians have, the particular attraction to London, and more generally to Britain, is based on several points: the national diversity that characterises the multinational ethnic and racial dimension in identity definition, and also economic and social possibilities. These elements align with the ideal of cosmopolitanism such that young Sicilians develop and strive towards a social life made up of cultural and social fulfillment without taboo-making. 25% of the interviewed young Sicilians living in Britain mention socio-cultural freedom as an important factor in joining supranational belonging. Whereas ‘England has the fame of being more than others a country of traditions, that is to say to produce a specific culture where traditions have a particular weight in everyday life’ (Poirier 1992), Britain is considered by Sicilians as the symbol of
an iconoclast society, the multicultural aspects of which tend to erase traditions. In the conducted survey, one of the most used adjectives to define Britain is indeed “cosmopolitan” (Chaix 2006).

Besides, cosmopolitanism, also referred to and used as a synonymous expression of global citizenship, finds explanations and roots in globalisation. Globalisation, understood as the process by which the experience of common life marked by the worldwide diffusion of commodities and ideas towards the heyday of standardisation, is often felt as a menace to national and cultural identities because of the tendency to homogenise cultural realities and eventually jeopardise singularities and particularities, resulting in the inevitable fragmentation of society. The process of globalisation tends to create standardised and globalised life patterns across the world, embodied by the so-called “McDonaldization” massification reflecting centralised and internationalised economies. In this process of homogenisation, we understand that cultural identities may feel endangered.

Notwithstanding, while most people are to view with alarm the idea of international pressure on national sense of belonging, it can be acknowledged that pressure created by globalisation sometimes leads countries to undertake reforms or actions that aim at strengthening themselves, just as pressure upon individual identities leads to strengthen and protect one’s culture. Globalisation may somehow reunite societies under common aims and ways of life reconciling universal values. Moreover, for the “citizens of the world”, globalisation represents a remedy to the negative aspects of the cultural and moral weights of traditional societies; for instance in the family pattern featuring a male hierarchy and female domesticity, cultural traditions such as name assignment passing from grandfather to grandson, funeral traditions such as open and public mourning process lasting days and nights, or even traditions like that of a Sunday family meal with baked pasta, which seems a lighter and less relevant aspect, but that is in fact pervading social life and acting as socio-cultural determinism.

**Individual Belonging versus Group Belonging: Towards the Emancipation from Classical Cultural Pattern and the Belonging to a Supranational Group**

It should be remembered that until the early 1970s all Italians and Sicilians coming to the UK were subject to report to the Police and treated as ‘Aliens’. This recording continued until 1973. Since then, there has been no further requirement to report to the local police or the Home Office (Goucher 2003).

Although Sicilian immigrants in the United Kingdom had to register until 1973
with the police and were treated as “aliens” – an expression which reflects the gap and differentiation made between British citizens and the “others” – the survey undertaken reveals that 20% of young Sicilians living in Great Britain declare to identify only as citizens of the world, showing a total distanation from the national or regional belonging, whilst 95% of them claim to feel citizens of the world secondly, just after their regional belonging (Chaix 2006).

This phenomenon takes roots in Sicilian culture. In Italy, strong regional divisions do exist where local and cultural belongings are supported and defended. This regional identification tended to grow stronger in the older Sicilian generation while the younger generation tends to identify mostly with a globalised identity pattern, symbolised by the “citizen of the world” challenging cultural weights. While the Sicilian identity remains, younger Sicilians living in Great Britain bear a more multicultural and cosmopolitan definition of their identity in that they tend to identify neither with a Sicilian viewpoint any longer, nor with their host society, but we may detect among young Sicilians living in Britain a cosmopolitan trend as Charles Taylor underlines: ‘Free, […] democratic […] societies require their citizens a strong sense of identification. […] We have no other choice than being cosmopolitan and patriotic; this means fighting for an open and universalistic patriotism’ (Taylor 1995, 38).

Perceived as a mosaic or kaleidoscopic society which reflects its multiethnicity, Great Britain attracts young Sicilians who look for modern social life in harmony with diversity, devoid of labels and stigmatisation.

**Cosmopolitanism as a Challenge to Labelling and Deviance Representation**

For most young Sicilians, the sense of belonging to a supranational group reveals the will to cultural integration and societal internationalisation as a barrier to cultural labelling and an impediment to the construction of either ideological or fantasmatic migrant representations. The concept of deviance was born from subjective categorisations that lead to a globalising criminalisation of the other and labelling of otherness through specific markers as a threat to the prevailing social order of British society. Indeed, society and powerful social actors emphasise the presence of the deviant as those who do not belong to the recognised and accepted social hierarchy. Deviance intends a dialectical relationship between the prevailing social norms to which citizens belong and the recognition of transgression through the acceptance of social control across the power of moral entrepreneurs (White 1992), mass media and powerful think tanks which draw an emphasis on otherness and contribute to its stigmatisation through negative designation.
Stigma is entirely dependent on social, economic and political power - it takes power to stigmatize (Link and Phelan 2001, 375).

Gérard Noiriel quotes François Guizot to recall that social actors ‘rule through intellectual manipulation’ (Noiriel 2010, 226-227). In a contextual perspective where the perception of the “other” paves the way towards social questions like victimisation of the others in the host society triggered by strong elements – one of which has been for years unemployment – creating inevitable tensions and giving birth to criminalised scapegoats that the others represent. The way social actors convey ideas make immigration a strong and powerful ideological theme: ‘In our modern societies, the politician has the strange particularity to crystallise values, passions or social antagonisms into ideologies’ (Bertucci 1994, 57).

In other words, social actors instigate a devilising stigmatisation of the other. It is true that even though it does not appear quite easy to prove and underline the link between stigma and power in the labelling process, power is ‘an essential element in the social production of stigma’ (Bertucci 1994, 57). Under the influence of the social actor, the other becomes what society leads us to think it is. Howard Becker evokes the role of mass media and moral entrepreneurs in biased designation and compares it to a real intelligence. It is precisely in this sense that identification with an ideal global citizenship can be seen as a deterrent to deviant representation, in that it may challenge labelling and allow younger Sicilians to get away from prejudices and labels, such as the image of mafia organisation or dolce vita lifestyle that sticks to Sicilian representation around the world, stretching across generations and times.

Stereotypes are involved in stigmatisation to the extent that the response if perceivers is not simply a negative one (i.e dislike of ‘devalued identity’) but also that a specific set of characteristics is assumed to exist among people sharing the same stigma (Biernat and Dovidio 2000, 89).

At the crossroads between pejorative characteristics and cultural markers, societal labels are clearly exploited by social actors. Often, facts and events that denote some specific cultural belonging contribute to growing and generalising labelling that sometimes trigger public curiosity.

At this point, it clearly appears that stereotyping, labelling and stigmatisation are interlinked and cosmopolitanism counteracts collective thought and cultural labels. Through cosmopolitanism and global citizenship, young Sicilians living in Great Britain challenge the identification process with cultural and societal images that reflect Sicilian identity.

The social act of tagging or labelling a person a deviant tends to alter the self-
conception of the labelled person towards incorporating this identification (Wells 1978, 200).

The group to which one belongs is therefore highly cultural, as is discrimination towards clothes, behaviour, language, customs, etc. Traditional labels refer to difference and stigmatisation through specific traditions such as the pasta tradition or other renowned societal aspects like the so-called Dolce Vita, or even the Mafia organisation which remains a powerful image of Sicilian identity. As Link mentions, stigmas imply ‘a relationship between an attribute and a stereotype to produce a definition of stigma as a mark (attribute) that links a person to undesirable characteristics (stereotypes)’ (Link and Phelan 2001, 365). Other strong cultural aspects such as family organisation and hierarchy, best known as the archetype of “famiglia”, are the target of a reducing stigmatization. Indeed, such representations embody traditional Sicilian lifestyle and customs where social roles testify the Sicilian schema. The conducted research presents young Sicilian migrants that tend to get away from those cultural patterns and the idea of belonging to a supranational reference group, which proves an evolution in the identification process.

For young Sicilians, getting away from traditional patterns means evoking global citizenship. Indeed, in the modern vision of family, labels tend to disappear since young Sicilians stand against the traditional family concept in which, for example, women are aligned with household and family planning as originally imposed by religion. This behavioural evolution is reflected by young Sicilians’ belongings as they put traditional ideas into question. The Sicilian interviewers declare as follows: only one quarter of young Sicilians are married, while half of them remain single and the other quarter lives with their partner without being married. This difference in time and generation shows a real evolution in behaviours and belongings and proves that young Sicilians want to identify with a modernized family ideal, which could contribute to erasing labels. New family strategies forecast the disintegration of a traditional anthropological system and at the same time a move towards the integration of European norms.

It is however true that young Sicilians now experience the idea of positive differentiation through positive interpretation of famous cultural characteristics such as Campari, Dolce & Gabbana, Italian style, etc. Cultural products and mass media have a specific role in conveying cultural references on which stereotypes are founded. Between criminalisation and fascination, societal labels are at the crossroads between deviance and charisma and pave the way to gradual societal destigmatisation.

Cosmopolitanism is also a way of contrasting linguistic and geographical stigmas. Beyond geographical elements that can be seen as landmarks of concrete deviance
and beyond socio-cultural labels that refer to belonging, the linguistic label may lead to the idea of abstract frontier. Language is indeed one of the main markers of identity. It is the ultimate symbol of one’s nest and can become the representation of one’s belonging. The use of one language instead of another has a symbolic value and can be considered as a way of expressing and choosing cultural and identity belonging (Pizzorusso 1993, 195). Whereas an average of 88% of older female Sicilians interviewed declare to have encountered a linguistic barrier, young Sicilians consider the English language as a representation of the growing democratisation of cultural exchanges. Nowadays, identity and belonging are not merely blood or passport identities, they are also language identities. Using the language of the others means going through symbolic frontiers towards another, new reality and knowing the language of the others means having under control the representation of one’s own difference. Identity is linked to culture, language and lifestyle that define one’s belonging to a social group and allow people to contextually identify with it (Warnier, 9). From a true monocultural identity in the past, identity belonging has definitely become a transcultural idea as a direct consequence of the multicultural society we live in and plural reality we evolve in. ‘Belonging’ representation paves the way towards integration paths and intercultural strategies that tend to make the others invisible against labeling and categorisation. Nowadays indeed, identity and belonging can be defined, as Alfred Grosser describes, ‘la somme des appartenances’, i.e. the multiple belonging that means that identity is today made up with original cultural patterns coming from one’s origins but is constantly under construction process according to new social, societal and cultural influences. This is what A. Grosser calls the ‘identités difficiles’, or ‘difficult identities’ as identities cannot be oversimplified or analysed, but appear as a complex thread that articulates a broad and shallow identity quest (Grosser 1996).

**Conclusion**

Identity and alterity are two conceptual extremities deriving from cultural interaction and internationalisation which can be considered, as Emile Durkheim’s philosophy suggests, as a fundamental social fact in nation construction. Identity quest and belonging definition reflect what is called the “crisis of European conscience” and paves the way towards modern and fluid identities which symbolise the growing multicultural societies we live in. In a multietnic Great Britain that symbolises the growing process of Europeanization and internationalisation, the sense of belonging, at the crossroads between inclusion and exclusion, allows identity awareness and indirectly connects the self with the “other” while the concept of “citizen of the world” defines a clear borderline between national and supranational identification. Such an expression also draws limits in terms of integration and multicultural politics in that it puts global citizenship as an alternative to national
identity development.

The tendency towards global citizenship corresponds to the process of “culturation” as defined by Marco Martiniello toward the identification to a reference group. People can contribute to shaping their own identities and strive towards a more universalistic definition of belonging expressed through the term “citizen of the world”. The use of this new-born expression by more than 95% of the interviewed young Sicilian migrants in Britain as a way of defining themselves arouses new questionings and debates on the key theme of belonging that is a dynamic topic within our modern world. Belonging means being part of a whole. Beyond the evolution towards a more open, universalistic idea of citizenship and belonging, the term “citizen of the world” appears thoroughly representative of our modern and contemporary reality where the citizen does not want to be included in a specific category linked to its origins but rather be included in a wider category which testifies its own belonging inclinations. In this context, one may warn and fear the dangers of cosmopolitanism that allows the challenge of abstract frontiers and may lead to a larger societal structure with anonymous citizens and weakened cultural patterns. Indeed, in our internationalised and globalised world, is there a place left for European belonging? The complexity and size of new networks of communication give what we now label as “globalisation” a peculiar force influencing belongings. We can also wonder whether supranational belonging such as world citizenship may allow the cancellation of labelling processes and difference devilisation. Our contemporary world is a paradoxical garden where new identities and belongings get born from our multicultural and hybrid society.
Bibliography


Jean-Pierre WARNIER, op. cit., p. 9.
A Sense of Belonging in a Diverse Britain: The Migrant Experience of British Pakistanis in Britain, as Explored Through the Literary Work of Qaisra Sahraz’s Novel, Revolt, and Short Fiction, A Pair of Jeans, Escape, and Train to Krakow

Qaisra Shahraz

This is not a conventional paper, based on in-depth academic research — its primary focus is on sharing and archiving the real and personal experience of migration for British Pakistani migrants, like me, living in England with multiple identities. I will explore the theme of ‘Sense of Belonging in a Diverse Britain’ through my personal reflections, my literary work, and as an educationist with a remit for inspections of colleges.

This paper will also aim to answer some of the questions listed in the conference information sheet, including:

1. How far does immigration status (including citizenship) affect people’s sense of belonging?

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Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Qaisra Shahraz is a prize-winning and critically acclaimed novelist and scriptwriter. Born in Pakistan, she has lived in Manchester (UK) since childhood and gained two Masters Degrees in English and European literature and scriptwriting. Qaisra was recognised as being one of 100 influential Pakistani women in Pakistan Power 100 List (2012). Previously she was nominated for the Asian Women of Achievement Awards and for the Muslim News Awards for Excellence. Apart from writing, Qaisra Shahraz has another successful career in education, as a consultant, teacher trainer and inspector for Ofsted. Her novels, The Holy Woman, Typhoon and Revolt, have been translated into several languages. The Holy Woman (2001) won the Golden Jubilee Award, was the ‘Best Book of the Month’ for Waterstones and became a bestseller in Indonesia and Turkey. She has appeared in many international writers’ festivals and book fairs including in Ottowa, Abu Dhabi, Jaipur and Beijing. Her award-winning drama serial Dil Hee To Hai was broadcast on Pakistani Television in 2003. Qaisra has recently completed a third novel Revolt, two volumes of short stories: A Pair of Jeans and Train to Krakow. Her work including several of her prize-winning short stories are being studied in schools and universities. A critical analysis of her works has been done in a book entitled The Holy and the Unholy: Critical Essays on Qaisra Shahraz’s Fiction (2011).
2. Does a strong sense of belonging to a particular cultural group tend to enhance or undermine people’s relationships with the wider community?

3. How do we achieve a healthy balance between celebrating diverse identities and cultivating a sense of common belonging to Britain? How can families and communities keep their distinctive heritage alive while cultivating a sense of belonging where they are?

In this paper, I am exploring and depicting the experience of British Pakistani migrants living in Britain through my own life experience, that of the British Pakistani community, and my literary works. In particular, I will focus on the theme of ‘the sense of belonging’. This is a theme that personally interests me and is central to my early fiction, such as the short stories compiled in *A Pair of Jeans & Other Stories*.

In particular, I will be asking and answering some of the following questions:

- Where do people like me — the second generation of migrants who have now lived in Britain for over 40 years — belong?
- What is our relationship with the host community, and what factors affect that relationship?
- What changes have influenced our sense of belonging? (Such as the conflict of living with multiple identities; multiple national and ethnic loyalties; cultural and religious affiliations; or groupings and the rise of ISIS extremism.)
- What is identity and what exactly do we mean by it?

As a British Muslim woman of Pakistani origin, I am forever contemplating my multiple identities and their impact on my life. For instance, when I am in Pakistan I become absorbed into the local Pakistani way of life and culture. I adjust myself accordingly, including what kind of clothes I wear, what language I speak, and how I even behave in a social context. When I am in Britain, Western values and ideas dominate my world.

Depending on home environment, geographical location, class, education, employment, cultural affiliation, age, and level of engagement with the host community at large, a migrant will have different life experiences. As a consequence of these factors, migrants will have different opinions about their sense of identity and belonging. Some, like me, have found that their multiple identities have enriched their lives, thus enhancing their self-esteem, and enabling them to integrate well into the wider world of mainstream life in Britain. This positive and enriching scenario allows people like me to weave in and out of our different identities with such ease, and little thought, on a daily basis.
My multiple identities have a direct bearing on so many aspects of my life. They play an essential part in how I see myself and my sense of belonging as a citizen of Britain. These identities are what make me who I am. Above all, as stated above, my experience of migration has been a positive process, but I have also experienced life landmarks in the process: arriving in a new country and adjusting to an environment so different to Pakistan; struggling with a sense of dislocation and the emotional pull of the country of origin that is still home to friends and relatives; eventual full immersion in the lifestyle of my adopted country. As a child, this immersion is enhanced by education and school life, and as an adult through employment and social interaction within the host community.

Access to full-time education and working in a mainstream environment, I believe, is highly important and instrumental in enabling the process of adaptation and integration within a country so that it eventually becomes naturally ‘home’. However, for integration to become both a positive and a natural process, one should not or be expected to cut themselves off from their other identities — the cultural links and ties with their country of origin. For me, apart from being British, being a Muslim and having strong links to Pakistan is still quite important, although weakening with time. If those links were severed, I believe I would lose my overall sense of belonging — virtually become lost — and experience cultural clashes that would force me to question who I am.

I believe that identity is a package that makes every one of us a unique human being. At the heart of it all, I think that the issue of identity relates to the concept of diversity. We are all different and differences need to be celebrated and valued, not denigrated or seen as a problem. We are all different in some way or other — even identical twins! It might be the colour of our eyes, our habits, our beliefs, our skin colour, our height, the language we speak, the way we dress, the food that we like, the music we love or hate, the accent of our speech, but there are always differences.

**My Multiple Identities**

As a form of case study, I will share in detail my experiences of living in Britain as a second-generation migrant with multiple identities since nine years of age.

I have three identities, and I regard them all as equal in importance, highly enriching to my life, and worthy of celebration. I have successfully managed to keep my three identities intact, and luckily have not experienced any conflicts relating to my migration status.

Let me unpack these three identities of mine, and share with you what it is like to be a British Muslim woman who still has strong connections with another country.
At this moment in time, after living for four decades in Manchester, Britain, first and foremost I regard myself as British. There is no question of loyalty or to why this is so. I believe you become a product of the place where you are raised; the immediate environment shapes you as a person and instills within you its values, beliefs and customs. English has become my first language — it is the language I use in everyday context at home, especially with my children, and in the outside world. I not only think in English, but have begun to see things like many other British people. I also write my novels in English.

British values, to a large extent, have become mine — I believe in fairness, equality, and treating others with respect and humanity, and I am proud that these principles are part of my British heritage. I eat British food — cheese and onion pie and fish and chips, so unhealthy, but a treat for my children, especially with mushy peas. Like every other British person, I crave a good ol’ cuppa of English tea, no matter where I am.

I like and wear Western clothes, although today’s fashion trends makes it more difficult for me as a Muslim woman to find suitable styles that don’t reveal too much flesh. I have work colleagues and good friends, all over the UK, with whom I share my thoughts. As a teenager I was hooked, like most people, on soap operas. I used to watch and enjoy on a weekly basis Coronation Street (based in my home town of Manchester) and East Enders. I grew up on English literature, studying it to a Master’s Degree level. I have learnt a lot of British history, and was especially fascinated by the lives of Henry the Eighth and his six wives. I love Western music — the music of the Bee Gees, ABBA, and the Carpenters still bring a smile to my face.

Manchester, my home, is a great city and I love it. I am so glad that my father made this his home when he settled in Britain in the 1960s. It has everything going for it. I have spent almost my entire life here, enjoying a full education from the local primary school at Stanley Grove to Manchester University. My extended family, which includes my father, siblings and their in-laws, all live in the Greater Manchester region. Manchester is where my home and heart is and, although I hate its rain, I love the cool summer of Britain.

**My Muslim Identity**

My name identifies me as a Muslim. Qaisra is an Iranian name, although its origin dates back to Roman times in the age of Caesar, so I have been told. My name Shahraz is from a city in Iran. I am a practicing Muslim by birth and by choice. I do not support the practices of suicide bombings, jihad and harboring extremist views.

My moral and social behaviour, thought processes, and conduct in life are to a large
extent dictated by my faith. For instance, as a female I avoid having to touch men. I address Muslim men as ‘brothers’ and women as ‘sisters’. I follow rituals like eating with my right hand, which relates to washing and personal hygiene rituals. My house has a prayer mat in every room. Out of my mouth these phrases are always uttered: ‘Inshallah’, meaning ‘God willing’; and ‘Asalama Alaikum’, meaning ‘Peace be with you’, when I greet other Muslims.

I do not eat haram (forbidden food such as pork) and only eat halal. I don’t drink alcohol. I pray, although not as regularly as I should, often because I am lazy or the Western secular working environment is not conducive to religious observances. But during Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, I try to make up for it by visiting the local mosque. There, with a group of other women, we perform special prayers called Tharavees — it’s a fantastic spiritual experience. Whilst on holiday in Granada, praying with a group of Spanish Muslims in a mosque was an exceptional experience, and a memory that I treasure. Another fantastic experience, and one which I wrote about in newspapers such as The Times, and in my novel The Holy Woman, is the Hajj — the pilgrimage to Makkah and Medina. It is a wonderful annual journey with its set of rituals, and one that all Muslims should perform once in their lifetime.

As a Muslim, I am totally dismayed by the rise of ISIS extremism, and I have personally experienced the effects of Islamophobia since the September 11th tragedy. I am horrified at how my faith has been hijacked by a group of criminals and extremists, resulting in Muslims and Islam being regularly demonised. I have now actively begun to use my Muslim identity to help build cultural and religious bridges with people of other faiths and those of none.

Islam and Muslim people have contributed a lot to the world’s civilisation. I studied an Islamic Studies course at Manchester Metropolitan University, and happily learnt about the famous Ottoman Empire (of what is now Turkey), the great Mughal Empire of India, the Moors reign in Spain, and the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia. I specialised in Islamic art, completing a dissertation on miniature paintings. I studied in translation the literature of Muslim writers, especially the wonderful poetry of Rumi, Sadi and Ghalib — all great men who enriched world literature — and I have used their quotes in my first two novels.

My Pakistani Identity

My other identity relates to my Pakistani roots. I was born in Pakistan and have vivid childhood memories of Lahore, the old Indian capital city, with its many gates dating back five centuries in Mughal India. These memories have enriched me as a person — I savour them and they have served me well in the writing of my three
novels: *The Holy Woman*; *Typhoon*; *Revolt*; and my collection of short stories, *A Pair of Jeans and Other Stories*, primarily set in Pakistan. The issues I feel strongly about have a lot to do with the society of Pakistan. I speak the two main languages — Urdu and Punjabi — and as an educationist and inspector I am strongly involved in the promotion of mother tongue and community languages.

Pakistan, in part, remains my second home. The family house, from my father’s side, is where we stay on holidays. I have strong links and many friendships throughout Pakistan at all levels of society. I have undertaken numerous literary tours around the country, visiting colleges and universities, giving lectures in teaching training and literature, and released an Urdu version of my first novel *The Holy Woman*. I have also written a 14 episode TV script for a drama serial that was set and produced in Pakistan, dealing with Pakistani social issues.

I love Pakistani food, and my husband and I relish cooking a wide range of curry dishes. My palate misses the spicy taste when I am on holiday, and I conscientiously make fresh chapattis for my family every day. I wear Pakistani clothes — shalwaar kameez for everyday wear — especially in the summer and at home. For Asian and Pakistani parties, particularly weddings, I have a whole set of glamorous outfits, including lehngas and saris, and a rich wardrobe of different styles of clothes, colours, textures, silks, chiffons, and satins, designed and bought from famous bazaars and malls in Lahore and Islamabad.

In Manchester there is a sizeable Pakistani community and I am an active member of it, attending functions and literary events, called mushairas, and meeting and befriending members of the local and national Pakistani communities. For the launch of my first novel, the leaders of the Pakistani community supported me, and Lord Nazir Ahmed hosted a party at the House of Lords. When I visit other countries, especially on book and lecture tours, one of the places I always connect with is the Pakistani Embassy — and I am proud that I am hosted by both the British and the Pakistani embassies. I am also proud that Pakistan has honoured me for my work at an international level, awarding me an entry in the *100 Pakistan Power List of Influential Women* in 2012. For me, connecting with the Pakistani community is a positive demonstration of my valued links to the culture and country of my origin.

**Culture Clashes**

Like any other migrant, weaving in and out of two worlds and cultures, there are moments of displacement or culture clashes where my three identities do occasionally collide. During these moments of ‘identity crises’, I can sometimes feel like an alien in both Britain and Pakistan and feel as if I belong to neither place. For
instance, when I go on holiday to the south of England, the manner in which some people stare, because of your ethnicity and colour, sadly brings it home that, despite having lived all your life in Britain, you are still at times regarded as different, an ‘outsider’, and made to feel alienated.

The same thing happens when I visit Pakistan — there, too, I don’t truly belong. Going on a holiday to my country of origin is one thing, but to consider settling there permanently is another matter. It’s not just the consideration of economy, jobs, change of scene, etc., but more about the social and cultural values of the land, which are so different from the country that I reside in and now call, 100 per cent, my ‘home’.

After living for over four decades in Britain, it strikes me that, generally, I am more British than Pakistani. I guess you become a product of the society that raises you. Like millions of other migrant children, I have adapted to the country’s way of life and adopted its lifestyles and values. When people talk about integration, I smile wryly and think that if my example is not of integration, then what is? Although my British values and way of thinking tend to dominate my identity, that feeling of alienation in the country that I now call my homeland still occurs, particularly during religious festivals.

In Britain, I wish that there was more awareness of the traditions and celebrations that I acknowledge, and that colleagues would remember to send me an Eid card, not always a Christmas card. I wish that they were more sensitive and remembered that I am fasting or likely to be fasting during the month of Ramadan. These are the moments where you find that you are shoved back, albeit indirectly, into invisibility and become lost as a minority. I realise that part of the problem is simply ignorance and lack of knowledge — if you don’t know, you can’t appreciate what it means. To help raise awareness about these cultural differences, over the years I have offered cultural awareness training in many institutions so that people can gain a better understanding of each other’s world and, above all, learn to respect each other.

There have been many moments of cultural and religious compromises in my life, and I am happy to share those which made me feel uneasy in order to raise awareness in non-Muslim people. Many years ago at a scriptwriters’ conference in Aix en Provence, France, I had to place my hand over a glass to stop people trying to pour wine in it, even after having informed them specifically that I did not drink. In Slovenia, on a teacher training course, a group of us foreign participants were asked to get to know each other better, and in the very first hour one activity entailed us having to sit in each other’s laps. I stiffly remained perched on the end of the seat rather than sit on the lap of a Czech man. Politeness had to be thrust aside as I was forced to inform the trainer that, as a Muslim woman, I could not
do that. Regardless, of my beliefs and tradition, it was an inappropriate activity for any group of people of any background in which to participate. I am sure that some other women or men would have felt uneasy, for it was an invasion of one’s physical space.

Another anecdote that I can share relates to a holiday in Greece in my twenties, when I stayed with a Greek family. They were wonderful people and we regarded them like family, however, cultural differences soon surfaced when we went swimming in the open sea. The other women, including our host and her sisters, wore bikinis, but I could not. I was finally cajoled into wearing a loose T-shirt and shorts. When I left the water, of course, the tee shirt was plastered to my body, and it led to distress and deep personal embarrassment. The lesson I learnt was to be more assertive in the future and never compromise on issues relating to my identity or religious practices and beliefs.

On my travels, during foreign literary tours such as a recent visit to the Byron Bay Writers Festival in Australia, I have had to accept the social gesture of kisses being planted on my face by male hosts or other writers. Another example was several years ago when an inspector colleague of mine attended my book launch party and did two things that most Muslim women would not welcome: he handed me a bottle of wine (I don’t drink) as a present; he then went on to plant a kiss on my cheek. I had to inform him later that touching a Muslim woman, including shaking her hand, is to be avoided. Many a time I have had to explain to colleagues not to offer their hand to Muslim women unless, like the Somali women, they offer it as it is a custom in their community — however, they cover their hands with a cloth so that no physical contact, as such, takes place.

In the Western world, kissing women or a social peck on the cheek is normal practice, and it can be daunting to be confronted with my response of physical withdrawal — I can only hope that they understand once they have been informed and will have learnt something. These instances are just classic examples of a cultural clash, and I persevere to prevent them where I can. When I used to have Muslim students in my classes, I was very sensitive about the seating and physical space arrangements, and I would try to pick up information from their body language as to how they felt about it.

I hope that the positive aspects of my multiple identities have become transparent through the process of sharing my life experiences. However, I am very aware that the experience of other migrants will vary. Some will have struggled for different reasons, facing their multiple identities and sense of belonging in the clash of cultures.
Multiple Identities and a Sense of Belonging

As a writer, I have used my work as a vehicle for exploring issues relating to migration, including the issue of a sense of belonging and the ensuing problems that can occur from living within multiple identities. As Professor Akbar Ahmed writes, my work will be of interest to: ‘… Westerners who want to understand what it feels like to be a Muslim grappling with issues that challenge their identity…’ (Ahmed 2011, 111).

My short story: A Pair of Jeans

A Pair of Jeans, my first piece of fiction published in 1988, focuses on the conflict of multiple identities. My heroine, Miriam, is totally at home in both her worlds and within her two identities, which she manages to switch in and out of very easily. Yet, one day, her jeans and short vest, and the manner in which they are worn, drives her two identities to clash head. This incident also leads to confusion in her and those around her, resulting in a culture clash.

I also explore the gap between first and second generations through characters like Fatima, mother of Miriam, the protagonist. Her daughter’s engagement has broken down and she does not know what to do; she is reflecting on the changes in her life since her stay in Britain, comparing her life in Pakistan.

‘Fatima stared after her daughter helplessly – she was in a real dilemma. She wanted to tell and advise Miriam…. At the same time she felt deeply for her daughter and wanted to support her in any way that she could. Never before had she felt the gulf between Miriam’s generation and her own so keenly. The generation and culture gap lay between them as wide as the ocean. She never did this sort of thing in her youth. Unthinkable! No matter what happened, the parents saw to everything. It was they who resolved problems; children did not take things into their own hands.

Pakistan was so far from Britain, it was another place and she was thinking of another time. As her daughter had said it wasn’t a matter of what was the right thing to do convention wise, but it was time for positive action. If Miriam thought she had a right to consult Farook about this matter, then she had every right to do so, and she, as her mother, would support her! Times had indeed changed. They lived and were brought up in different worlds, traditions and cultures. Above all the world was quickly changing around them.’ (Shahraz 2013, 20)

As Dr Sami Rafiq writes in her article:

The story titled A Pair of Jeans focuses on three Muslim women caught in the clash between Eastern and Western cultures…the real problem is a conflict
between two cultures. When Miriam is caught unawares, dressed in revealing Western clothes, her future father-in-law breaks off her engagement to his son. The reason for breaking off this engagement is that he sees her wearing a western dress as a kind of collusion with the west and departure from her own traditions. (Rafiq 2011, 255)

Dr. Liesel Hermes, a Western interpreter of the same story, and who originally took *A Pair of Jeans* to Germany to be used as a literary text for German schools, similarly focuses on these issues, including that of problems posed by having multiple identities:

Shahraz’s story *A Pair of Jeans* deals with problems of assimilation, integration and separation. Ayub seems to live more or less in a separate world and expects his... (family) to acknowledge that western and Muslim cultures are almost incompatible...Miriam seems to be integrated into the English culture as far as her role as a college student goes...She is the one torn between two worlds, that of her home and college experiences. The conflict that arises from her multiple identities is encapsulated in the pair of jeans, which symbolises her integration into her role as a young woman at an English college... (Hermes 2011, 143)

Professor Shuby Abidi, from India, focuses on the ‘female identity switching’ roles in his article about *A Pair of Jeans*.

A Pair of Jeans has a variety of themes, one of which is identity switching and role playing of women....Miriam expresses her awe and wonder at this: ‘two steps into her home had led to another world. The other she had left behind with her two friends on the bus. What mattered now were the two people downstairs’...It shows the multiple thresholds a woman has to cross every day. (Abidi 2011, 295)

Professor Mohammed Ezroura, from Morocco, addressed the generational gap:

A dilemma generated by a socio-cultural context governed by a generational conflict pitting a young Muslim woman living in Britain, against the older generation of her parents in law, who want to maintain an archaic culture while still living in a more secular milieu. These apparently small conflicts become allusions to larger struggles led by representatives of cultural minorities to voice their identities and secure survival. (Ezroura 2011, 106)

Similarly, Samir, the seventy-year-old protagonist in my latest story, *Escape*, written around the theme of migration, is thrown into a dilemma about what to do with his life when his beloved wife passes away. Suddenly he feels both geographically and emotionally displaced, and he questions his sense of belonging and multiple
identities.

The words ‘back home’ had just slipped out of him again. It was a curious use. For a few seconds he was lost in thought. Why did he say that? Was Manchester not his ‘home’? After all he had spent over 40 years of his life in this city. The other place was just his birthplace, his country of origin, and reminder of his youth. Surely these facts would make Manchester his home?

He shrugged these thoughts aside, willing his mood to lighten…The big task facing him was presents to buy for his two college friends in Lahore. He promised himself that this time the three friends would treat themselves to a walk through the elegant Victorian corridors of the Government College of Lahore where he had studied. (Shahraz 2009, 133)

However, after experiencing disillusionment and a sense of displacement in Pakistan, he ‘escapes’ back to Manchester, cynically realising that Pakistan is no longer the home that he had anticipated: ‘When he spoke to his brother on arrival in Manchester, he was asked when he would return to his homeland. After a pause Samir asked, “Homeland? Which homeland? I’m home…” Then he added laughing; “you can visit me next time”’ (Shahraz 2009, 133).

For Samir, a first-generation migrant, the break away from so-called ‘Pakistan the Homeland’ had taken place. I highlight this break further as Samir happily adjusts to his life in an elderly people’s home, a place that he had once scoffed at in his youth as a totally Western alien life.

‘Wave goodbye to loneliness and heartache’ he tells his friend joining him in the old people’s home, ‘We are the new English Babus, living in old people’s homes, the ones we used to ridicule once upon a time! Meals on wheels for us now –we have worked so hard-time to enjoy ourselves now, hey?’ (Shahraz 2009, 133).

In my latest novel, Revolt, about a mixed race marriage, I have attempted to highlight the importance of intercultural dialogue and respecting others as human beings, and not allowing our differences to divide us. One character is struggling with his sense of belonging, straddled between two worlds of Pakistan and America, struggling with his two identities

‘Master Arsalan was wide awake, struggling with the reality of straddling two worlds. A lost traveller wedged between two lands- that of his homeland and America, yet belonging to neither; unable to come to terms with his parents’ world and running away from the other that had become increasingly hostile to him since the awful events of 9/11’ (Shahraz 2013, 24).
The First Generation of Migrants

In my story *Escape*, I have explored what it is like for people of my father’s generation: the first generation of migrants who have lived and settled in Britain for over 40 years, and made England their home. Unlike some migrants who had a craving to go back and build homes in the ‘homeland’, people like Samir, and my father, fully adjusted to life in Britain, making the most of the opportunities of work and education for their children. In the early years, migrants of my father’s generation, who arrived in Britain in the 60s or 70s, concentrated primarily on work, supporting the immediate and often the extended family, giving them the best life that they could afford.

Apart from their children’s academic achievements and entry into good employment, another form of progress materialised in the type of house that one lived in. As the years passed, like thousands of other citizens, the areas and houses we lived in got progressively better. From Manchester, my family moved to Cheadle, one of the leafier suburbs of Greater Manchester. The children of migrants, like me, made the most of the education opportunities and entered into top professional jobs. However, has not been the case for all migrants. The home environment and many other factors also shaped the progress or lack of it made by the second generation.

The spells of annual or bi-annual trips to the country of origin, often to visit grandparents, kept the ties with the homeland and the Pakistani identity strong for children like me of the second generation. Those trips were a highly enriching process — the love we received from relatives was so welcoming and we wholeheartedly embraced it.

The knowledge of another country, a different way of life, new places visited, and shopping trips made these journeys a highly pleasurable and a nostalgic experience. At least this was the case with my family, but other migrants experiences may vary — the heat, the dust, and different cultural differences could well have proved challenging for some. Although the visits strengthened ties, as soon as my grandmother passed away there was a long absence of nearly 11 years. My immediate family was in England, and therefore there was no urgency to visit Pakistan. However, those families whose spouses were from Pakistan normally ended up making frequent visits, and their ties continue to remain strong. Subsequently, their children are also more attuned to life in Pakistan, can well relate to both countries, and their competence in spoken Urdu or Punjabi is higher than migrant children of with no connections left — like me. My main language is English, and in due course the mother tongue is likely to be lost, unless it is concertedly maintained.
With time comes change — all migrant groups go through the same phases or processes. The first stage is entering a foreign land and culture, and the feelings of alienation, of being the ‘outsider’, and a distinct sense of displacement. ‘Where do I belong?’ is a constant question. Then there is the settling period when two worlds come together, and difficulties and challenges are overturned as inevitable adjustments are made to fit into a new environment. It is more of a challenge for those women who stay at home, feeling culturally and socially isolated whilst pining for their families and a different way of life — open spaces, servants, siblings and so on. Whereas children and men went out into the world to school and work, interacting with host community members, many women, by virtue of language, cultural barriers and childcare issues, remained isolated in their homes. Therefore, the full process of integration never really became their story. This was always the challenge for women of my mother’s generation, to take full part in mainstream life, even after taking English classes, although they helped enormously.

The positive side to this situation was that a new social phenomenon took place. Educated, middle class Pakistani urban women became the best of friends with illiterate village women from other parts of Pakistan, purely by the commonality of their circumstances — as neighbours and with no other immediate family members. Women of all backgrounds, languages, and ways of life interacted well together. Although it meant remaining on the periphery of the host community, I have delighted in witnessing these life-long friendships which turned mere strangers into close ‘sisters’. My mother inherited at least three of these ‘sisters’, closer to her than her own sister. For the first generation, the migration process became a great social and class leveller — an aspect that I find so endearing.

The Impact of Ghettoisation

The sense of social isolation and the problem of ghettoisation are problems that are growing with the emergence of digital TV channels and entertainment. When I was a child, British TV programmes, including the news, were a concrete reminder to us, including my mother, as to where we were — we were living in Manchester, not Lahore. Now, news channels from across the world, such as Ary or Geo from Pakistan, and drama serials from the country of origin, have enforced links with the ‘homeland’ and begun to weaken connections with the host community. Retired people of my father’s generation or the newly arrived spouses, who have learnt little English, find that there is a lack of opportunities for them to connect with host community members. This results in them leading more insular lives than my mother’s generation. Through watching the Pakistani channels, they know more about what is going on in Pakistan than where they are living now. This, of course, will also be true for other ethnic groups, such as Bengalis, Indians, and Arabs.
With time, as communities have settled in certain areas and have grown in numbers, and the indigenous population has slowly moved on to different areas, migrant communities have become more insular by default, spending more time with members of the same ethnic group. Unfortunately, this has resulted in enforced ghettoisation, with people, including children of the third generation, being cut off from the host community. The isolation starts off in the local primary school environment, where more children from the same ethnic minority groups, particularly within inner city schools, are likely to be present. Later on in life, employment can change the situation. If there are jobs in the mainstream working environment, then there is opportunity for interaction, but if the only work available is in local shops run by the same minority group, isolation and insulation remains a problem.

The lack of interaction between different minority ethnic communities has been one of my main concerns as an educationist and member of a minority group. To combat this at a personal level I have begun to work with and befriend other community groups, such as the Chinese, Somali, and Indian. The interaction has been most fulfilling and of supreme importance. I believe that different migrant communities need to engage with each other, and there is a need to foster a culture of respect for other communities and their ways of life.

Heritage and Cultivating a Sense of Belonging

This is a very pertinent question for all migrant communities settled in Britain or elsewhere. How can one keep one's heritage alive, whilst fully integrating in the host community? It is a challenge, but my own experience testifies that it can be fully achieved; where all aspects of one's life are allowed to flourish, whilst still being actively absorbed in the life of the host community. However, this can only happen fully in a social and cultural environment which both values and celebrates diversity, and where racism is actively challenged. Compared to some other European countries, Britain is, on a whole, very welcoming, promotes tolerance, and is capable of assimilating migrant groups and celebrating a diversity of cultures. In such a context, a migrant family is able to flourish in multiple ways, take part in all aspects of the British way of life, whilst still maintaining their heritage at home and within the ethnic community to which they belong.

On the other hand, when a certain culture and way of life is denigrated, mocked or where racism and prejudice become rampant, life becomes intolerable for the victim, damaging the person's self esteem and sense of belonging. Fear of the host community as a result of racism can increase vulnerability and therefore, is likely to encourage withdrawal and seclusion.
I believe that keeping all identities intact and taking the best from both worlds, host country and the homeland — through faith, culture, language, food, clothes, and etiquette — enables people to keep their heritage alive. As illustrated already, I have been successful in keeping my three identities alive due to my recognition that they enrich my life, and are worthy of celebration, and I have also been fortunate to not have suffered from a lot of direct racism.

**The Muslim Identity and Islamophobia**

Since September 11th, I have noticed that for all three generations of migrants, the Muslim identity has been strengthened, partly as a form of reaction to the constant negative media coverage and the ensuing international turmoil and rise of Islamophobia. Migrant status and the Muslim identity have become far more significant for the younger generation than that of even their parents. There has been an uprising of the Muslim identity within many Muslim communities, including Pakistani Somali, Bengali and Turkish, commonly manifested in women wearing the hijab veil, and men growing full beards.

In these days of post September 11th, terrorism and the continued hatred of Muslims and Islam, I find myself actively having to assert and celebrate my Muslim identity. When I go on tours to non-Muslim countries, such as Germany, USA or my recent trip to Australia, I often leave my lectures with these words: ‘I am proud to be a Muslim. I love my faith and I am not a terrorist. Please connect with people like me who are law-abiding, moderate Muslims, and well integrated in the way of life of the host community.’

**Citizenship versus the Rise of Extremism in the Muslim Community**

The importance of citizenship must be recognised as the cornerstone of democracy and progress to combat any forms of discrimination. The espoused values of British citizenship are of paramount importance for all inhabitants of Britain. It is vital that all migrant groups take an active part in the life of the host community as a citizen of that country. This might be so for migrants like me, but at times, for the youngest generation, children of parents from another country and born and bred in Britain, the events of the Iraq war and September 11th have sent their sense of belonging reeling. Their need to rebel against injustices, such as the killing of millions in the tragic invasion of Iraq, have hardened their feelings towards their home country — Britain. It is imperative that those affected by radicalism and dissatisfaction realise that their actions against innocent people serve no purpose and are divisive.

In Britain, during the Tony Blair years, the British aspect of a sense of belonging was partially damaged amongst the minority Muslim communities. Disillusionment
created an affinity with Muslim victims suffering in many countries, resulting in
disdain for citizenship and an uptake in extremist beliefs and terrorist activities.
The Muslim community at large is challenged by the extremist acts of minority
members, and it needs to act with a manner of urgency to deal with this problem
from within.

**Celebrating Diverse Identities and Cultivating a Sense of Belonging**

Intercultural dialogue creates better understanding and respect for other faiths and
cultures and creates community cohesion. By genuinely learning to respect other
beliefs, customs, languages, and ways of life, we enhance ourselves and our integrity
as human beings. I will now highlight how interfaith work has shaped my sense of
belonging as a British citizen.

My current work as an educationist (Inspector for Ofsted), and as a Muslim, has
resulted in devoting a lot of my time to the principles of community cohesion,
and reaching out to other faiths and communities. I do this through my work as
an executive member of the Muslim Jewish Forum, Christian and Muslim Forum,
and FN4M (Faith Network 4 Manchester), and as a trustee for the Manchester
Multi-Faith Centre.

We hold bi-monthly dialogues on different themes, such as divorce, marriage, and
burial rites, and share practices and rituals. All festivals are mutually celebrated at
given times, such as Hanukkah, Eid, Vasaikhi, Diwali, Iftiar party, and Christmas.
When going through challenging times, like the present Gaza and Israeli conflict,
which has resulted in unrest among some Muslim and Jewish members, the interfaith
dialogue and practice has been invaluable. We have travelled together, and when I
visited concentration camps in Birkenau and Auschwitz, my Jewish companions’
grief became mine. So overwhelming was the experience that I decided there and
then that I would write about the Holocaust, and it became my story *Train to
Krakow*, set in Hungary and Poland.

**Building Community Cohesion**

The concept of community cohesion is very important in my personal life, and it
starts at home, with my neighbours. I have two sets of neighbours, from Germany
and India, and these two countries have become very important in my life. We host
dinners for each other, exchange ideas and information about festivals, food and
habits, and have travelled to each others’ countries of origin. Questions like, ‘Don’t
you get hungry or thirsty when you fast all day?’ are asked of me. I, in turn, ask my
Hindu neighbours about the different roles that Hindu deities play in their religion.
We watch dramas like *Mahabharat* together, based on the Hindu holy book, and
the enthusiastic narrative by my neighbour has given me an understanding of
Hindu religious history. Our interaction has led to a solid interest in our different backgrounds and genuine care for each other, which has helped to eradicate any shadows of racism, prejudice or barriers. I have two faiths represented on either side of my family home — Christianity and Hinduism — and now, through our close friendships, we consider ourselves as ‘family’.

Complex Identities and the British Education System

As a former teacher, I recognise the importance for educators to learn about their students and their background. We have an enormous role to play in helping to shape their future, and if we ignore the identity package they bring into their place of education, we risk devaluing a child or adult learner. Consequently they can suffer emotional distress, identity crises, and culture clashes.

Although a migrant, whether child or adult, has a duty to learn and appreciate the identity package of the host community, and integrate and adjust accordingly, their beliefs, faith and customs should not be compromised. In my work as an educationist, I ask students different questions: Is your background and faith valued in college? Are your festivals and cultures celebrated? Are staff and other students sensitive to your faith and cultural needs? Are there welcoming signs in different languages, and equally are there images representing different ethnicities within the campuses?

I also ask teachers and managers what they are doing to meet the varying needs of their students. How do education providers reach out to people of other faiths and communities? What can they offer that is pertinent to students’ needs: a GCSE in Punjabi or Urdu; a women-only English class for Muslim women who do not feel comfortable in mixed classes, and so on.

High school and college provide opportunities for different groups to interact, and it is imperative that education providers are vigilant in breaking down ethnic and minority grouping barriers. As an inspector, I am always interested in knowing how teaching staff and leaders of schools and colleges promote community cohesion, and the notion of good citizenship among minority groups and Europeans. I often ask teachers what opportunities are provided for interaction within groups from different backgrounds, particularly in places like Bradford or Blackburn that have a high proportion of students from minority groups, and who may feel ghettoised. I also address the issue of extremism, and ask staff what measures they have in place to identify it and tackle it.

Similarly, it is important that faith schools, in particular, instill a sense of belonging and British citizenship in their pupils. It would be a great disservice to those pupils
who might feel marginalised or uphold different values to those of the mainstream community when they enter higher education or the workforce. British values and a sense of common belonging should be embedded at the heart of any faith school curriculum, whether a Muslim, Catholic or a Jewish school. It is also equally important that parents take on direct responsibility to help and support their children in negotiating complex identities, and to ensure that they grow up with a secure sense of belonging.
Bibliography


Part 3

DIASPORIC COMMUNITIES AND SENSE OF BELONGING

‘Placebo Nostalgia’: The Greek-Cypriot Diaspora in Birmingham, Its Churches, and Limits to Who Can Belong

Michalis Poupazis

Abstract

This paper reflects on how migration status affects Birmingham-based Greek-Cypriots’ sense of belonging, focusing on church-controlled Greek schools’ exploitation of emotional discourses and manufacturing of limits on who can belong. By doing so, arguments are strongly intertwined with socio-cultural theories, as these reflect the utterance of cultural resources that migrants have in their possession, such as their faith schools and communal cultural events. Through these, many forms of nostalgias are generated, one of which is here defined as.Placebo nostalgia, which functions as an emotional control within power relations involving migrants in the two Greek Orthodox churches in Birmingham. The paper’s discussion expands into

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understanding the placement of the diasporic Greek Orthodox schema as a catalyst for the migrants' sense of belonging in contemporary Britain's diverse society, and the limits that such institutions and nationalisms might impose on migrants.

Key words: belonging, Greek-Cypriot diaspora, nostalgia, migration studies, cultural studies, memory

Introduction

My phone rang late one afternoon in Birmingham in spring 2014 during my research fieldtrip there. It was Christos [Christou], a second-generation Birmingham Greek-Cypriot in his mid-fourties and a relative of mine. (All names used in this paper are real unless participants have chosen to remain anonymous). In contrast to the majority of the Greek-Cypriots I have met during my ethnography there, Christos shares warm feelings about his Turkish-Cypriot compatriots who are also now expatriated in Birmingham; as he said to me in a previous conversation, he grew up with them. The majority of Birmingham-based Greek-Cypriots ‘laudably’ define their identity as Greek Orthodox migrants in the UK, detaching themselves from Turkish-Cypriots. Christos’ father was originally from Mazotos, a village in the Larnaca district shared harmoniously before the conflicts by Turkish- and Greek-Cypriot natives, and a red zone of the Greek-Cypriot attacks on Turkish-Cypriots during the conflicts. Christos also spent most of his childhood summers in the village before his father passed away; this perhaps might explain his divergent perspective.

This was a call I really looked forward to, as I knew that as well as providing a plurality for my narrative data it might change the course of my research. Christos is a father of two boys married to a third generation Greek-Cypriot wife, Nicola Christou, and according to the Turkish-Cypriots he is the binary equivalent of a Rumcu — a Turkish-Cypriot who mixes with Greek-Cypriots (Göker 2012, 118 and 137) — making him, as some Greek-Cypriot nationalists would say, a filotourkos (friend of the Turks). However, up until that afternoon Christos would never confess (at least on record) to his philoturkic notions, since for a member of a small migrant community such a thing would perhaps carry a risk of exclusion. On 21st March, he called to invite me for a coffee (as Cypriots do) at the chip-shop of his dearest Turkish-Cypriot friend Salih [Komurcugil] in Cannock, saying, ‘I believe you would find our conversations interesting.’ And indeed it was one of those groundbreaking ethnographic moments, when I realised I could now understand, meta-narratively, why Greek-Cypriots in Birmingham have limits on who can belong.

The primary idea posed by this journal’s editors is to ‘explore ideas and research
findings concerning the sense of belonging in contemporary Britain’s diverse society’. This raises and foregrounds a series of questions concerning the Birmingham Greek-Cypriots’ migrant status, and this paper aims to use the example of this group to create an academic platform for addressing such questions. Is the laudable cultivation of sense of belonging observed amongst Greek-Cypriots migrants an affirmative or dissenting attention to cultural difference? A factor that affects the migrants’ placement within the wider community of Birmingham? The product of the two Greek Orthodox faith schools in Birmingham (and if so, how)? The aftermath of catechism by the local churches only, or by the pan-Orthodox schema in the UK? The result of nationalistic notions that place limits on who can belong? To answer as many as possible of these questions, I have followed the data collected during the past two years (2012–14) from my ethnographic experience with this group, and traced the narratives that shed light on these ideas.

**Need to Belong**

The need to belong is now acknowledged as a pan-human motive, causing a series of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural human stimuli through a range of faculties and with its study intertwining amongst interdisciplinary academic platforms (Gardner et al. 2000, 486). Being inherently social, humans tend to claim roles and assemble in a variety of groups, from large gatherings to couples pairing (Brewer and Caporael 1995, 31). Belonging is merely achieved through carrying out socio-cultural tasks that would affiliate or make one accepted by the majority of a social group. It is almost as necessary to the human psychological construction as food and water are to physical hunger and thirst (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 497; Calhoun 2003a; 2003b). Underlining this is demonisation through social exclusion as a form of punishment regardless of age and culture group (Williams 1997). Such punishments can have a tangible nature (e.g. imprisonment) or an intangible one (e.g. bullying; Travis 2002, 15–7). This perhaps might explain Christos’ initial hesitation to share his *filotourkos* notions, worrying about the intangible social punishments he might face from the migrant community to which he belongs.

The study of why to belong has taken a rather self-referential turn in the contemporary arts, humanities and social sciences. By way of exception, Vanessa May (2013) in her inclusive book about belonging in a changing world, *Connecting Self to Society*, raises a series of questions concerning where and why people feel they belong which are not far from the ones generated during my research. The intangibility of the concept of belonging is reflected by the difficult though reasonable questions raised both by researchers and also different groups of people, in this case Birmingham-based Greek-Cypriots. May (2013, 3) frames belonging as the ‘process of creating a sense of identification with, or connection to, cultures, people, places and material objects’. By this quote I would like to stress the importance of identification (that is,
identity), as this is of vital importance to the examined group for their construction of a sense of belonging. In many ways, this paper is about identity, about who migrants feel they are or their imagined belief in what that might be (Day 2011, 50-1).

However, at the same time it is much more than identity. Belonging is a sense (a feeling), a type of memory that brings serenity to the migrants through being connected to familiar socio-cultural, relational and material surroundings; together with nostalgia, if that may be admitted to as an acceptable notion in diasporas, this feeling (belonging) can be a catalyst of intracommunal social behaviour in the Birmingham example. This transforms the intangibility of the sense of belonging into tangible social reactions, ones caught between diasporic and political discourses contesting each other. An example, not far from this paper’s theme, is given by May (2013, 3) in her introduction to multicultural Britain and the public debates of citizenship that arbitrate who has the right to belong and who does not.

In this paper, an account is given of how migration status affects Birmingham-based Greek-Cypriots’ sense of belonging, focusing on church-controlled Greek schools’ exploitation of emotional discourses (nostalgia) and manufacturing of limits on who may belong. These nostalgias are explained through communal cultural resources, arguing that the church explores such naïve nostalgic notions to keep its members subordinated, feeding myths of social degeneration (‘myths’, because degeneration in diaspora is almost an organic process) so as to inhale money from them, thus acting as a capitalist profit-making institution. Data and observation reveal the churches’ agenda of tactfully using nostalgias and fears of degeneration to manoeuvre the migrants’ behaviour, to satisfy their need to be or to feel nostalgic; here this is termed ‘placebo nostalgia’. This paper commences by profiling the migrant community briefly, describing the communal and ecclesiastical intracommunal micropolitics, and explaining placebo nostalgia theoretically in terms of migrants’ reworked and misplaced identity, cultural, and religious utterance. It concludes by suggesting how these institutionally controlled emotional discourses construct nationalism, thereby placing limits on who can belong. Greek-Cypriot migrants isolate themselves collectively (while being involved individually in the UK social stream), establishing an imagined community distinct from those of Britain, Greece and Cyprus, dependent on placebo nostalgia.

**Self and Belonging in Diaspora**

Notwithstanding work looking at Cypriots’ sense of belonging both in migration and Cyprus itself as a collective, cultural memory expression (regardless of their ethnic prefix, i.e. Turkish or Greek before the Cypriot), pertinent research has recently emphasised collective memory as a means of constructing a sense of
belonging in a variety of environments and social statuses in native, migrant (George and Millerson, 1967; Constandinides, 1977; Robins and Aksoy, 2001; Teerling and King, 2011; Gulmez, 2012; Navaro-Yashin, 2012), and the native urban and rural habitus (Skoutella, 2007). None of this work has focused on individualism and nostalgia, and research on UK Cypriot migrants has largely been confined to London; Birmingham has not yet been covered other than in my research. I find the studies mentioned above flawless, in their own contexts; however, I also see them as a paralogism, ‘an imaginary resolution of real contradictions’ (Lévi-Strauss 1963/2008, 161). Perhaps the only exception, focusing on an individual’s testimonies, is the essay by Aybil Göker (2012, 118-39) which brings to the foreground the story of Ayçe (pseudonym, a female Turkish-Cypriot migrant in London) and her narrative sense of belonging.

The aim of this paper, in part using Christos as an example, is to reverse this modern scientific correspondence, exploring how collective memory and narratives expand to the migrant self as a body of resources that impel individuals within the cosmopolitanism of Birmingham, and against the tide of social exclusion, to nostalgic emotional ends that restore the true Cypriot culture which natives and migrants fallaciously portray to outsiders as ‘Greek’ or ‘Turkish’ as part of their modernisation process (Argyrou, 1996). Of course, individuals’ narratives can equally point to other locales and be future-oriented, or be used to integrate the self into ways of life perceived as British or non-localised, and so my study follows the full spectrum of intersections between self, memory and the diasporic imagination. Therefore, by abandoning the grand narrative of collective memory this paper takes a meta-narrative approach of looking at the little narrative (a story about the story) as ‘a quintessential form of imaginative invention’ that answers Greek-Cypriots’ sense of belonging in the rather complex urban and migrational setting of Birmingham – ‘Le ‘petit récit’ reste la forme par excellence que prend l’invention imaginative’ (Lyotard 1979, 98).

As an oxymoronic schema, the concept of the ‘individual’ spawns from romantic and Enlightenment scepticisms (usually promoting equality), as a reflection of one’s past, and as an imagined consequence of looking upon one’s self (Weissberg 1999, 9-15). This perhaps has to do with the transparency that the Enlightenment’s advocates had, stemming from the ethos of their science and its postmodern emplacement. This imagined self-reflection proliferated in the 18th and 19th centuries, with the famous examples of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1959) self-Confessions (in Oeuvres Complètes I) promulgating himself as a free-standing individual as opposed to an illustrious figure, and the 19th century novels of Balzac, Dickens, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy (Terdiman 1993, 3-32; Weissberg 1999, 9), which bridged autobiographical writings of imagined worlds with the liminalit(ies) of space and time within history.
Numerous themes interconnect in the study of cultural memory, ranging from the modern examination of autobiography and narrative self (Fivush and Haden 2003; Beike et al. 2004) to the post-structural meta-narratives (Lyotard 1979) and ephemeral amnesias (Connerton 2009), resulting in competing pasts and their co-existing politics of memory and belonging (Radstone and Hodgkin 2003).

**The Community, a Place to Belong**

There are approximately 12,000 Greek-Cypriot migrants in Birmingham; Mr. Costas Petrouis, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Cyprus in Birmingham, gave this estimate to me on the 14th November 2012. This makes it the second largest such community, after London. It comprises two parishes: Apostle Andrew, and Apostle Luke and Holy Trinity. Each parish has its own church to belong to: Cathedral of the Dominion of the Mother of God and St. Andrew the Apostle, and Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity and St. Luke. The church of Apostle Andrew became a Cathedral since it was the first Greek Orthodox establishment in the Midlands. Migrants usually interact through cultural events (such as weddings) and during national/religious celebrations, usually held at the Midlands Greek Cypriot Association’s *Estia* building (*the home* — the building, the common ground, that fosters the parishes’ joint celebrations) adjacent to Apostle Luke church; the two parishes members’ relations are ambiguous.

The prospect of industrial work in the UK during the early 20th century attracted Cypriots to settle there. There were three waves of migration: inner-imperial (Cyprus was a British colony during the early 20th century); post-colonial, as a result of the mid-20th century conflict between EOKA and the British; and post-war (i.e. after the 1974 Turkish invasion of the island). (EOKA, *Ethniki Organosis Kyprian Agoniston*, the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters, was a Cypriot paramilitary organisation fighting against British rule in the island in 1955-6. EOKA-B existed from 1971-74 to fight for union with Greece.) Both terms, the EOKA ‘conflict’ with British rule on the Island and the Turkish ‘invasion’ of 1974, are adopted from the literature (Oakley, 1987; Mavratsas, 1997; Papadakis, 1998; Bryant, 2001).

Initially settling in London, a few migrants later sought employment in Birmingham, settling first in poor areas like Erdington and Aston. Later financial success enabled them to partly acculturate and disperse throughout Birmingham. According to testimony, the community grew mostly by sponsoring further immigration through networking with their ménages in Cyprus. The very earliest migrants to settle in Birmingham were employed in manufacturing (e.g. in the nail factory). Later first-generation migrants tended to establish fast food businesses, typically fish and chip shops, a pattern that was also popular amongst London Greek-Cypriots. This
was Christos’ father second job when he migrated to Birmingham. The second
generation, building on the financial success of the first, either studied at university,
or (like Christos) entered existing family businesses, or opened new ones. Late 20th
century migrants’ choices were broader; some chose traditional industries, such
as fast food, while others assimilated to surrounding British working patterns.
Christos is currently a director of his father-in-law’s chicken processing factory.

Migrant families are patriarchal, with the eldest male exercising appreciable power
over family members. Ethnography further reveals that nearly all migrants marry
other migrants or native Cypriots, as it is the case for Christos; as many testify, these
marriages are usually arranged, in the traditional early-mid 20th century fashion
(Artyrou 1996).

Regardless of migrant generation, older (45+) community members try to live
out a migrant model based on concepts of heritage taught by the church during
their upbringing. Constandinides (1977) suggests that London Cypriot migrants’
heritage concepts stem from political ideologies, while fieldwork in Birmingham
reveals that guilt is the root there, not politics; yet it is fruitful in terms of cultural
continuity, nonetheless. Younger (<45) migrants tend to discover Greek-Cypriot
traditions through Westernised lenses, hybridising their national heritage with
British popular culture. They tend to exploit British philhellenism linked to
Greece’s ancient culture, and the European orientalism that modern Greece projects
(Jusdanis 1991, 210). This shapes into a contemporary expression of their need of
national identity.

Christos’ and other migrants’ life stories point to their attachments to places: sensed,
remembered or imagined abstractions of homeland Cyprus. In some cases their
narrative even guides the current recognition of absence, sensed for example when
Christos in his conversation with Salih that day remembered the scent of cucumber
peels that are no longer there. The understanding of place (where to belong to)
in the individual narratives in Birmingham was precarious. Göker (2012, 123)
makes similar observations about Turkish-Cypriots in London, suggesting that her
informants’ easily interchangeable sense of place and home was due to heated native
political conditions. Although precarious, however, the sense of belonging from
my Greek-Cypriot informants in Birmingham has been constant and nostalgic
in defining and locating the home. Birmingham-based Greek-Cypriot narratives
almost reveal an opposite reaction to the London Turkish-Cypriot ones that Göker
examines. The political nuisances, also causing the three waves of migration, I
suggest, had and still have a domino effect on the clearer perspective of home for
Greek-Cypriot migrants in Birmingham.

This stronger sense of place for Greek-Cypriot migrants was reflected in their need
to instantly create a tangible liminal space, the Cathedral of Apostle Andrew, as an assembly point, where they could sense belonging in an interplay of ‘creating… identification with, or connection to, cultures, people, places and material objects’ (May 2013, 3). Simultaneously, this equality in social assembly in the luminosity of a temple, a *communitas* (*sensu* Turner 1969), generated a prominent feature of belonging theories, the establishment of social exclusion as a punishment (Williams, 1997); whoever does not belong within the liminal space of the church is excluded. As will also be argued later, the establishment of a church has almost been for Greek-Cypriot expatriates to Birmingham as necessary as food and water (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 497), and their diasporic narrative of this feeling has catalysed social behaviour throughout the Birmingham community’s existence. This social creation of self and belonging was also reflected in Christos’ stories of Mazotos, his *home* in Cyprus. Bender (2001, 5) points us to the pilgrimage along familiar paths, nostalgic memories, myths and stories of otherness that are stimulated from sensory memory (sight, sound, smell and touch). This is a prime ethnographic example how the intangibility of sensing belonging transforms into tangible social reactions.

Migrants’ precarious sensing of belonging is reflected intracommunally through their segregation into two parishes with ambiguous narratives about their relations. The church of Apostle Luke was established later to host migrants who felt displaced within the Cathedral of Apostle Andrew. Apostle Luke members’ narratives suggest that this displacement had to do with their pre-expatriate location, and thus their common understanding and sense of what *home* is. The majority of this parish’s members, or their parents or grandparents, derive from the same village in the Larnaca district, Aradipou. However, the Aradipou migrants’ sense of belonging also fully constructs with their participation in collectively cultural events (mostly weddings) and during national/religious celebrations, in togetherness with Apostle Andrew Parish’s members.

The interplay of precarious sense of place is also reflected through the migrant generations and their behavioural contention. Older community members portray themselves in accordance with a *migrant model*; whatever this might mean, imagined or understood differently by each individual as an aftermath mostly of strict upbringing in the Greek Orthodox tradition. However, younger generations, by exploiting British philhellenism, turn this notion into a future-oriented one that points into other locales and includes identification with a transnational mash-up of Cypriot, Greek and British, a contemporary expression of their need of national identity. There is also an intrafamily and intragenerational sense of belonging. With the patriarchal family models being adopted in Birmingham, Greek-Cypriot families there create family roles and an indigenous sense and understanding of how
one is supposed to belong within a family; this is also mirrored in their relationship with their churches, as will be discussed later.

Another example of felt misplacement and precariousness of place has been the partial acculturation to Birmingham of migrants from London (the only port of arrival for the first migrant waves to the UK). The cosmopolitanism and new abstraction of London made some of the migrants who first settled there feel misplaced, and seek further migrational worlds in which to sense belonging. For Christos’ father, who first arrived in London and then acculturated to Birmingham, that was perhaps his strongest expression of sensing belonging in the multiculturalism of Britain; Christos explains that his late father, Kyriakos Christou, was clear about this in their conversations. Moving from the small village of Mazotos into the multiculturalism of London was an intimidating experience, and costly too; Birmingham seemed like the promised land for such small-village-derived migrants. The sponsoring of further migration to Birmingham by Greek-Cypriots who had already settled there also comes out in the story of Christos’ father. Ironically, Christos’ current father-in-law’s father, Tofis Mallas, was the one who initially invited Kyriakos to Birmingham as to work with him in his then job in a nail factory in Erdington. Kyriakos then followed the collective establishment of fast food businesses, typically fish and chip shops, a mimetic pattern popular amongst London Greek-Cypriots. This collective creation in a foreign setting of a common business platform to which to belong is a prime example of why I suggest that Greek-Cypriot migrants have a strong sense of place, even if it is misplaced or confused.

Diasporic (a-)Politics of Belonging

Politics in the Cypriot context, native and migrant, traditionally not only includes political ideologies but a way of life; it underpins race, and has promoted racism and violence ( Anthias 1992). It also carries an intense interplay between Cypriotism (usually from left-orientated supporters of the political party AKEL) and Greekness (usually from right-orientated supporters of the political party DISI), leading to an identity mix of Greek/Cypriot and alien (i.e. British or Australian) elements in their diasporas. A blurred intracommunal identity understanding was strongly reflected throughout my ethnography as well, but the political doings of Birmingham-based Greek-Cypriots do not repeat these discourses; they do not replicate or imitate native Cypriot modes, but draw on reconstructions of the past—myths, stories and an imagined reality—and not on mimesis, as arguably London’s Greek-Cypriots do by following unerringly the AKEL vs. DISI model. Birmingham’s Greek-Cypriot Consul’s testimony reveals that this perception leads to intensive local involvement, as community members work hard to create an identity as the UK’s second-biggest Greek-Cypriot migrant group. This accords with their observed close involvement with Greek-Cypriot cultural activities, rather than with politics. However, their
conspicuous ways of preserving their heritage foster a stronger sense of ethnic
identity than the London migrants’, mirroring the comparisons drawn by George-
between London migrants and the even less ethnically-aware mainland Cypriots.

For Birmingham-based Greek-Cypriots, doing politics as traditionally understood
does not apply; migrants there have a profound naivety on the matter. In a sense
their politically conscious behaviour is a rejection of all meta-theories sensu
Foucault’s (1972) The Archaeology of Knowledge, thus harmonising with key
postmodernist tendencies. In contrast to the London-based migrants’ emphasis
on the micropolitics of local struggles for liberation, the Birmingham community
rejects speaking for others in a unified movement, offering prolific examples of
fragmented identity and meaning as per the best of the social science of the past
century (i.e. Adorno, Foucault, Deleuze, Lyotard, etc.).

I would like to clarify what I mean by the migrants’ political consciousness: it
is what they believe they are doing, as revealed in the ethnography, while their
unconscious political doings are what they are tacitly encouraged to do, in the guise
of being a model migrant (guilt) and emotional attachment to homeland (nostalgia).
Both conscious and unconscious political doings are (I suggest) products or by-
products of the grand pan-Orthodox schema and its construction in the UK; this
is one of the main arguments of this paper.

Instead of using the binaries of conscious and unconscious, however, I will be
engaging with the term ‘(a)political’, i.e. their (a)political sense or actions. My focus
is Birmingham and the community there, so any arguments here are drawn from
and concern only them and do not apply to any other Greek-Cypriot diasporic
communities, each of which has its own idiosyncratic environment.

Birmingham’s Cypriot expatriates do (a)politics in two ways: through claiming
a distinct identity (explained above as having the need for a more pronounced
identity than the London migrants, or the younger members’ contemporary transnational expression), and by intracommunal social and religious involvement.
Both homogenise into unique and idiosyncratic (a)political reactions, which make
sense to and have social meaning for Greek-Cypriot migrants in Birmingham,
and for them only. By this indigenous (a)political behaviour, migrants create a
platform where they can politically belong, one that subsumes their actions and
social contributions that mostly target the liminal sense (of belonging) of their local churches.
Politics of Religion and Limits on Who Can Belong

Studies commonly utilise diasporic religion as a means of evaluating social behaviour, and argue that religion is the strongest indicator of transnational identities (Levitt 2003). The only examination that briefly refers to the Greek Orthodox Churches’ social migrational (London) discourses since the 17th-century is Panikos Panayi’s (2010) An Immigration History of Britain. The academic silence and non-existence of heretical literary opposition might explain the post-modern engagement of nostalgia (Stauth-Turner, 1988; Hutcheon, 1998; 2000) on behalf of the churches, who now have two historic backgrounds against which to build their luminous representation: one being the history of the Greek Orthodox Church in general, and the other the church’s migration history and evolution in the UK. Religious evaluations underpin how the church might use a notion, such as nostalgia, or a sense, such as belonging, to explore the social group that uses liturgies (McCutcheon 1997). This leaves unanswered questions of power (Foucault, 1980; 1982) and the political utterance of notions such as nostalgia (Shklar, 1965; Davis, 1979; Keller, 2012), and whether there is a danger of misuse (and if so, what its motives might be; Boym 2001; Rutherford-Shaw 2011). Many other case studies of migrant groups and their religious discourses can be seen as paradigms of the same hypothesis (Coward, Hinnells and Williams, 2000).

Most migrants are very attached to their parish churches, having strong religious beliefs, with the older members having the strongest religious affiliations. This abstraction has also been explored in diverse environments revealing similar behaviours, such as Shinozaki’s (2012) Schönberg city case study, which argues in a similar vein. The churches’ communal significance reflects the size of the Greek Orthodox institution in the UK (an estimate of 113 parishes is meta-narrative given by the church itself; Archdiocese of Thyatira 2012) and is mirrored in migrant society’s adoption of the church’s hierarchical structure, enabling the Birmingham churches’ exercise of ‘pastoral power’ sensu Foucault (1982, 782). Foucault argues that pastoral power in Christian institutions has a unique form due to features that appear ‘as more reciprocal than [those] of royal power, in that it must respond to the community and the individual for their salvation’ (Godfrey 2012); this pastoral power is perceived as a sign of modernity. Moreover, ‘in a way, we can see the state as a modern matrix of individualisation or a new form of pastoral power’ (Foucault 1982, 783).

Eriksen (2001, 157) argues that the church, as an institution, drives its members’ social actions, while migrant society exerts power by sponsoring the church with personal contributions, mostly large financial donations and investment of time in church events. This is all to prevent the social degeneration that might follow, in the estimate of the church, from being in a foreign country (both priests interviewed
in Birmingham, Father Kosmas Pavlidis of Apostle Andrew Church, and Father Christos Stefanou of Apostle Luke and Holy Trinity Church, each stressed the same argument). This relationship also derives, according to Birmingham migrants’ testimony, from their longing (nostalgia) for social continuity with the homeland, both churches acting as institutionalised assembly points, *ekklesiai* in the classical sense. The tangibility and familiarity of symbols, icons, and food that the church provides for migrants (usually there is a sale of traditional Cypriot products outside the churches every Sunday after the mass), secures a place where they can belong in familiarity and liminal sharing. Additionally, the church provides festivities, potlatches of gift conversations and offerings (Mauss 1967/2011), which are accompanied by transients such as music sourced from CDs and mp3 files also made accessible to the migrants by the church. Tölölyan (1996, 13) traces communal ‘collective [cultural] memory’ as subsisting in ‘embodied’ form both transiently (for example in food and drink) and perpetually (on CDs, etc.) *via* dynamic social, communication and trade networks (such as those involving Cyprus in our example), making the homeland the place to belong in a migrant displacement. Observation and testimony each underline the distinctiveness of migrant culinary and musical culture; both food and music are symbolically familiar smells and sounds, utilised by the migrants daily.

It is exactly because of this I have underlined from the beginning of this paper the importance of the cultural resources that are made available to migrants in Birmingham, and how migrants call upon them in constructing a remembered or imagined home, one that shelters their sense of belonging. For Greek-Cypriots, church is a place to access the familiar, and according to Ritivoi (2002), the familiar generates nostalgia; in turn, as Boym (2001) says, nostalgia generates a need for social continuity. Echoing Daynes’ (2005) work on musical continuity in the Rastafarian diaspora, observation and testimony show the considerable efforts and extents that migrants invest and reach in maintaining the two churches’ activity levels, to preserve that social continuity that will enable the church, the familiar place to belong, to feed their hunger for nostalgia; this makes complete sense in their meta-diasporic psychological and social construction, both as individuals and collectively.

Another notion observed strongly during fieldtrips, was that the migrant community’s hierarchical structures, mentioned previously in the context of the family, are also expressed through parish committees and groups (e.g. church, school). Any migrant member who wishes to, may become involved in these and supplement him or herself with an intracommunal title and the chance to belong within an extended group/family. This is another resource made available by the church which attracts migrants to come closer, perhaps by satisfying their vanity through having a title
within a social structure (e.g. President of the Greek School Committee). Such committees also exist across the two churches in an almost cooperative structure, with Presidents (as it were, CEOs), Vice-Presidents, members and most importantly Treasurers. I stress the importance of treasurers as they embody the real purpose for which these committees are formed, which is to collect money to maintain their churches. Expenses, according to several committee members (who choose to remain anonymous), include building maintenance, priestly salaries, charity donations to those in need both inside the migrant community and more widely in Birmingham, and sponsoring festivities where priests and their ecclesial superiors eat in some style (for free). Among the financial objectives they found admirable or unremarkable here, the last in the list seemed to cause some disquiet. Small wonder the members who gave these narratives choose anonymity, though; the fear of social exclusion is obvious, and they elect to keep such *thinkings* clandestine in order to continue to belong within the (arguably imagined) migrant reality that they live in.

Migrants’ religious reactions are acute and fervent. Orthodox beliefs promote Greekness, especially in diaspora, as exemplified by the migrants’ choice of cultural resources; everything is Greek to them (Poupazis 2013; 2014). However, this migrant understanding and imagined rationalisation reflects no political ideology—Greekness in this instance does not link to DISI, as it commonly does in the native parallel. My observations initially suggested that the church’s early nurturing (through its Sunday-Greek schools) and sponsoring of Greekness might be a clandestine effort of DISI. It would perhaps be an easy conclusion to say that the limits of who may belong are formed by such nationalisms and political forces encouraging Greek-Cypriots in Birmingham to turn collectively into their microcosm and alienate themselves (as much as possible) from the mainstream sense of belonging. However, after longer field experience I concluded that the Orthodox schema is much stronger among Birmingham’s Greek-Cypriots than any native political party, steeped as they are in political naivety (see later discussion of the Greek schools’ activities). Also, my decision to focus on the individual narratives revealed that many migrants have or would like to have a social involvement within their local mainstream; they would like to be considered British and belong among Britons, who are their compatriots as some even argue. Christos’ narrative is a prolific example of this; although his initial testimony revealed a mono-dimensional, intracommunal, expression of a sense of belonging, after our meeting with Salih at Cannock, his narrative expands his sense of belonging to include Turkish-Cypriots and Britons as vital particles of his understood place in the world. In other words, it is not nationalism that builds barriers of belonging amongst Birmingham-based Greek-Cypriots; it is the fear of social exclusion as an intangible punishment of not conforming with the church’s norms.
**Parable of the Mad-lady**

“**THE MADMAN**----Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: “I seek God! I seek God!”---As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated?---Thus they yelled and laughed” (Nietzsche 1882-1887/2010, 181).

The Sunday after my meeting with Christos and Salih in Cannock, I attended the morning mass at the Cathedral of Apostle Andrew. I had heard many good things about the after-liturgy teas and how the migrants get together there to share refreshments and traditional Cypriot food (homemade by the older female members of the parish). The tearoom is also known as the *arhontariki* (trans. a hall worthy of a lord) and it is situated between the Cathedral’s main hall and the Greek school’s yard: the ideal liminal space in which for Apostle Andrew migrants to attest and enact their (perhaps imagined) intracommunal social roles. I suddenly heard some laughter at the far end of the room. It was Maria (pseudonym), a woman well known in the community who provoked much laughter with her nonsense actions and words. It was then I remembered one of my favourite parables, Nietzsche’s (1982/1987) ‘Parable of the Madman’, where similarly to Maria he seeks God in a nonsense way and is laughed at by the rest around him. I then observed how the (imagined) intracommunal roles that migrants have find acceptance in the liminal space of the church’s tearoom. Men are patriarchs sitting and being served by the humble females while children run and play in the school’s playground. Both adults and children find their places where even roles such as Maria’s contribute to the imagined social construction of this migrant community — perhaps a point of difference from Nietzsche’s parable, after all. This is something that as an outsider it took me a while to understand, as it is a contemporary ritual of belonging that is carried by the migrants and understood only by them. Ironically I have observed people who enact behind closed doors family roles that are the opposite of those they portray socially, which are excursions from their real selves, social subordinations, in order to conform to the communal normality and so belong. The *arhontariki* is now transformed into the adult equivalent of their childhood schoolyard, woven with warm memories and familiar sounds (Greek and Cypriot folk music playing in the background). The adults are the children of the past, who have once again found their place of belonging. This migrant theatre of play and real life is a contemporary example of a ritual of belonging.
Placebo Nostalgia

As mentioned before, the migrants sponsor their two already-rich churches with financial and other resources, both to prevent (as they understand it) social dissolution, and to assuage their nostalgia for social continuity with the homeland. I further argue that the churches in Birmingham tacitly use such nostalgias and fears of degeneration to do politics and manoeuvre the migrants’ (a)politics and sense of belonging, something I term *placebo nostalgia*. I will discuss next how this placebo nostalgia is conveyed to the migrants; I suggest this process happens within the two Church’s Sunday Greek Schools in Birmingham, and that migrants are nurtured in it from a very young age.

It is very important to establish here, briefly, the science behind nostalgia that is pertinent to our theme. More detail can be found in Poupazis (2013). Boym (2001, xvii) refers to nostalgia as a ‘currency of... globalism exported’, underlining the notion’s commoditised importance and power in the ‘global culture’. However, Boym and primary sources reveal a darker side to late-20th/early-21st century nostalgia. In her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym (2001, xvi), warns of the hazardous misemployment of the notion as a way of exploring political feasibilities through peoples’ memories, and how when unreflected on it breeds monsters. A brief literature survey yields a prolonged list of work on marketing, selling and buying behaviours, and two questions should perhaps be asked: who benefits from such market surveys (using this term as opposed to academic research, as that is what they really are)? And how are their outcomes, which reveal nostalgias of many kinds, used by market makers? The answers were perhaps given two decades ago by Appadurai (1996) in tackling Filipinos’ homesickness for a ‘world they never lost’ (29-30), warning of nostalgia as a ‘fashioned’, commodifying ‘instrument of [the] merchandiser’s toolbox’, an ‘ersatz nostalgia’, ‘nostalgia without a memory’, and a ‘capitalist nostalgia’ (75-85) that appropriates the past merely to sell fashion (Markas 2011); this has some apparent points of contact with what the two Birmingham churches are doing.

However, these dangers and capitalist overtones of nostalgia are not quite what I have observed within the migrant community as they manifest their religious behaviour through (a)political *doings*. The churches in Birmingham may certainly be seen as marketers, ensuring that all these forms of nostalgia run throughout migrants’ lives; as the generations grow in the diaspora, the fear of social degeneration promulgated through Sunday homilies is too loud to be ignored, and empowers the turning of the notions manufactured by the Sunday Greek schools’ tacit confusion of Greek customs with Cypriot ones into the familiar that carries through from childhood into adulthood.
However, the migrants do have a genuine longing for home, an ersatz, pain-free nostalgia. (Ironically so, as the word ‘nostalgia’ is in part derived from *algos*, pain). They usually draw on cultural resources such as food and music to summon up their remembered or imagined homes in a non-political way. Such nostalgias will be explained along with the community’s musics in the next section; this study argues that the church explores such naïve nostalgic notions to keep its members subordinated, feeding myths of social degeneration (‘myths’, because degeneration in diaspora is almost an organic process) so as to inhale money from them, thus acting as a capitalist profitable institution.

It is obvious from both data and observation that the churches have an agenda of tactfully prescribing placebos to satisfy migrants’ need to be or to feel nostalgic. I want to coin the expression placebo nostalgia to describe all the above complex abstractions in a simple, if flamboyant, phrase. In brief, placebo nostalgia comprises the tactics and calculations imposed by an institution on its subjects to subordinate them unconsciously via emotions and memory, and covertly guide them into (a) politics. It is another form of micropolitics, with an agenda including memory, emotions and cultural resources.

**Faith Schools**

Each parish’s church and school operate as one; testimonies and observations reveal the investment in the construction of pastoral power and adult migrants’ marked ethnic identity as a response to sensing belonging. Both schools function weekly on Sunday mornings, helping to inculcate in younger migrants a need of positionality and build a longing (nostalgia) towards their homeland (Cyprus). This conclusion is founded on several teachers’ testimonies concerning the basic cultural knowledge — grammar, literature, music, dance, etc. — that these schools offer. The identity blurriness mentioned above is also fostered in the schools; I have observed during lessons that students are introduced both to mainland Greek and to Greek-Cypriot customs and traditions. Faith schools, tacitly confusing Greek and Cypriot cultural heritage, cause a blurring that may sometimes perhaps be traceable to lacunae in the teachers’ own knowledge.

The influence of the parish priests’ cultural backgrounds is harder to assess. Father Kosmas (Apostle Andrew parish) is from mainland Greece, and was ordained before moving to the UK; Father Christos, on the other hand, was a first-generation migrant from Cyprus before leaving a better-paid job to become a priest. It might be conjectured that the inevitable Greek-centredness of the Greek Orthodox Church as an institution largely overrides the cultural backgrounds of ecclesiastics who come from elsewhere.
Traditionally, secondary and high schools in Cyprus distribute cultural studies and musical education between Greek and Cypriot culture. The political climate in Cyprus makes this a delicate topic; therefore, schools there approach Greekness and Cypriotism neutrally, trimming their direction slightly according to the current administration. The two migrant Birmingham schools adopt the same model, perhaps as a non-party-political way of mimicking the home model that will inculcate a sense of belonging through a feeling of having equal educational opportunities with native children.

This migrant adaptation of the neutral educational model also contributes to blurred cultural identity in childhood and adulthood by intentionally introducing mainland Greek and Greek-Cypriot music, dances and customs to the children quite promiscuously. However, free from mainland Cyprus’ political context, Birmingham migrant children have no social awareness of what these songs, poems and dances might connote to anybody else. This apparent naivety of approach is remarkable, and the apoliticality of the educational process is noteworthy. In this sense the Greek schools create a unique educational platform that only makes sense to them, and that paradoxically (and indeed heterodoxly) only they can belong to.

The model adopted by both Birmingham Greek schools offers music teaching activities alongside dance, drama and poetry lessons. The Cypriot customs that the children encounter through their weekly teaching are very limited; as Stella Tryfonos (head teacher of Apostle Luke school) underlines, ‘we do not teach them Cypriot songs as much as we should’ (30th March 2013). This suggests a fostering from the early stages of migrants’ lives of the community’s blurred identity, weakening the Cypriot part of the cultural mix.

This blurring of cultural identity develops from naïve pictorial schoolbook abstractions about homeland into a nostalgically monstrous adulthood where everything is Greek to them. This process of identity-blurring generates Greekness and manifests as ersatz nostalgia for the familiar, not for its source, and finally enables placebo nostalgias to guide the (a)politics of migrants in adulthood. I would like to explain this through describing a field experience I had with one of the schools, Apostle Andrew (I focus on this school’s musical/dance education, as my fieldwork involvement there was comprehensive); however, similar observations and conclusions apply to Apostle Luke’s school and the broader community.

Mrs. Maroulla Georgiou (the music/dance teacher at Apostle Andrew school) explains, ‘I teach them [songs, dances, plays and poems] by semester and according to the celebration that follows’ (17th November 2012). The School holds four celebrations, and thus four repertoires are taught: 28th October, a Greek national celebration; Christmas; a joint celebration for 25th March and 1st April which I will
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focus on; and the end-of-year celebration.

31\textsuperscript{st} March 2013, then, was not an ordinary Sunday for the migrants. The children of Apostle Andrew school were to present an annual celebratory event of singing, recitation and dancing (something very similar was happening simultaneously at Apostle Luke church). I was about to witness the musical genre of the community pertaining to children aged 3–16. The program revealed, as expected, what I had observed at the school: a mixture of mostly Greek and some Cypriot songs, dances and poems.

Looking into the celebratory repertoire, 15 Greek songs, dances and poems were found, while three Cypriot items (one song, one poem, and one dance) were seen. Although unbalanced, the mixture was designed to fit this occasion perfectly as the community was observing two national celebrations: 25\textsuperscript{th} March, a Greek national day, and 1\textsuperscript{st} April, a Cypriot anniversary (rather ironically, the commemoration of the Greek-Cypriot struggle for independence against the British in 1955).

Soon the children marched into the church waving Greek and Cypriot flags, dressed in traditional mainland Greek and Cypriot costumes hand-crafted by their families. Focusing on the only Cypriot song performed that day, 1\textsuperscript{st} April, it is not just any song but a Cypriotist-patriotic number promoting Greekness (a quick look into the lyrics amply attests that). As performed by Apostle Andrew students, it replicates the original, revealing how a rather simple melody has no need to be subsumed differently.

However, the melody and chord progression of the song itself ‘borrows’ (to put it gently) from the American western ballad Oh my Darling, Clementine. This reveals another identity blurring running through the mainlanders and (by extension) the migrant Greek-Cypriots; it might surprise the migrants as much as it surprised me that a momentous patriotic musical resource of their childhood is American, and not Greek at all. The cultural identity mix in this case is obvious, though one might argue that the emotional censorship that Greek-Cypriots attach to this song is valid and assertive. For the migrants, however, the fact that the song celebrates the beginning of the EOKA fight against British colonial forces appears rather oxymoronic, as they consider themselves partially British. This song can be considered as blurring migrant identity further.

A clearer example of the blurred Greek and Cypriot mix was observed when the 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} grade children performed a two-part presentation consisting of a Greek
and a Cypriot dance, *Sousta*\(^\text{12}\) and women’s *Karchilamas*.\(^\text{13}\) The migrants portrayed these as one common dance with two legs (a Greek dance, in their teachers’ unsophisticated view), even though that is not the tradition at all. This is a very unique way of subsuming a bi-cultural heritage. However, migrants take this in their stride, because as we should not forget, everything is Greek to them! This is their way of avoiding social exclusion in their adulthoods later on, and the superficial reality in which they belong.

Throughout the celebrations, I sat next to Nicola, Christos’ wife, both of whose sons were performing. She emotionally testified, ‘This brings back lots of memories. We did exactly the same routines when we were children as my two sons do today’ (Mrs. Nicola Christou 31st May 2013). This is an attestation of nostalgia about childhood and its naïve understanding of one’s cultural heritage as all-Greek, and a reminder that she will always belong and find her place in the schoolyard of her faith school. *Greek-music* for Birmingham-based migrants perhaps symbolises nostalgia with overtones of crying that may echo the Homeric nostalgia of Odysseus ‘sobs and groans and anguish...’ (Fagles 1996, 157 — Homer, *Odyssey*, Book 5, 169, 174); in other words, a mythological (imagined) nostalgia. Through listening to such songs and utilising similar cultural resources, migrants’ shift ‘from spatial to the temporal’ *algos*-less (painless) homesickness is attested by Mrs. Christou, who never really lived in her ‘home’ village of Mazotos; it is a ‘memorandum home’ (Malpas 2011, 88) impressionistically woven from the intermingling of intimate sounds and aromas during her childhood years in Birmingham, leading to an ersatz nostalgia when as an adult she looks back on her childhood (the familiar), and not the actual musical and cultural traditions of her homeland. What second- and third-generation migrants actually listen to or consume is largely irrelevant to this nostalgia, as they will be nostalgic about it anyway.

It is exactly this nurtured and ersatz nostalgia that enables intracommunal institutions (church and school) to breed nostalgic monsters, hooked and dependant on the placebos they prescribe. This is a prime example of *placebo nostalgia*.

\(^{12}\) *Sousta* Dance (translation: Spring Dance). It originates from the martial dance of Pyrichios in Greece. In modernity it is considered mostly a Cretan and Pontian form because of its lyre instrumentation, and sounds nothing like the example we heard.

\(^{13}\) Women’s *Karchilamas* (translation: Women’s suite dance). The *Karchilamades* or *antikristi* are a suite of female/male dances that Greek Cypriots most closely identify with. When migrants refer to women’s *karchilamas*, they refer to the women’s third suite.
Conclusion

Older expatriates acknowledge the obligation to maintain their cultural heritage and be *model migrants*; that is their *place, home* no matter if it seems misplaced and precarious to outsiders — it makes (belonging) sense to them, and that is what counts. Their genuine nostalgia and their patriarchal social reality, understanding and practice mean they construct their *place* by getting involved in their community, either by participating in committees or by donating money. This involvement is also understood by them to guard, Cerberus-like, their cultural continuation in reply to the fears of social degeneration thrown at them by those they look up to. These involvements are the conscious (a)politics that migrants do.

My research in Birmingham suggests that the churches not only understand these social needs of older migrants, but that they also to an extent amplify them for their own financial and nationalistic benefit. This is done by offering a plethora of opportunities for the migrants to put into action their need of nostalgia and the patriarchal family model through fostering and creating social hierarchies within the migrant community where migrants can show their nostalgia through cultural resources. To those who do not intrinsically have such needs, usually third- and subsequent generation migrants, the church attempts to make sure they acquire them by using contemporary cultural means (i.e. songs in mp3 format, or Xbox games tournaments) to pull them in, and encouraging the older males to act as watchdogs for them in case they attempt to escape this social reality; by announcing fears of social degeneration at every opportunity within and outside the church (as recorded through research); and by attracting them through free meals (paid for by older male members) or financial aid when in need. This process is also manifested within Orthodox publications in the UK, and the more localised ones in Birmingham, both accessible very easily to migrants. Christos rejects these notions, and he explains he advises his sons to pay less attention to the Greek school and more to their regular school, as he does not want them to acquire too inflated a notion of their Greekness and so be automatically estranged from Turkish-Cypriots. As an expression of meta-diasporic modernity, he hopes both of his sons will fully assimilate into the British social reality.

This paper covers only a micro-scale of the placebo nostalgias that these migrants are prescribed: nostalgias that include fears of hierarchical, patriarchal and socio-cultural degeneration. The social pressure that older migrants experience makes them unquestionably *shop-front dummies* for the church’s clothes of Greekness, embodied window displays of ethically correct migrant behaviours for the younger migrant generations, who though they hybridise their cultural heritage or even assimilate into British popular culture still harbour fears and guilts for not being the migrants they ought to be. They consider themselves Greek, forgetting the...
Cypriot in their national mix and excising it completely from their vocabulary, as everything is Greek to them and that is all there is to it. Placebo or not, the Church’s prescriptions successfully breed nostalgic monsters of the *all is Greek to me* kind.
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List of Interviews


Diaspora Mobilisation and Belonging in the UK: The Case of the Iraqi Diaspora in the Aftermath of the 2003 Intervention

Oula Kadhum

Abstract

Explanations for diaspora mobilisation in the literature have traditionally focused on the myth of return, long-distance nationalism, identity maintenance, development of the homeland and as a reaction to discrimination in hostland contexts. Yet less explored and understood is diaspora mobilisation and belonging in hostlands where diasporas have felt included in the body politic. After conducting fieldwork in London with 27 diaspora members from Iraq’s multi-ethnic society about their political mobilisation in the aftermath of the 2003 intervention, I argue that diaspora mobilisation in multicultural Britain has reinforced their loyalty and sense of belonging to Britain due to their a) freedom to politically mobilise, b) ability to assert their ethnic and religious identities, and c) ability to travel back and forth due to their dual citizenship. In doing so it has encouraged their political transnationalism as they feel included in the political community. Simultaneously it has allowed members of the diaspora to reconcile their hybrid identities, increase their sense of belonging to their country of settlement and re-strategise political

14 Oula Kadhum’s research investigates in a comparative perspective the differences in political mobilisation of the Iraqi diaspora in the UK, Germany and Sweden. She is interested in exploring how the make up of diaspora, citizenship regimes, and foreign policy of host-lands affect the political opportunities and constraints for diaspora mobilisation following the 2003 international military intervention in Iraq. After successfully completing her 1st year review Ph.D. process, Oula accomplished the first phase of her field research in London, UK in the autumn of 2013. She conducted 27 semi-structured interviews among diaspora members of different ethnicities and sects that make up Iraq today. These include Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and Assyrians, as well as Iraqis who self-identify as Shia, Sunnis, Christians and secular, and stem from a range of political and social backgrounds. Plans in the near future include conducting focus groups in the UK, and continuing field research visits in Sweden and Germany in the autumn of 2014. Oula has written a paper on the Iraqi diaspora in multicultural Britain, and presented it at the ISA annual meeting in March 2014 in Toronto, Canada. Prior to commencing her PhD at Warwick Oula completed her Masters degree at the School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London, where she wrote her dissertation on the gender impact of British security policy in Iraq following the 2003 intervention. She also completed a Post Graduate Certificate in Education at Kings College London and a Bachelors degree in French and Hispanic Studies at Queen Mary, University of London.
mobilisation, especially in light of Iraq’s worsening security situation. Senses of belonging it is argued in this paper are thus important for understanding motivations for diaspora mobilisation as well as the type of transnationalism that it encourages in different contexts and periods of time.

**Introduction**

Diaspora mobilisation has spawned a vast and eclectic literature encompassing the complex components of how and why diasporas mobilise towards a country they no longer live in. Explanations for diaspora mobilisation in the literature have provided some answers and have largely focused on the homeland through the myth of return (Safran 2007; Cohen 1996), long-distance nationalism (Skrbiš 1999; Glick-Schiller 2005; Anderson 2006), development of the homeland (Orozco and Lapointe 2004; Lubkemann 2008; Brinkerhoff 2008) or a reaction to discrimination in hostland contexts (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992; Basch et al. 1994; Koopmans and Statham 2001). Yet while these theories provide homeland oriented explanations for diaspora mobilisation or attribute it to the negative impact of hostile hostland environments they neglect to take into account how a diaspora’s changing sense of belonging in the hostland can also be a motivating factor and in turn shape diaspora mobilisation.

In this paper I hope to contribute to this gap in the literature by offering an insight into the case of diaspora mobilisation amongst the Iraqi diaspora in Britain. After conducting fieldwork in London with diaspora members from Iraq’s multi-ethnic society, a new sense of belonging is discerned amongst the diaspora members interviewed towards the hostland and with it new strategies for political mobilisation emerge in the aftermath of the 2003 US led intervention. For many, the intervention was the first time they were physically able to return to Iraq since their migration. Yet as the possibility of return waxed and waned due to the worsening security situation, politically active diaspora members began to negotiate their identities and belonging to their adopted country.

Iraqis have been migrating to Britain since the 1950s as students or business people (*Now We Are Here: A survey of the Profile, Structure, Needs, Hopes and Aspiration of the Iraqi Community in Britain*, 1995). Since the late 1970s however, there have been waves of migration as a result of the Iran-Iraq war, economic sanctions on Iraq, the First Gulf War, and the Shia uprisings in 1991 as well as the 2003 intervention (Sassoon 2009). While a middle class who were sending their children to study and work in Britain characterised earlier waves of migration, later waves saw the rise of Iraqi refugees, political exiles and asylum seekers. Today it is estimated that there are between 250,000 to 400,000 Iraqis in Britain.
In the Autumn of 2013 and early 2014 I conducted semi-structured interviews with 27 Iraqis from the diaspora who have been politically active towards Iraq since the intervention in 2003. The sample of interviewees were selected from Iraqi migrant organisations, various political parties, and grassroots organisations and individuals representing the majority of Iraq’s ethnicities and religions to include, Arab, Kurd, Assyrian, Turkmen, Faili Kurds as well as those from the Shia and Sunni sect, Christians, secularists and atheists. I talked to 20 men and 7 women about their diaspora mobilisation towards Iraq and their integration in the UK. The diaspora members I interviewed were a mixture of labour migrants, political exiles, asylum seekers, and refugees who have been in the country for at least 15 years and at most 57 years. While the views of the respondents represent only a sample of those represented in the Iraqi community, they nevertheless express a particular outlook that exists and which may be helpful for understanding how a sense of belonging in the UK has been constructed and reconstructed following the 2003 intervention and how it has encouraged diaspora mobilisation.

I argue that diaspora mobilisation in Britain has reinforced diaspora members’ loyalty and sense of belonging to Britain due to their a) freedom to politically mobilise, b) ability to assert their ethnic and religious identities, and c) ability to travel back and forth due to their dual citizenship. In doing so it has increased their integration into the country and allowed members of the diaspora to reconcile their hybrid identities and sense of belonging as exhibited through their modified mobilisation strategies. Their futures are increasingly tied to the host country rather than their country of origin, especially in light of the worsening political and security situation in Iraq.

This paper will commence by offering explanations for diaspora mobilisation as presented in the literature followed by a discussion on the concept of belonging. By bringing these two disparate literatures together it is shown that diaspora mobilisation cannot be understood fully without an appreciation of where the diaspora in question’s sense of belonging lies. Simultaneously, the type of belonging that a diaspora feels in their hostlands will dictate the type of political mobilisation that a diaspora may engage with. Therefore a correlational relationship exists between the concepts of diaspora mobilisation and belonging that further needs to be examined. It is the purpose of this paper to advance this field of knowledge by looking at how the two concepts have evolved over time through the case study of the Iraqi diaspora in the period of 2003 to 2013.

The empirical section of this paper will be interwoven alongside the literature and

15 The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013ERC grant agreement number 284198.
lays out the argument drawn from original interviews with the Iraqi diaspora in London. I show how the diaspora’s sense of belonging in the UK has increased their political activism and has reconciled their hybrid identities and renegotiated their sense of belonging to their homeland and hostland as exhibited through their re-directed mobilisation strategies.

**Diaspora Mobilisation**

Before entering a discussion on diaspora mobilisation, defining the concept of diaspora is key for identifying the group of individuals under study. The concept of diaspora continues to be contested and challenged, not surprisingly because it has been used to connote any population which is de-territorialised and has transnational links (Vertovec 1997). The term has been conflated with various migrant categories without specifying exactly what unifies them as a diaspora. Does a refugee, labour migrant or asylum seeker always form part of a diaspora? Not necessarily. Forming a part of a diaspora is rooted not so much in displacement as the traditional literature originally stressed (Cohen 1996; Safran 1991, Butler 2001), but rather in having a sense of belonging to an imagined homeland in the same sense in which Anderson intended his ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 2006). This paper therefore draws its definition of diaspora following Sökefeld, that “diaspora” exists only in the self imaginations of people who view themselves as belonging to a collective “homeland” community. I also follow Lyons and Mandaville (2010) within this definition to members who mobilise politically to affect change in their country of origin through either a) migrant organisations, hostland institutions or individual mobilisation b) those who mobilise directly in the homeland through organisations, homeland governments or individual initiatives. Consequently, and in agreement with Brubaker it is more useful to talk of diasporic ‘stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices,’ so that we can better study empirically support for any given project within that “diasporas” constituency (2005, 13).

If diaspora is socially constructed from a homeland imaginary it’s political practices occur in a hostland reality. It is for this reason that the absence of belonging from current explanations of the study of diaspora mobilisation is problematic. This is because the particular ‘stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices,’ that diasporas adopt are shaped by their sense of belonging. Put simply, the approaches and attitudes that diasporas take to mobilisation do not occur in isolation of their hostland environments.

Nevertheless current explanations for diaspora mobilisation have focussed largely on homeland ethnic identities and orientations for understanding diaspora mobilisation. The theories presented in the diaspora literature include the myth of return; the idea that diasporas carry within them a desire to one day go back to
their homeland. This myth is cultivated from what Skrbis calls ‘symbolic economies of memory and imagination.’ (Skrbis 2001, 134), and perpetuated in the diaspora which is used as a focus for political mobilisation (Safran 1991, 87, Sheffer 2003).

A second theory sees diasporas as long-distance nationalists, mobilising towards their still perceived homeland. Their identity is defined by a sense of belonging to this perceived territory, which acts as a focus and inspires feelings of kinship and community (Glick-Schiller, 2005), which motivates action. Identity maintenance, and its assertion, thus become far more important in the lives of ethnic communities who are geographically distant from their ancestral homelands. As Shain puts it, diasporas may be ‘geographically outside the state, but identity-wise perceived [by themselves, the homeland, or others] as ‘inside the people’-[and] attach great importance to kinship identity.’ (Shain and Barth 2003, emphasis my own). As the bountiful literature on ethnic interest groups and ethno-nationalism attests, ethnic identifications are powerful modalities for diaspora mobilisation (Shain, 1994, 1999; Shain and Barth, 2003; Shain, 2007; Wayland, 2004; Adamson and Demetriou, 2007; Baser, 2012) Famous examples include the independence struggles of the Kurds and the Palestinians, secession as in the case of the Kosovars or the Tamil Tigers or the maintenance of territorial hegemony as in the case of the Jewish diaspora.

Lastly, motivations for homeland nation building may not always be nationalistic in nature. Indeed for some diasporas the desire to see developmental change provides the impetus for political action. These may be in the form of remittances that go towards supporting families (African Development Bank Group 2011; Koser 2007; Lubkemann 2008) or even funding armed groups or opposition movements (Wayland 2004; Bercovitch 2007; Koser 2007). Or through the transfer of knowledge and ideas (Patterson 2006; Kapur 2010) or collaborations with homeland governments (Ragazzi 2014; Gamlen et al. 2013) or NGOS, between diaspora organisations and hostland governments (Brinkerhoff 2008; Van Houte et al. 2013) or NGOS, or indeed a combination of the above.

Diaspora mobilisation has also been attributed to discrimination in hostlands which encourages the maintenance of homeland identities (Basch et al. 1994) and is said to encourage political transnationalism (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001; Koopmans and Statham 2001) because immigrants are unable to integrate into their hostland societies (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992) and therefore cling to their homeland identities. This argument is certainly valid and there is much empirical evidence to suggest that communities who are considered ‘other’ will have more transnational politicised identities (Wald 2008). However, this presents only the negative side of hostland experiences rather than addressing how a positive sense of belonging in hostland contexts may also lead to a political transnationalism of a
very different nature.

In sum these theories are heavily focussed on diaspora's sense of belonging to the homeland, it's territory and ethnicity, and how this motivates their political mobilisation, or the negative experiences of hostland contexts, which encourage a homeland orientation. These theories do not take into account that belonging is an ever-changing, multidimensional process, that hostlands may cultivate positive senses of belonging which may also impact identity formation and consequently motivate action. I argue that these theories while part explaining diaspora formation, only go so far in explaining diaspora mobilisation. I contend that homeland identities do not always predate political action. Interviews conducted with diaspora members in London reveal for example that inclusion into the hostland political community has increased their sense of belonging and has motivated diaspora's political action. In the next section I draw on the concept of belonging for elucidating how understanding its multidimensional nature can help us appreciate how and why diasporas mobilise and which in turn further reinforces a sense of belonging.

Iraqi Diaspora and Belonging in the UK

An important concept in the diaspora literature is that of belonging. How do diasporas who have left behind a set of attachments to their country of origin view their sense of belonging? Is it simply attached to their past or displaced by new locales and identifications in the hostland? Or is it indeed a composite or shared belonging that has come to define their diasporic existence?

The diaspora literature has depicted diaspora belonging in two very contradictory ways. In the first, diaspora belonging is said to be fixed to a group or territory and privileges ethnic and national attachments and shared collective memories (Safran 1991; Cohen 1996). Belonging to the homeland is nurtured in the diaspora via cultural and symbolic events and practices that continue to solidify ethnic diaspora identities in the hostland across generations (Bauböck 2010). This sense of belonging places its emphasis on the homeland territory and imagination.

More convincingly, diaspora belonging is depicted as a hybrid experience of mixed social, cultural and political attachments of not necessarily “where you’re from” but also “where you are at”, a combination of roots and routes (Gilroy 1991, cited from Kalra et al. 2005; Clifford 1997) that can be a source of tension, ambivalence and contradiction for many migrants (Gardner 1993), a place of “in-betweeness” (Waite and Cook 2011). Vertovec captures the essence of this hybrid experience as a duality in perspective which he labels ‘bifocality’, which relates to an identity that is both ‘here’ and ‘there’, reflected in people’s transnational practices and lives (Vertovec 2004).
The literature however falls short in showing the view through the bifocal lens on either side and what sense of belonging is attached to ‘here’ and which one to ‘there’? What shapes this vision and sense of belonging and what types of belongings are linked to the homeland and the hostland? Diasporic belonging is thus a continual process rather than an “affiliation to a singular idea of ethnicity or nationalism, but rather about the multi-vocality of belongings” (Kalra et al. 2005, 29). This was certainly evidenced in the majority of diaspora members I interviewed. When asked whether they felt British or Iraqi, the majority answered both seeing their senses of belonging to each not as incompatible but rather split in complex ways as I shall later explain. In order to understand how this multi-vocal sense of belonging may be constructed the concept of belonging needs to be further unpacked.

Belonging is a term often conflated with identity and for good reason. The two concepts are closely related as one is characterised by the conception of self and that of others (Vertovec 2001), while the other evokes an inclusive and exclusive discourse of who is accepted and who is not. To make this distinction more plainly, a woman for example who identifies with the Pakistani Muslim community may not feel she belongs to it because she is also a lesbian. Her homosexuality may contravene the norms of the community and therefore lead to exclusion and a sense of not belonging. Therefore identity and belonging while closely related do not always go hand in hand.

The belonging of migrants in the literature has been approached through two distinct dimensions; one that relates to the formal and political and the other to the social and emotional. The political dimension includes citizenship rights and practices and boundary demarcations of who is in and out (Lynn-Ee Ho 2006; Mee and Wright 2009). Meanwhile it has also been associated with where one feels at home and the social and emotional attachments that certain places evoke (Yuval-Davis et al. 2006; Waite and Cook 2011). It is here that a sense of belonging transcends territorial states and can encompass faraway places, imagined or real, as well as transnational social fields or spaces (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992; Pries 1999) that span more than one place.

Bringing the two aspects together, Anthias rightly points out that ‘to belong is to be accepted as part of a community, to feel safe within it and to have a stake in the future of such a community of membership. To belong is to share values, networks and practices and not just a question of identification’ (Anthias 2008, 8). Belonging is therefore about access, participation, and rights but also about the social and emotional bonds that memberships create (Anthias 2008). It is therefore more accurate to see belonging as encompassing ‘a sense of belonging, practices of belonging and formal structures of belonging’ (Fenster 2005 quoted in Mee and Wright 2009, 773). Conceptions of belonging are thus both territorial and
deterritorialised.

Following the interviews conducted with politically active diaspora members in London, it was clear that the concept of belonging required further problematizing since it is not a one-dimensional concept but rather various facets in different contexts can contribute to a space of belonging. In the case of the Iraqi diaspora in London, there was a very strong sense of belonging to Britain in a general sense that stemmed from a gratitude for allowing them a chance to live in comfort and security and an opportunity to live and work with integrity. Respondent 7 says: “The British population doesn’t have hate against foreigners. They have respect for others. And as for us political refugees we were able to maintain our dignity here. We were able to live, and have integrity and stability”. This positive perception of British society was echoed by the majority of respondents who repeatedly used words including ‘tolerant, fair, just, equality, human rights and democracy’ to describe British society and system which made them feel they belonged. These were values regarded with much admiration amongst the Iraqi diaspora members I interviewed and were the principles that they wanted to transport back to Iraq through their political action.

Another important and recurring theme was Britain’s multiculturalism. This was lauded for its success in giving ethnic minorities rights and it was a policy many hoped could be transported to Iraq where its diverse population would benefit and be protected. On the other hand, for some diaspora members multiculturalism in Britain provided a mode of incorporation that has allowed them to carve out their own sense of belonging without socially integrating by retaining homeland social ties and relationships rather than fully assimilating. Respondent 8 exemplifies this point, when I asked whether he felt socially integrated into the UK he responded: “Socially no. UK is multiculturalism and it accepts this. This is the nice thing about Britain. Yet the integration has happened. I am a Muslim, Kurd, British and Iraqi. There is no objection to this. In this respect I feel this is my country and I have loyalty towards it.”

Multiculturalism thus was understood as a way of allowing ethnic communities to live in social separation while being committed to the state and its laws. For the majority of the Iraqi diaspora thus their sense of belonging to Britain was to the state, system and its institutions rather than its nation. Respondent 10 says:

I can’t complain from a lack of relationships, but between us who are immigrants and British society there are no strong relationships, because the Iraqi community is like the other communities, all retreating into themselves, so communication that exists is only between us and British formal institutions; the doctor, the hospital or any official department like a
bank. This is the relationship.

In other words on an institutional level the Iraqi community was integrated but not socially. Indeed, the majority of respondents felt that their sense of belonging was half and half – the halves that belonged to the social and emotional belonged to the homeland while the halves that belonged to the hostland were described as ‘institutional’, ‘cultural’ or ‘intellectual’ and, as would gradually become apparent, political.

Others meanwhile were conscious of and deliberately retained their social and emotional sense of belonging to their homeland so as not to lose their ethnic or religious identities, especially for the second generation. The latter point strengthening Sheffer’s argument that even in tolerant societies diaspora may not wish to fully integrate into their adopted countries (Sheffer 2006, 243).

A few respondents drew attention to other facets of life in Britain, which presented obstacles to their sense of belonging. Firstly, while the UK welcomed them and their immigration trajectories were relatively smooth, the UK did nothing to integrate them into the country. Respondent 5 says,

> The problem is when you come to the UK they welcome you but they do nothing to integrate you, you have to do it. It's up to you… I think for me the four years were the hardest years in my life in the UK, in terms of money, the standard of life, the house health issues and also communication and finding out how the system works and what's my rights, what are other people's rights, what's my neighbour's rights it was really difficult and there was nothing in Kurdish or in Arabic I could start with at that time.

This lack of integration help in the UK was a recurring theme amongst the interviewees who felt that there were no British organisations to help them understand the system and society. When I asked interviewees what did help them to integrate the majority referenced Iraqi friends and welfare organisations, which directed their integration towards their ethnic communities.

Secondly, some respondents claimed they felt a low level of racism and discrimination towards Muslims. One respondent described this as a dualism in British society, where one face is polite and civil, while the other is less openly racist. Other

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16 Respondent 10  
17 Respondent 5  
18 Respondent 8  
19 Respondent 22 and 23  
20 Respondent 11
respondents mentioned discrimination at work due to their daughter and son’s Muslim identity. One respondent mentioned how difficult it was for his daughter who wore a hijab to get a job\textsuperscript{21}, while another claimed that despite his son being white and British looking, finding a job was difficult due to his Muslim name, while he himself had been passed up for promotion for the last 14 years even though he outdid his colleagues in terms of targets at work\textsuperscript{22}. Security wise, another respondent felt a different treatment at passport control due to his Muslim name and non-white appearance despite having a British passport\textsuperscript{23}. Interestingly, though only a few respondents mentioned or used the word Islamaphobic, those that did tended to be the more practicing Muslims.

For the majority of the Iraqi diaspora members interviewed, their social and emotional sense of place was very much rooted to their homeland identities and imaginaries yet politically a sense of place and belonging was strongly felt in the UK. How and why was this the case? This paper develops the idea of practices of belonging that Fenster 2005 has alluded to, to relate how belonging can also be constituted through political participation and an inclusionary politics of belonging. In this way it is argued that political rights and their access through citizenship can conversely increase a sense of belonging to a hostland and create a sense of belonging that is “plurilocal and multiscalar”, i.e the idea of belonging may reside in different contexts and constituted at different scales (Staeheli and Nagel 2006, 1602). Staeheli and Nagel argue that in this way belonging is allied to the idea of ‘home-making’ where acts ‘through repetition begin to take on symbolic and affective meaning’ (2006, 1602), reconstituting the spaces and places of belonging and citizenship.

Therefore a sense of belonging is also determined by the ‘translocal positionality’ of diasporas, i.e. the context and the meanings they offer specific individuals and groups at particular moments in time (Anthias 2008). Indeed the manner in which migrants are received, and their positionality vis à vis hostland political, economic and cultural institutions and society largely shapes their sense of belonging through their communicated and experienced exclusive and inclusive realities (Anthias 2008).

So how has the UK’s Multicultural citizenship regime shaped the Iraqi diaspora’s sense of belonging and in what way? Has this had a bearing on diaspora mobilisation? In the first place the literature tells us that citizenship increases political participation of immigrants because it draws its commonality not from an ethnic homogeneity

\textsuperscript{21} Respondent 11
\textsuperscript{22} Respondent 27
\textsuperscript{23} Respondent 23
but rather shared political values (Kymlicka 1995). Having experienced very little of this under the Baath regime, where public political opposition could lead to imprisonment or death, freedom of expression and more specifically political expression in Britain is strongly valued by the Iraqi community. It has increased the diaspora’s sense of belonging and admiration for their hostland because they have been able to participate politically and have their voices heard. What they lacked in political rights in the homeland was compensated for in the hostland. All respondents felt that they had open access to political institutions and had political rights in Britain. Respondent 14 says ‘The only thing I feel in the UK is I am free and a human being. Unlike Iraq then and now…I have complete rights here’. This sentiment was echoed repeatedly by the diaspora members I interviewed and was demonstrated in the widespread political activities and through the political institutions they were in contact with. These included lobbying or meeting with parliamentarians in the House of Commons, formulating petitions, organising demonstrations outside Downing Street or the Iraqi Embassy in London. Meanwhile Iraqi political party representatives and migrant organisations who were involved in political work had various connections with Members of Parliament, to whom they updated and clarified the political situation in Iraq and lobbied regularly regarding abuses of ethnic, human and democratic rights in Iraq. Some had even organised trips for MPs to visit Iraq to view for themselves the human rights abuses they were lobbying against. Respondent 8 said: “When they [MPs] support us this makes us feel more integrated”. The institutional access and ease to the government, parliament and MPs and the consequent support that the interviewed diaspora members received through their political mobilisation has increased their sense of belonging to the UK because of its inclusivity.

Indeed in agreement with scholars who have argued that inclusive citizenship regimes encourage diaspora mobilisation (Wayland 2004; Van Houte et al. 2013; Baser 2012), this study affirms this hypothesis. By providing minorities a stake in the political community, they give diaspora communities the opportunity and access to formal political institutions and the ability to mobilise towards homeland issues. Inclusive citizenship models in the words of Shain are ‘weak’ and ‘permeable to societal influences on its decision-making process’ (Shain 2007, 143) the War on Terror, and massive shifts in migration patterns, analysts and scholars are finally being forced to reckon with the limitations of the old territorial models of global politics. As these and other political and economic changes continue to defy national borders, interested readers owe it to themselves to appreciate the power of kinship and diaspora——two of the most powerful factors in transnational politics today. Yossi Shain’s essential new work replaces the old, nationally bounded image of international politics (a vestige of the age of empire and the rise of the nation-state. This allows diasporas to act as ethnic interest groups in their host societies.
Workshop Proceedings: Sense of Belonging in a Diverse Britain

(Shain 1999). Inclusive citizenship regimes therefore facilitate diaspora mobilisation through a mechanism of accessibility.

Secondly, multicultural states recognise minority rights by law, providing the legal means for ethnic or religious identities to practise their individual and collective rights. This creates an inclusive political community, offering more opportunities for citizens to make crosscutting political claims. This was evidenced among the Iraqis I interviewed. Their ability to mobilise politically on behalf of their ethnic or religious identities has also contributed to their sense of belonging to the UK. Several respondents drew attention to this point by referencing the fact that religious tolerance in the UK was a great source for wanting to integrate24. Another respondent stated the acceptance of people from different nations, religions and ethnicities made him feel more loyal to Britain25. While another respondent26 stated that there was no objection in multicultural Britain to his multiple identities as a “Muslim, Kurd, British and Iraqi”. Britain’s multicultural policies not only advocate tolerance of ethnic and religious identities but also protect them under the law supported by acts such as the 2006 Equality Act, the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act and the 1998 Human Rights Act. For many Muslim respondents from Iraq’s multi-ethnic community the ability to exercise their ethnic and religious rights increased their sense of belonging to Britain and loyalty to the country. As the literature has rightly documented, for immigrants multicultural citizenship’s rejection of assimilation and recognition of their cultural identities (Joppke 1999, 13) is welcoming and encourages their inclusion as citizens in the body politic, as at least in theory there are no barriers to their participation. These polyethnic rights help integrate ethnic or religious minorities by allowing them to express their differences without it obstructing their access to the economic and political institutions of the larger society (Kymlicka 1995). In contrast, Respondent 3 with French citizenship, who now lives in the UK explained that the French assimilationist model neither encouraged his integration, with its lack of tolerance for ethnic and religious identities, nor did it permit any opportunities to politically mobilise as a result.

Thirdly, the holding of dual citizenship in Iraq and the United Kingdom has allowed politically active diaspora members to travel back and forth between the two countries and maintain a sense of belonging to their hostland through a circular migration instead of return. One diaspora member recalled shuttling to Iraq 12-14 times a year, though many had significantly reduced their travels to Iraq in light of the instability pervading the country. In reality the duality of citizenship was merely

24 Respondent 22
25 Respondent 2
26 Respondent 8
nominal as it was only practiced in the UK where sovereignty and state institutions are effectively run in contrast to the failing Iraqi state and its defunct institutions.

Furthermore, open access to citizenship allows a two pronged approach whereby diasporas can travel to their homelands and mobilise whilst simultaneously lobbying their host state governments (Wayland 2004). Certainly dual citizenship, has given politically active diaspora members a permanent lifeline to Britain where their sense of belonging would increase and evolve further. One Minister who still serves in Iraq even expressed a reverse nostalgia for the UK stating, “I never cut off from the UK either, even now when the airplane enters Heathrow I feel I’m coming back to my roots”. The rooting analogy traditionally used to connote the homeland now transplanted to the hostland underscoring the rhizomatic nature (Malkki 1992) and unrootedness of roots.

The above helped those interviewed to better understand the British system, their rights as well as mix more widely with British society. This has inevitably contributed to a sense of belonging and institutional integration as diaspora members depart from a passive citizenship to an active one. Respondent 3 says, “I started to meet with more people and also with British people through my work in helping Iraqis so this opened up more opportunities between myself and the British society and British circles”. This feeling also resonated with other respondents who stated that through their political activism towards Iraq they now had friendships and relationships beyond their Iraqi communities and with MPs, civil society organisations and other professionals working on Iraq.

In mobilising towards Iraq many diaspora members were thus able to assert their hybrid identities, and reconcile their sense of belonging. Indeed their political action has provided a channel for bridging the gap, allowing them to feel part of the political community in the hostland while sustaining their emotional and social attachments to the homeland. In mobilising ‘here’ for ‘there’ and bringing their two worlds together to try and make sense of where they belong. Respondent 4 says: “I work in this area because there is no clarity for me of who I am, maybe this feeling of not belonging here or there”. An exchange with Respondent 2 further exemplifies this point:

_Author_: You’ve been settled here for 20 years, why are you motivated to making change in Iraq?
_Respondent 2_: “We want to mix, we want our people in Iraq feel we are still Iraqis. And we need the British the government feel that we are working hard to join them together.
_Author_: So that is your motivation?
_Respondent 2_: “Yeah so it’s not loyalty to British or Iraq but doing this you
will mix them together, and you feel you can feel happy work both sides, not against one against each other.

Author: So you feel that bringing the Iraqi world and British world together will be... [get cut off]
Respondent 2: Yeah, which is what we feel half there and half here, bring them together so you can feel just one.

The concept of belonging in the diaspora literature has therefore either meant a belonging to a territorial homeland where place of origin is prioritised (Anthias 1998) through ethnic and national identifications, or the view advocated in this paper a constructed sense of belonging where old and new identities intersect, evolve continuously to create new attachments. Belonging is thus multivocal, multiscalar and multisited and cannot be viewed in isolation of the diaspora in question’s translocal positionality, i.e. its various relationships with the state(s) and society/(ies) it inhabits.

The theories in the literature that explain diaspora mobilisation are thus inadequate for understanding the picture of diaspora mobilisation in its entirety. Senses of belonging inform the type of mobilisation that diasporas engage in whether it be motivated by a long-distance nationalism, a myth of return psychology or a development agenda. It is therefore problematic to explain diaspora mobilisation as composed of only homeland motivations, but rather senses of belonging to hostlands can shape political action, even motivate it.

**Changing Sense of Belonging and Mobilisation Strategies**

It has been argued thus far in this paper that the Iraqi diaspora members interviewed have reconciled their sense of belonging through political action allowing them to create a space where their past and present identities and loyalties can simultaneously co-exist in harmony. In feeling a sense of belonging to the UK’s political community through a) accessing political institutions, b) exercising their ethnic, religious rights and human rights and c) exercising their dual British-Iraqi citizenship they have been able to mobilise politically towards Iraq. This in turn has allowed them to know the British system better and in a cyclical relationship further increase their sense of belonging. Secondly, that in doing so diaspora members were able to reconcile their ‘here’ and ‘there’ hybrid identities by bridging together their two worlds.

In this section I argue that the diaspora’s transnational practices towards Iraq, has led the diaspora to re-evaluate their future belonging which prior to 2003 was seen to be in Iraq but is now increasingly seen as tied to the UK. This has led to a modification of their mobilisation strategies as return becomes a distant dream and
political action towards the country is increasingly conducted through and in the hostland and not in or via homeland institutions.

Political mobilisation towards Iraq and the ability to travel back and forth has also inadvertently contributed to the majority of the diaspora members interviewed to reconsider where they belong. Prior to regime change narratives of return were commonplace in the diaspora as the large majority awaited Saddam’s fall and a return to the homeland. The British Iraqi diaspora, though not homogenous, was united in its stance against the regime of Saddam Hussein. Despite this, there were strong and diverging opinions about whether a US led intervention was welcome, and how regime change should be carried out, both among the exiled opposition elites (Allawi 2007) and the wider community.

Yet upon going back to Iraq and experiencing for the first time the dilapidated infrastructure, widespread corruption of the political classes, and the worsening security situation the spell of the pre-2003 myth of return was broken. Indeed many skilled professionals who went back to serve the country and help the government in its reconstruction efforts returned disappointed and even insulted by the lack of respect and incentives offered for their expertise. Furthermore, many interviewed and those I met at the Iraqi Governments Migration and Displaced Persons Conference in October, 2013, experienced hostility from Iraqi professionals inside the country who felt insecure about losing their jobs to those coming from abroad. Skilled professionals wanting to rebuild Iraq’s institutions, healthcare, political culture, media and government were thus prevented from those on the inside, who in the words of one respondent “built fences” between them. As a result, there has been a seismic shift in the imagination of home as well as where the future belongs for certain sections of the Iraqi diaspora. As one Iraqi gatekeeper in London explained, “Iraqis have now changed their strategy of return and serving their country to staying put”. An ideology of return has now been displaced by what Brah has called a “homing desire” that is sufficiently sustained through political identification and action towards the homeland (Brah 1996, 177). It has also involved the concept of ‘home-making’ expounded by Staeheli and Nagel (2006), where the act of mobilisation has begun to take on symbolic meaning, changing in effect where the location of belonging is. Respondent 4 says: “I feel the UK is my country, because home is where you feel safe that is your country. Where you can feed your kids and put your head to sleep safely this is your country not a piece of land which is called your country.”

It is important to underline at this point that senses of belonging even within the

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27 I use the term gatekeeper here to denote a well known community leader who is very active in the Iraqi diaspora in London.
Iraqi diaspora are not equally felt neither towards the homeland or hostland. An important consideration is that related to background and gender (Yuval-Davis et al. 2006). For instance the relative peace and stability found in Kurdistan’s burgeoning metropolis has meant that some Iraqi Kurds have had an altogether different relationship with their homeland and hostland as their ability to go back as returnees is far greater than those of Iraqi Arabs or Iraq’s other minorities. One Kurdish Regional Government Minister28 explained to me that over half of the Ministers serving in Iraqi Kurdistan were from the European or US diaspora, especially those who were highly skilled and had language abilities. Yet even within the Kurdish Iraqis interviewed, senses of belonging were very much gendered as one female respondent29 explained that due to the low levels of women’s rights in Kurdistan her sense of belonging to her homeland was only emotional due to her family being there.

The reality of the challenging security and political conditions in Iraq as well as the culture shock and disappointment faced by those who went back to try and help has left many diaspora members frustrated. Yet faced with these adverse conditions many have not given up and continue to have hope. In an attempt to circumvent the security and political conditions inside the country, several respondents had modified their mobilisation strategies either by continuing to make a difference through hostland organisations and institutions or by finding new and innovative channels including social media.

One of the most innovative examples of this redirected strategy I came across was by a very active diaspora member who had worked extensively in the field of human rights and through the London branch of the Al Khoei Foundation had been an advisor to the Iraqi and UK governments since 2003 on various issues related to governance, democracy and human rights issues. He had also attempted to work directly with the Iraqi government to set up conferences to tackle the issues of democracy building, writing of the Iraqi constitution, human rights, fighting terrorism and the Kurdish question. Disillusioned with the ineffectiveness of the political class and culture, he decided that grass-roots activism to influence the minds of the Iraqi people would be more effective in making change in the country and proceeded to establish the Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation in London (HDF). The HDF was set up to build a “peaceful Iraqi society, human rights and civil society”30 from the outside to inside Iraq through live public lectures transmitted from London to Baghdad. Lectures are transmitted through the Al Selam satellite channel of its founder Hussein Al Sadr straight to an Iraqi audience. Furthermore,

28 Respondent 1
29 Respondent 5
30 Human Dialogue Foundation website http://www.hdf-iq.org (Last accessed 1 August 2014)
videos of the lectures are uploaded on Youtube, the foundation website and emails of the links are sent to members in Iraq.

Lectures involving expert speakers have been organised to address issues in the fields of human rights, women’s rights children’s rights, as well as economic, cultural, social and health education. Addressing sectarian violence has also been a strong focus of the foundation. It has sought to unite Iraqis by inviting speakers and members from all backgrounds, giving them the space to interact and act as a model to emulate back home. Much of the work centres around issues of reconciliation and tolerance.

Similarly other organisations, political parties and individuals reported using the Internet and social media as platforms for their political organisation and activity. Since the Internet was opened to Iraqi civilians in 2003 following the intervention, it has offered politically active diaspora members a way to circumvent the security and political challenges and yet directly engage with Iraq, friends, family and audiences inside Iraq. Interviewees were using various social media sites including Facebook for lobbying purposes, awareness campaigns, information sharing and for organising events. Whatsapp was mentioned repeatedly, especially by political parties who were using the application as a means to stay connected to Baghdad headquarters and other branches around the globe. Similarly Youtube and video content was used as a means to spread and share information to wider audiences, and quoted as being a powerful tool for the spread of knowledge. At the Migration and Displaced Persons conference in October 2013, video conferencing was also suggested as a means of continuing to hold workshops with people back home.

The move towards the online community has been a shift in the strategies of politically active diaspora members as they adapt to the political situation in Iraq and as Iraqi audiences become more technologically savvy and proficient in their use. Simultaneously as their sense of place and belonging has shifted so too has their targeted audience as organisations, such as the Iraqi Women’s League, have refocused their attention on the hostland and are now starting to upgrade their websites and online presence to serve not only Arabic speakers but also English ones as they look to appeal to hostland audiences and funders.

Beyond the use of media and social media channels, committed diasporans have mobilised on an individual basis by twinning institutions such as universities back in Iraq with those in the UK. Some political parties and organisations even brought Iraqis from the local government to learn and train from their British local council and school politicians on governance issues through training and workshops with political parties in the UK. In mobilising in these ways, these diaspora members were asserting their sense of belonging to the UK by promoting UK institutions and attempting to transfer their institutional or political cultures to Iraq. One
interviewed diaspora member representing an Islamic political party in Iraq organised for delegates from Iraq to have a session with Labour Party members in London, in order to promote a political culture through the UK’s example and increase their knowledge of opposition politics. When I asked what he hoped for them to learn, Respondent 8 replied:

Respondent 8: For example how to develop political members. For them there the most important thing there is ideology and these things but here they discovered and heard from the Labour party that is nothing for a party and a democratic party. This is a private thing. So for me as an Islamic person as part of this party whether I pray or don’t pray this is personal to me. It should not be a condition for membership. This is for example one of the things they talk about there. If we want a political party we need to be like the AK party which is removed from ideology and not to have as a condition for membership whether someone prays…”

Author: So how to build their membership?

Respondent 8: Yes exactly, activists, this is the most important thing not number of members. The Labour party here has fewer members than what we have back home but over there they need to work with society. This is what we want to transport […] Also over there you wouldn’t get someone Shia voting for a Sunni.

Author: So you also want them to be rid of this sectarian mentality?

Respondent 8: You want to create statesmen…I want the person to lead me to be equal. Not that this person is more religious or more Kurdish etc.

Furthermore, other have contributed on an individual basis and have collaborated with international organisations such as Habitat for Humanity International so as to address housing and sanitation needs, or collaborations with Books a Million, to send out of date medical and other educational text books to Iraqi’s National Library. Iraqi diasporans have persevered in their efforts to contribute to Iraq by working around Iraq’s internal structures of power while affirming their sense of belonging to the UK.

**Conclusion**

The case of the Iraqi diaspora in the UK and their mobilisation demonstrates that a sense of belonging is indeed multisited and multiscalar, as Staeheli and Nagel (2006) assert. It also encompasses both formal and informal aspects of belonging that evolve and develop in line with ever changing translocal positionalities in the domestic and the international. What the case of the Iraqi diaspora exposes is that
a sense of belonging is created in both territorial and de-territorialised forms, in the imaginaries and emotional attachments of the homeland and how they intersect with their political manifestations in the hostland. The perceived open access to Britain’s political institutions has developed a sense of belonging to the political community in the hostland, which in turn has encouraged diaspora mobilisation. Simultaneously asserting their sense of belonging through exercising their rights and political participation has served as a motivating factor for their political transnationalism. This has allowed many to reconcile their hybrid identities through an active ‘home-making’ in the hostland with their ‘homing desire’ and emotional attachments to the homeland (Brah 1996). This has especially been the case since the 2003 intervention when activism towards the home country was possible. Yet a myth of return narrative was quickly dispelled due to the exacerbating security situation inside Iraq, the corruption of the political classes as well as the idealism of the diaspora returnees. As a result their sense of belonging has been renegotiated and reconciled between their past identities and future ones (Hall 1990), constructing a different sense of belonging to the hostland and homeland. The case study of the Iraqi diaspora in London shows that senses of belonging create the space in which diasporas feel they can act politically, which in itself can encourage mobilisation and chosen strategies.
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Christianity: Oppressor and Liberator? 
Reflections on Black Theology and the 
Religious Experiences of U.K. African-
Caribbean Elders

Josephine Kwhali

Introduction

This paper considers the role of Christianity in the lives and experiences of African-American and British African-Caribbean people. It explores the emergence of black theology in challenging dominant theological discourses, and considers the link between the development of black theology in the United States and wider liberation struggles. The paper discusses the way in which Christian teaching was used as an oppressive instrument during the centuries of the transatlantic slave trade in order to justify the subjugation and dehumanisation of black people. The paper identifies the process by which ‘Bible talk’ has been partially reclaimed by black theologians in order to affirm black people's equality and human worth.

The paper then moves on to consider the experiences of a group of African-Caribbean Christian elders who migrated to the U.K. during the late 1950s and 60s. It explores the role of Christianity during their childhood in the Caribbean and their early experiences of U.K. churches where they suffered rejection and humiliation. Despite this, the elders retained a sense of ‘belonging’, not necessarily within individual churches or within the UK, but as a full and God-valued part of the human race. The paper questions whether black theology has relevance within the U.K. and outside of the African-American historical context from which it emerged. It charts the contribution made by British based black theologians, who

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have drawn upon black people’s experiences of racism, exclusion and sexism to explain why Christianity remains important to many African-Caribbean people at a time when overall church attendance in the U.K. has been in decline.

Overlaying the discussion is a recognition of the link between Christianity, theological understanding of ‘biblical truth’ and racial subjugation and liberation. It portrays Christianity as a powerful instrument for both good and ill, as its teachings were used to dehumanise black people suffering the brutality and savagery of slavery and subsequently ‘reclaimed’ by some of the descendents of those who were brutalised by its teaching. Through a chequered and often hidden historical and racialised religious experience, many African- American and Caribbean-born descendents have found strength in faith, liberation in their Christian belief, and a sense of belonging in God.

**Black Theology**

Black theology speaks to the suffering of black people (Cone 1975). Whilst rooted in the Christian tradition it attempts to link religious teaching with the historical exploitation of enslaved black people and their descendents. Black theologians seek to facilitate new insights in to the role Christianity has played in both the colonisation of black people and their spiritual and physical liberation.

James Cone’s black theological writings emerged from and related to African-Americans’ three hundred year history of enslavement, segregation and struggle which culminated in the passing of the Civil Rights Act (1964), five years before Cone’s first black theology book was published (Cone 1969). Indeed Erskine (1998) suggests that it was the Civil Rights Movement, led by Rev. Martin Luther King Jnr., that provided the central impetus for black theology and helped turned a movement of resistance in to a distinct academic discipline.

Cone sought to address the question, ‘What does the Christian gospel have to say to powerless black men whose existence is threatened daily by the insidious tentacles of white power?’ (1970, 32). In seeking to answer that question Cone came to define black theology as ‘Christian theological reflection upon the black struggle for justice and liberation’ (1984, 7), linking black theology with other freedom struggles across the world (Erskine 1998).

In his writings, Cone analyses the role of Christianity during slavery and segregation and considers the contribution of the black church and ministry in African Americans’ freedom struggles. Cone challenges white theology for the manner in which the Bible has been used by Ministers to justify the oppression and subjugation of African-Americans, claiming that ‘white theology has not been
involved in the struggle for black liberation. It has been basically a theology of the white oppressor, giving religious sanctions to the genocide of Amerindians and the enslavement of Africans’ (1990, 4 cited in Kwhali 2011, 24).

The conversion to Christianity of enslaved people was not however intended to contribute to ‘black liberation’ – quite the opposite. Wood (1990) examines the relationship between Christianity and racism in America and argues that racial injustice has been both promoted and sustained through much of Christian thought and conduct. According to Ellerbe such promotion is rooted in the conversion of enslaved African people to Christianity across the Americas. She argues that conversion helped to ensure that they ‘became more docile and obedient’ (Ellerbe 1995, 91-92).

Such docility and compliance was to be achieved by reference to the Bible and God’s apparent approval of slavery. Jefferson Davis, the American President claimed in his Inaugural Address (1861) that ‘Slavery was established by decree of Almighty God... it is sanctioned in the Bible, in both Testaments, from Genesis to Revelation...it has existed in all ages, has been found among the people of the highest civilisation, and in nations of the highest proficiency in the arts’.

Ellerbe (1995) agrees that virtually all civilisations had slavery, but that the form it took was very different to the transatlantic slave trade which Jefferson sought to justify. This was not only because of its duration (across four centuries) and the forced deportation from their homelands of unknown millions, but because of the plantation nature of slavery. This, Ellerbe argues, represented a divergence from earlier civilisations and the forms of indentured labour that were more common. Plantations were intentionally created for imported and enforced mass black labour and were the settings where enslaved people and their American born descendents were brutalised, stripped of their names, language, identities, heritage and culture, and denied even the most basic of human rights. Importantly, Ellerbe claims that the transatlantic slave trade was the first occasion where slavery was based upon and legitimised by ‘race’. Ellerbie questions whether such a term even existed before the transatlantic slave trade and the justification that had to be sought for what the French historian Jean-Michael Deveau described as one of “the greatest tragedies in the history of humanity in terms of scale and duration” (2004).

According to Karenga (1993), the biblical justification for slavery and the desire of some slave owners to convert enslaved African people to a particular interpretation of Christian teaching helped to legitimate, reinforce and maintain dominance. Karenga explains:

Thus, in 1743, a white minister prepared a book of dialogue for slaveholders
to teach enslaved Africans which stressed contentment and thanks for being enslaved and ended saying “I can’t help knowing my duty. I am to serve God in that state in which He has placed me. I am to do what my master orders me.” As the indoctrination progressed, then, slaveholders soon discovered that many of the most amenable and submissive enslaved Africans were those who were Christians. (Karenga 1993, 231).

Christianity became not simply a rationale for slavery per se, but also the justification for black people’s collective dehumanisation. Such a rationale could not only be found in biblical text – ‘slaves obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would God’ (Ephesians 6, NIV) – but in the alleged curse of Ham (Genesis 9:25-27). Whilst drunk and asleep, Prophet Noah was viewed naked by his son, Ham, whilst Ham’s two brothers, Sham and Japheth turned away. Upon waking Noah allegedly blessed Sham and Japheth, whilst cursing Ham and declaring that Ham’s son Canaan and all of his descendents were to be slaves. As Ham was darker skinned, the enslavement of black people as inheritors of ‘Ham’s curse’ was legitimated (Haynes 2007).

Drawing upon the work of the Womanist theologian, Kate Cannon, Wimbush argues that ‘the notion of black inferiority was substantiated by depicting blacks as degraded and wretched beings lost in spiritual darkness’ (1993, 359).

The notion of the ‘black heathen’ in need of the civilising force of Christianity is not merely reinforced by Karenga’s claim that slaveholders and other whites ‘believed it was their duty to bring light to benighted and lost heathens’ (1993, 231) but through the missionary zeal that accompanied colonialism and imperial rule as it attempted to convert those of other faiths and religious traditions to Christianity. Wimbush (2003) discusses the manner in which the Bible gave many Europeans the moral justification for viewing themselves as biblical people who were required by God to conquer and convert ‘heathen people’ to their particular version of Christianity: ‘Then Jesus came to them and said, “…. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”’ (Matthew 28:16-20 NIV).

Whist Cone recognised that many black theologians merely absorbed and reproduced white theology and ignored the injustices being perpetuated against black people in the name of Christianity, he used those historical and contemporary injustices and contradictions to explore its key role in the freedom struggles of African-Americans. Whilst many African-Americans converted (or were forcibly converted) to Christianity during slavery and its aftermath, others did not. Whilst there were undoubtedly the docile and compliant of whom Ellerbie (1995) speaks,
the history of the transatlantic slave trade is also characterised by rebellion and resistance, both in its most violent forms and through acts of passive disobedience (McKissack P. & McKissack F. 1996).

Cone was not of course the first black writer to recognise the complex duality of Christianity in black colonial struggle. According to Martin Luther King Jnr. (1978), Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) ‘was the first man on a mass scale and level to give millions of Negroes a sense of dignity and destiny, and make the Negro feel he is somebody.’ King claimed that Garvey spoke of seeing God through ‘black spectacles’ (cited in Cone 1986, 13).

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois (1903) uses poetry and song at the outset of each of his chapters, going on to describe as ‘sorrow songs’ the negro spirituals and gospel music crafted by and sung by black people during their enslavement. The spirituals were, however, more than sorrow songs. As King Jnr. (1964, 86) argued, the Civil Rights activists of the 1950s and 1960s ‘sing the freedom songs today for the same reason the slaves sang them, because we too are in bondage and the songs add hope to our determination that “We shall overcome, Black and white together, We shall overcome someday”’.

Roboteau (1980, 243) argues that negro spirituals were ‘the message of the Christian Gospel... translated into songs in terms of the slaves’ own experiences’. It was those experiences which black writers have sought to theologise and theorise; to take a Bible used by oppressors to legitimise he degradation, enslavement and exploitation of people and nations and to recast aspects of that Bible and Christian teaching in a manner that offers hope, redemption, freedom and equality to subjugated people.

Cone and other African-American theologians who followed (Hopkins 1972, 1986; McCall 1986 1999, 2002; West 1982, 1997) essentially deconstructed the more negative aspects of white religious discourse and mirrored back to its architects the ‘heart’ of Christianity – a faith where all are created equal and where, during Jesus’ sermon on the Mount, followers were told “to do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Matthew 7:12 NIV). Cone argued that God is a ‘God of the Oppressed’ (1975) who identifies with the struggles of suffering people through the sacrifice of Jesus his Son; a Son who challenged the power interests of his day and reached out with love and acceptance to the poor, hurting and marginalised. For Cone (1989), God was not a White God or a European God – ‘God is whatever color God needs to be in order to let people know they’re not nobodies, they’re somebodies’. If God can be any colour God needs to be, perhaps the question might also be posed as to whether God can also be any gender God needs to be? Cone’s early writings
consistently spoke of ‘black men’ and framed black theology in patriarchal terms, privileging men over women. This perspective increasingly came to be challenged as black women writers contributed to black theological discourse.

**From He to We: Womanist Theology**

African-American women are part of the theology of blackness of which male theologians speak. They have equally suffered alongside men the humiliation and degradation of slavery, racial brutality and segregation and been part of the freedom struggles. African-American women, like all black women, potentially bring to black theology a perspective and set of insights that are borne out of the duality of their racialised and genderised experiences of the Christian faith (Williams 1987, 1995).

It is unlikely that many Christians would now support Jefferson’s 1861 claim that the enslavement of people was justified ‘because it says so in the Bible’. Biblical mention of slavery would hopefully be understood in the cultural and social context of the era and circumstances in which such passages were written. African-American churchmen who challenged the validity of taking single lines from the Bible in order to justify and promote the transatlantic slave trade and the racist ideology which sustained it, appeared to make no such argument when it came to the religious subjugation of their African American sisters.

The European-American writer, Walker (1995), speaks of a ‘man made God’ dominating the three Abrahamic faiths. She argues that religious text and interpretation has been used to subjugate women and justify patriarchy. According to Walker, religious patriarchy has not only been used to entrench women’s secondary role within the Christian Church, but to validate male control over women – and indeed violence and misogyny towards them. She argues that men have justified male dominance on the grounds that women were created by God as ‘help mates of men’ and as followers rather than leaders. This view is benignly legitimised by the less than reassuring claim that whilst God created women as equal to men and of equal spiritual worth, God endowed women with different qualities and ascribed them responsibilities and roles that largely placed them first under their father’s and then their husband’s instruction and protection. This may have appeared reasonable in 1400 BC when the first Old Testament writings were arguably scripted and during the last half of the first century when much of the New Testament emerged. Indeed, women were likely to have had so few rights that an instruction to husbands to ‘love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her’ (Ephesians 5, 25 NIV) was possibly quite revolutionary!

Hence black women are juxtaposed between and within race and gender. They
do not however have ‘two selves’, one that is genderised and one that is racialised. They exist and live their lives as ‘one person’ within the racial and gender discourses that shape their opportunities and experiences. Williams speaks of the African-American women’s ‘cultural codes’ that evolve from their experiences as black mothers, partners, daughters and workers who have historically lived within the triple discourses of poverty, racism and sexism. Williams says:

These cultural codes and their corresponding traditions are valuable resources for indicating and validating the kind of data upon which womanist theologians can reflect as they bring black women’s social, religious, and cultural experience into the discourse of theology, ethics, biblical and religious studies. Female slave narratives, imaginative literature by black women, autobiographies, the work by black women in academic disciplines, and the testimonies of black church women will be authoritative sources for womanist theologians (1987, 4).

It was not, however, until African American writers such as Williams (1987, 1993), Cannon (1988) and Grant (1989) began to challenge Cone for his lack of attention to gender, that the contribution of black female theologians became more fully integrated into black theological discourse. This became known as ‘womanist theology’. ‘The term ‘womanist’ was first coined by the African-American author Alice Walker (1983) and then became applied to a particular form of theological discourse’ (Kwhali 2012).

Williams (1993, 67) defines such theology as:

a prophetic voice concerned with the well being of the entire African-American community, male and female, adults and children. Womanist theology attempts to help black women see, affirm and have confidence in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of the Christian religion in the African American community. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impeding black women’s struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women’s and the family’s freedoms and well being. Womanist theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical ability and caste (cited in Kwhali 2012, 25-6).

In challenging black theologians for perpetuating a male constructed concept of ‘black experience’ and claiming black theology as their own, black women have not only contributed to black academic thinking but provided insights into the complex relationship between African-American women and Christianity. Haywood (1995) explains how the autobiographies of black women such as Jarena Lee, Julie Foote and Maria
Stewart who were preaching and doing missionary work in the nineteenth century indicate that the aforementioned gendered and racialized discourse influenced the approaches that they took to reading and interpreting the Bible (cited in Wimbush 2001, 360).

She goes on to discuss how they:

exposed biblical interpretation as a social act, and more specifically an act of social construction. This construction was designed to institutionalize and to maintain power relationships that devalued African Americans and women, while it simultaneously maintained or elevated the positions of those in political and economic power who were to gain from subjugating women and blacks (Wimbush 2001, 360).

Through understanding their ‘God ordained’ oppression as ‘interpretations’ rather than something mandated by biblical text, Chanta suggests those early black women preachers created space for a different analysis of male-normed Christian teaching that challenged dominant discourses concerning the status and role of black men and women. Haywood argues that “African American and particularly African American women have had strong relationships with the Bible despite and perhaps because of its oppressive use, and they have suggested how the Bible in many ways has been transformed or adapted to their lives” (Haywood 1995, cited in Wimbush 2001, 360).

It would of course be erroneous to imagine that black theological analysis has taken the African-American churches by storm, transformed them into beacons of gender inclusive enclaves or influenced black religiosity amongst Christians of African heritage transported to other parts of the Americas. The African-American challenge to ‘traditional’ Christian teaching stemmed from a particular historical context; a context where black people were held in subjugation and were either forced to accept the legitimacy of their enslavement and segregation or to find the theological as well as the political means to resist. Hence if the Bible was used to justify injustice by one set of Christians who claimed ‘truth’ as their own, then it is not perhaps surprising that others sought to challenge and reconceptualise that ‘truth’ in the light of their own understandings and experiences.

Segregation effectively forced the creation of what Erskine (2008) described as ‘black sacred space’. The concept of the ‘black church’ had literal as well as epistemological meaning and was where the oratory, theological and political skills of leaders such as the Revs Martin Luther King Jr, Al Sharpton, Jessie Jackson and Jeremiah Wright were honed. America’s Racial Integrity Act of 1924 established the collective concept of ‘black’ that had been entrenched during slavery and segregation. This included any person with even ‘one drop’ of ‘black’ blood – i.e. people with seven white
and one African heritage great grandparents. African Americans of all shades were black, even where they might have had Europeanised features. Hence, however unintentionally, one of segregation’s legacies was to socially construct and politicise ‘blackness’ to include any person of Sub-Saharan African heritage who was not white and in so doing to establish amongst African Americans a black consciousness and a collective awareness of racial subjugation (Kwhali 2012).

The African-American writer, Burrell (2010) questions black theology. He views Christianity as part of a process that has helped entrench the mythology of black inferiority, encouraging black people into dependency, passivity and benign Christian forgiveness as they wait for heavenly salvation. He challenges black theologians for allegedly reinforcing black people’s identity as bound up with notions of poverty and helplessness and states “The subtle but inescapable conclusion; should we no longer qualify as oppressed and downtrodden, we would no longer be part of the Christian community” (2010, 188). Whilst black theology arose as a theology of resistance against the very poverty and helplessness of which Burrell speaks, his central question is an important one: Does black theology have relevance only at times of acute suffering and within a nation whose past is intrinsically linked with religion and the scarring history of the transatlantic slave trade and state sponsored segregation?

**African Caribbean Christian Elders in the U.K – a Faith Lived, a Journey travelled**

This was a question I was interested to probe in researching the views and experiences of African-Caribbean Christian elders in the U.K. (Kwhali 2012). African-Caribbean elders shared with their African-American cousins elements of a joint history – ancestors taken as slaves from the African continent and forced to work on plantations under the yoke of subjugation. They too had lost names, identities, culture, languages and religions. They too lived in countries colonised by the British and other European powers but, unlike the States, white people were a minority within the Caribbean countries. As Cain and Hopkins (1993) discuss, white colonial power in the Caribbean (and elsewhere) could not be maintained through the physical presence of white people alone. It was also maintained through the racial politics of divide and rule, privileging those of Indian and Chinese descent over those of African heritage and creating an apartheid mentality of blackness by affording greater status and opportunity to fairer skinned black people and those with more obviously anglicised features. Hence, rather than a unified concept of blackness emerging as occurred in the States, African-Caribbean’s were encouraged to view their self worth through a racist prism which placed ‘black’ below those labelled as ‘brown’ ‘high yellow’, ‘red’ etc. - and of course, placing all people of
colour below the allegedly ‘superior’ condition of whiteness.

The narratives (or stories) of the fourteen Caribbean elders I interviewed (Kwhali 2012) afford important insights into the complex relationship between Christianity, racism, belonging and the personal and racial struggle for dignity and equality. At the time of the field work (2011) the elders were aged between seventy one and ninety years. They included twelve single, divorced or widowed participants and one married couple. All of the elders were living in South London and were drawn from two different churches (one Pentecostal and one Baptist) in the area. Thirteen participants were born in Jamaica and one in Grenada.

Elders spoke with eloquence about the role of Christianity during their childhood. It was only as adults that a number came to identify the association between their early religious teaching and racial subjugation. Elders spoke of being presented with visions of a white Jesus, encouraged to view their colonial reality as God ordained and largely taught by white male Ministers, or ‘approved’ black preachers who had been theologically trained in mainstream theology.

Elders viewed their early churched experiences with considerable warmth and affection. In many cases they did not necessarily understand much of the preaching. What they did recall was the incredible sense of belonging that was forged by their local church and congregations. All of the elders had grown up in poor and largely rural communities. Colonial education was limited and there were few organised outlets for fun and socialising. The church provided people with an opportunity each week to dress up in smart clothes, gather with other children in the village, sing songs they loved and to play outside while the adults conversed after the service. There were examples where elders with no formal schooling had learnt to read through Sunday School and many others where singing and performing skills were honed. (Kwhali 2012, 75-78).

The Black British African-Caribbean theologian Reddie (2001) speaks of the need to understand British Caribbean elders in the context of their religious belief and this is undoubtedly true. As one elder commented, virtually everybody in the area went to church and was baptised and / or confirmed into the Christian faith; it wasn’t about choice, it was just a normative part of their lives. Religion was important to them, not only because of the social role performed by the churches, but because as children, the elders were affirmed in their humanity by coming to know that God created all people as equal and loved them without condition. Elders also spoke of learning important values such as forgiveness, sharing and kindness. This collective sense of belonging is best summed up in John’s words: ‘Church was good to us children. We belong… not just to our family, but to each other. We know God loved us… we knew we should be kind to each other and
obey our parents. We had other adults to talk to... I think we feel secure and cared about’ (Kwhali 2012, 77).

Indeed, had this group of elders remained in the Caribbean, they would have undoubtedly retained this sense of belonging, regardless of whether they had ultimately gone on to question or not the specificities of theological teaching. They did not however remain. From the 1950s onwards factors associated with poverty, a spirit of youthful adventure and / or personal circumstances drew the elders to the U.K. This established another important difference between them and their African-American cousins.

European Americans have no greater claim to the United States than African-Americans as neither groups’ ancestral heritage lies on her shores. Both groups became ‘American’ through the combined forces of conquest, deportation, slavery and the genocide of Amerindians. Hence, however much African-American elders may have been subjugated within their country of birth, it was the country of their birth and neither they nor their forefathers and mothers could realistically be told to ‘go home’.

By contrast, the African Caribbean elders came to the U.K. from a black majority country still emerging from the yoke of British colonial rule. They came to the ‘Mother country’ as young adults and as part of the post war British Empire/Commonwealth migration that helped to rebuild the country after the second world war and to staff its newly emerging National Health Service and Industries (Brown and Hanna 1996). They spoke the language and practiced the religion of the British and were schooled (if schooled at all) in British-interpreted history. Whilst the elders may have believed they were coming to a country in which they were legal citizens and would be welcomed they quickly realised that whatever emotional attachment they may have formed to the ‘Mother’ was largely unreciprocated. They found themselves in a foreign land, viewed as immigrants and confronted by the stark realities of racism.

### Belonging and Non-Belonging

The link between Christianity and racism has been documented, not just within Black Theology but more generally (Davies 1988). Within such narratives Christianity played its part in creating and sustaining the ‘docile and obedient’ people of whom Ellerbie (1995) spoke. The elders scripted a different telling, set within the context of their time. Elders spoke firstly of their struggle for jobs, child care and housing and of the open and overt racism many experienced at a time when there was no Race Equality legislation or ‘anti-racist’ policies. Not only were they missing children, families, friends and homelands but they were frequently coping
with long working hours, insecure employment, overcrowded homes and open hostility to their presence. This was perhaps exemplified by the ‘successful’ political campaign fought by the Conservative M.P. Peter Griffiths in 1964 in the previously Labour constituency of Smethwick under the anti-immigration slogan ‘If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour’. Hence from the ‘sense of belonging’ forged in their poor childhood homes, they were confronted with their non-belonging – not simply as British citizens but as Christians. They entered U.K churches, having previously internalised the affirming nature of God’s love of all people. They were largely greeted by church congregations and Minsters who exhibited anything but. All but two of the fourteen elders spoke of being asked to leave churches, of being told to sit at the back, of being met with glares and stares and of hearing that white worshippers would not welcome their presence:

Oh my Lord! ... It was they look at us as if we shouldn’t be there. We shouldn’t be in church. It was a Baptist Church... When we went back the next Sunday, the Pastor ask if we could sit down at the back... they didn't want us to come to the front (Hyacinth).

When I went in and sat down, the woman sitting next to me, she get up and said, ‘Why you people have to come in here’ and then she move to another pew. (Joylin) (Kwhali 2012, 87).

In listening to the stories and absorbing the hurt and pain that still accompanied them so many years later, I was struck by the acts of resistance and courage which the elders demonstrated and of their determination to force white Ministers and churchgoers to confront the essence of the Christian message. Whilst a number of post-war Caribbean Christian migrants formed their own ‘house groups’, most continued to go to majority white churches and defied efforts to exclude them from worship. I reflected on the strength of these elders’ Christian faith, and indeed of a tenacity that enabled these men and women to continue to walk into churches and confront open hostility and overt racism. Far from being ‘passive’ in the face of such crude racism they were remarkably active:

‘When that man asked me to move my seat I eyeballed him right out and said, “If you want me to move then you come up and move me” (John). The man apparently did not take up John’s offer.’ (Kwhali 2012, 100).

‘The vicar came up to us and said that some of the congregation were going if darkie people – that’s what they called us in those days – darkie people – started to come, and he thought it better we leave. My husband was very angry – he started to argue but we were in church and I didn’t want no trouble so I said that we should just leave.’
Can you remember how you felt?

‘Oh yes, I remember it, I remember it well. I was so hurt. How could a man of God say such a thing Josephine? I was shocked. God loves all people, that’s what the Bible teach us... a man of God should know that. God doesn’t worry about colour... I was so hurt and upset but I was also angry. We had come to England to work hard. It wasn’t easy … We didn’t stop people coming to church in Jamaica. I was so upset and also angry. My husband was just angry. He was a peaceful man my Donovan, never like trouble, but when we got out that church he was shouting and cussing that man. He no go back to a white man’s church ever again.’ (Gwyneth) (Kwhali 2012, 100-101).

Gwyneth makes the link between the actions of the Vicar and her understanding of the Christian faith where ‘God doesn’t worry about colour’, as indeed does Joylin when she reflects upon those earlier church experiences: ‘They just prejudiced, call themselves Christians and they racially prejudiced’ (2012, 87).

Whilst the elders’ stories have a different context to the one scripted by their African American sisters and brothers, it too is a story of pain, of rejection and of racial humiliation. It tells of an attempt to reconcile their treatment at ‘human hands’ with the love and acceptance they had found in their understanding of the Christian story. Through their faith many African-Caribbean Christian migrants also found strength in knowing that ‘they mattered’ even as they were being shown in subtle and overt ways that they did not. Gravesande (in Aldred & Ogbo 2010) talks of how ‘Caribbean immigrants’ “solidarity of experience, culture and faith created deep roots and a life time of fellowship” that helped them to cope with the challenges and privations of migration and racism and how ‘that generation learnt to serve God on their knees, they prayed out and cried out to God’ (2010, 116-117 cited in Kwhali 2012).

It is perhaps impossible to now envisage the dehumanising treatment that many post-war migrants experienced in their earlier years in the U.K; to recognise that words and actions that would now lead to criminal charges were accepted and even normalised in daily discourse. This is not to suggest that there were not people speaking out against racism in the post-war era, but it is to suggest that fifty years ago black people had to craft a life, raise their families and survive against a backcloth where they were constantly confronted with challenges to their humanity and self worth - including within allegedly Christian churches. How easy it is to let go of the stories of extraordinary ordinary African-Caribbean elders and to deny them the respect they deserve for their contribution not only to the United Kingdom, but to the various forms of anti-racist thought, action and literature that followed (Reddie 2001). A small numerical minority of largely poor and partially educated people coming from the villages and small towns of Jamaica and Guyana, filled
with their hopes, dreams and fears as they journeyed to a motherland that had been instrumental in the enslavement of their ancestors, and who with other European powers enjoyed the spoils of imperialism and colonial rule. Perhaps the stories are too painful to hold, perhaps they sit beneath the shadow of post colonial guilt and racial denial, perhaps they suffer from a re-scripting of secularised anti-racism that held subsequent generations of enlightened activists to be more worthy of acknowledgement than the black elders who crafted the foundations on which the challenges of mine and subsequent generations were laid?

### Church Attendance in the UK

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that Christianity and Church attendance is specific only to African-Caribbean elders seeking to ‘manage’ a particular experience of post colonial migration. Whilst formal adherence to religion amongst white people has been in decline, with between 6-10% of mainly older and ‘middle class’ people regularly attending church, amongst black people it is increasing (Brierley 2006, 2008; Tear Fund 2007; BSAS 2010). 48% of black people of all ages in the U.K regularly attend church – a figure which excludes small house groups and independent black led churches which may not appear in ‘official’ surveys. Christian Research (2005) indicates that in London, black church goers outnumber white with churches recording a growing black membership. Such membership is spread across a range of Christian ‘denominations’, the largest of which are described as ‘Black led’ congregations followed by Pentecostals and Orthodox Churches. The Catholic Church has the smallest number of U.K. black worshippers, followed by the Anglican (C of E) Church (UK Christian Handbook 2006, 2008).

Knowing that people are ‘black’ tells us little however about the ethnicity of such groups, the kind of theology to which they subscribe, the ethnic and cultural mix of the congregation or the ethnic background of the Pastor or Minister. A ‘Black majority’ church for instance could arguably be more ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse than a ‘mixed’ church that primarily has a white UK and African-Caribbean congregation. As previously identified (page 8) the term ‘black’ has political, historical and epistemological meaning in the States and constitutes a form of ‘racial belonging’. The ancestral heritage of black people in America is recognised through the commonly used term of African-American. In contrast black people in the U.K. have been sub divided through the Census categories (and official ethnic monitoring systems) in a manner reminiscent of apartheid - Black African, Black African-Caribbean, Mixed Race, Black Other, Black British etc. Such categories are not the ‘ethnic categories’ they claim but simply the means of banding people of hugely varying ethnic, linguistic and cultural traditions into largely meaningless official groupings whilst negating the African heritage of many people who might be required to tick ‘Black British’, ‘Black Other, ‘Mixed or indeed ‘Asian’.
The 2011 U.K census indicates that 565,876 people identified themselves as African-Caribbean. This constitutes 1% of the population and 12.2% of all ethnic minorities in the U.K. with a majority (61%) living in London (ONS 2012). They and their British-born descendents are joined by increasing numbers of bi-racial people who are officially categorised as something other than black regardless of how they might themselves identify and by ‘Africans’ whose population doubled between 2001 and 2011 to represent 1.7% of the U.K. population (ONS 2011).

None of the elders interviewed identified themselves as African-Caribbean, consistently describing themselves as ‘Jamaican’ or ‘Black’. None had ever visited the African continent. They did not know of their African names and as an intentional consequence of colonial education they were taught only about the ‘achievements’ of the British and nothing of the continent from which their fore parents originated. When they spoke of hardship and struggle they related more to the experiences of African-Americans such as Martin Luther King Jr and Rosa Parks than they did to African freedom fighter such as Kenyatta or Kwame Nkrumah.

If I see a black person who is being treated unjust anywhere I am always ready to speak up because I don’t like unjust. That’s why I admire Martin Luther King. Although it cost him his life, he left a path, a footbridge that we can follow to know that – he know he was going to die but he didn’t know which day. Because they hated him so much – as he took a stand. (Kwhali 2012, 93)

Subsequently reflecting on Rosa Parks, the same respondent says:

Oh yes, (claps) Miss Rosa Parks. She started the Civil Rights you know. Martin Luther King didn’t start it – she started it and I can tell you she was a brave lady, very brave. Oh yeah and she was getting up that bus. I tell you, one person can make a difference, one person make a difference because she did make a difference and I really admire her. (2012, 93)

It is therefore unsurprising that Black British Theology in Britain, like American Black Theology before it, arose from and spoke to a period of struggle – not a ‘black struggle’ per se but a British African-Caribbean Christian struggle captured and theorised largely by those of African-Caribbean birth or descent.

**Black British Theology**

In 1998 the Jamaican born writer Robert Beckford launched in Birmingham the Journal *Black Theology in Britain*, which was subsequently re-titled *Black Theology: An International Journal*. Beckford was raised in the Pentecostal church and has written extensively on black theology (1998, 2000, 2002, 2004a, 2008, 2010,
2014) and presented a number of programmes and documentaries (2004b, 2006a, 2006b, 2007). The 2004 Channel 4 production *Who wrote the Bible?* explicitly challenged the traditional Christian view that the Bible is the unadulterated word of God. In the black theological tradition Beckford explored the process of the Bible’s formation and the various political motivations inspiring canon law. Beckford became the first tutor of black theology at Queen’s Ecumenical College, Birmingham, a position subsequently occupied until 2012 by Dr. Anthony Reddie, who currently edits the International Journal of Black Theology.


Despite black theology evolving from particular racial and historical experiences which challenge dominant and oppressive white theological discourses and despite such theology being constructed and written about by black writers, the role of Christianity in the lives, experiences and struggles of black people has been largely ignored within the ‘caring professions’ in the U.K. and in their supposedly ‘anti-racist’ literature. Henerey suggests that:

> Ethnic minorities are generally characterised as first religious and then spiritual. They are therefore placed enmasse in the disfavoured half of the spirituality-religion binary. Overall, despite its claims to the contrary, the literature on spirituality seems to compliment rather than counteract dominant social arrangements” (Henery 2003, cited in Wong and Vinsky 2009, 111).

Religion then potentially becomes seen through a secular prism that arguably dislocates professional ‘values and ethics’ from the religious ethics of believers, or through dominant discourses which profile ‘religion’ in the context of the ‘war on terror’ or religious fundamentalism. Holloway (2006), in her study of the ‘helping professions’, found a largely ambivalent attitude towards religion within both health and social care, with social workers being more hostile to organised religion than nurses or other ‘caring’ professions.

Okitikipi and Aymer, in their discussion on anti-racism, suggest that there is a ‘a
general acceptance that religion is a private matter and should therefore play no dominant role in social work' (2010, 94) and, by implication, can be ignored; a position largely achieved within social work education and training, which Furnham and Benson (2005) found to be largely secular and ambivalent about religion.

Not only have the Christian insights and experiences of Black people been marginalised within professional discourses, there is little to suggest that they have been a source of inspiration to churches for challenging past and present racial injustices in the U.K. Despite there being some attempt to theorise theology from a British African-Caribbean perspective and regardless of the learning that might emerge from black people's experiences of struggle, migration, survival and faith, there is little evidence that its theological insights have had influence outside of the academy. This does not mean that black theology is without relevance. Black people do not necessarily have to read academic texts in order to understand their own experiences of racism and subjugation – they live such experiences, and, if afforded the opportunity, give voice to those experiences and to the knowledge that stems from them:

In the Caribbean, Josephine, you know that we don't have wealth. We are poor. We asks the Father for everything. And every day we get up and whatever we have we give thanks. We eat and you say, 'Thank you Lord'. (Lillian) (Kwhali 2012, 108)

If I was to go back I’d really go in to my history as lots of people tell me they are Jamaican but we are a lost race. We have no culture of our own, we have no language, so how you say they are Jamaicans – we are Africans with European names, not our names. You say you go by Jamaican laws but they are laws Europeans gave, so what we got? We ain't got nothing. It's sad, we haven't got nothing so we got God. (Fitzroy) (2012, 109).

Black theology has attempted, however partially and incompletely (Skinner 1975; Evans 1977; Anyabwale & Knoll 2008; Burrell 2010), to give back to people like Lillian and Fitzroy a God who understands their suffering, identifies with their needs and who stands alongside them in both joy and trouble. It has arguably sought to ‘humanise’ a faith whose religious teachings had been used as justification for the transatlantic slave trade and the subsequent dehumanisation of black people. It has enabled black women writers to challenge the theological insights of black men theologians, and created spaces in which black women and men have dialogued and learned together – providing a ‘model’ for more fundamentalist Christians and indeed for other religions in which women’s voices and leadership contributions are even more marginalised. It has ‘spoken a story’ to many black Christians and non-believers and provided a rich body of material which other
theologians and lay people can now critique. Indeed, there are few other areas of public life, and especially within the U.K., where the voices, theoretical insights and writings of African-Caribbean born and descended people have so consistently found expression.

In reclaiming the interpretive tradition through which Christianity is presented by traditionalists as ‘definitive truth’, black theology has contributed to a wider theological discourse that seeks to understand social and theological issues within current times rather than through an unchanging prism of a medieval age. African-American and Black British Black Theology has revealed a different way of unpeeling black religiosity to the one presented in some allegedly Christian churches in parts of the African subcontinent, the Caribbean and indeed the U.K. by exposing issues of racism, sexism, and more recently homophobia (Brown Douglas 1999; Korenegay 2004). It has aligned Christianity with social action and challenged the notion of ‘personal faith’ by linking Christianity with the political and racial experiences of black people. Black theology ‘speaks’ to many of us and reflects a God based reality that is an historical, political and contemporary part of us.

**Conclusion**

Black theology is intrinsically linked to the history and experiences of enslaved people and their descendents, taken from the African Continent and brutalised on the American plantations. It tells a story of survival, hope and redemption by using the Bible to affirm black people’s humanity and of their God given equality. It has provided insights into the contested nature of ‘religious truth’ and challenged the interpretative tradition that justified through biblical teaching the dehumanisation of black people and the secondary status of women. Uniquely amongst ‘anti-racist’ literature (especially within the U.K.), black theology is black – conceived from the experiences and intellectual reflections of African descended men and women and speaking to a history that forms such an intrinsic part of African-American and African-Caribbean identity.

For African-Caribbeans who migrated to the U.K from former British colonies, ‘religion’ has formed a core component of their identities and sense of belonging. They have held tight to a faith that has endured through migration and exclusion and which has provided for them strength, hope, companionship and self belief. In telling their stories, the elders demonstrate the link between a theoretical understanding of black religiosity and black theology and the manner in which Christian teaching and observance experientially weaves its way into and through a history and a specific period of post slavery and post colonial experience. Religion, and more particularly Christianity, has given many African-American and African-Caribbeans a means of partially ‘making sense’ of a long and bleak period of human
history and human suffering.

It is perhaps appropriate to end with the refrain of a famous gospel hymn:

   By and by, when the morning comes,
   When the saints of God are gathered home,
   We will tell the story how we’ve overcome,
   For we’ll understand it better by and by. (Charles Tindall 1851-1923).
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Longing to Belong: Cultivating Transcultural Humanism in Modern Britain as a Source of Identity

Roger Griffin

The Need to Belong

The basic premises of this article are doubtless uncontroversial to the point of banality, but hopefully the argument that flows from it will put the issue of Britain's multi-culturality in a fresh light. Human beings have an innate need to belong, to feel an integral part of something greater than themselves, a cause, project, or living entity that outlives and transcends their own brief life-line. However the need to belong is deeply ambivalent, creating an inclusive sense of community, idealism, and tolerance in some circumstances, while generating exclusion, fanaticism and violence in others. It is this ambivalence that must be borne in mind whenever discussions arise in civil society concerning the need to ‘respect’ the cultures of others at all costs, assess the value of religion as a source of harmony or destructiveness, or set about the task of explaining why a minority may be tempted to join movements preaching hatred and violence.

The importance of a deep affective sense of belonging to a wider group of human beings, whether as a living social group or an ‘imagined community’, can doubtless be explained in terms of evolutionary ethics as having profound survival value in
pragmatic terms of cooperation and collaboration to overcome shared material threats to existence. However, I am primarily concerned here with what might be termed the ‘existential’ dimension of belonging, the degree to which it fulfils deep psychological needs and drives beyond the material sphere. In the present context the need for identity and belonging (community), and for a coherent picture of the world (nomos) is treated not just as a material necessity on structural-functional grounds, but as a fundamental human predisposition. It is a predisposition born of our uniquely reflexive human consciousness and its correlative: the drive to make sense of, and find not just a social but a psychological home, in an ‘objectively’ meaningless, inhospitable universe. Both Ernst Becker and Peter Berger have extensively studied the way pre-modern human societies have always been driven to construct heroic myths as templates of a higher, transcendent plane of existence (Becker 1962), and to elaborate ritual-based cosmologies which make up a ‘sacred canopy’ (Berger 1967) to ward off the devastating psychological pain which would ensue from coming to grips with the ‘objective’ finitude, absurdity, and loneliness of life on earth.

A major articulator of this type of approach to belonging is Erich Fromm, a prolific analyst of the healthy and unhealthy conditions of shared co-existence since the depths of the Second World War. In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1977) Fromm explores the theory that the existential needs of ‘man’ (his recurrent term for humanity) are structured by two fundamental biological conditions which mark ‘his’ emergence as a unique species, i) the ever decreasing determination of behaviour by instincts and ii) the growth of the brain and particularly of the neo-cortex. The self-awareness, reason and imagination which resulted have disrupted the unreflecting harmony with biological life which characterises animal existence, so that though humanity is part of nature it constantly transcends nature and the natural limits to existence mentally and spiritually. Human beings are existentially homeless, yet still tied to the planetary home they share with all creatures. Homo sapiens is condemned to ‘ex-ist’, live outside unreflective being, while animals and all other organisms ‘are’, untormented by the knowledge of death and personal mortality.

In evolutionary terms33 ‘man’ is thus for Fromm an unfinished project. The very physiological and psychological developments which underpin ‘his’ humanity has ‘evicted him from paradise’, the paradise of unreflective being. The biological dichotomy between ‘missing’ instincts and self-awareness produces existential needs common to all human beings rooted in the drive to overcome the horror of separateness, of powerlessness, of lostness. To survive they are forced to find,

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33 I accept that religious believers cannot accept this secular, Darwinian premise to an analysis of human belonging, but I trust they may still find something illuminating in what follows.
construct, invent even, albeit unconsciously, new forms of relating themselves to
the world to enable them to feel at home in it. These Fromm identifies as: a) a
frame of reference and devotion (i.e. a ‘world-view’); b) rootedness (i.e. a sense of
being part of something both prior and posterior to one’s life; c) unity (i.e. a sense
of oneness with at least part of the world; d) effectiveness (i.e. a sense of having an
impact on the world; e) excitation (or a relief from boredom and depression). It is
clear that the first four of these ways of relating to the world impinge directly on a
sense of belonging.

According to Fromm human beings can fulfil these needs in two diametrically
opposed ways. Precluded from returning to the symbiotic Garden of Eden which
they experience as part of the mother’s world or before evolving into homo
sapiens sapiens (i.e. knowing they know, the hallmark of human awareness), they
are capable of progressing through a difficult process of individuation to free
themselves from the power of the past and so become independent, creative and
capable of compassion and love. These faculties enable individuals (in the sense
of fully individuated beings) to experience solidarity with fellow humans in a way
which does not deny their separateness or difference and thereby achieve fulfilment
in a state of productive being in the world, one which involves giving and receiving.
However, the craving for symbiosis can also lead to regression into a symbolic world
in which the mother is substituted by nebulous entities inviting loss of self, and its
dissolution and fusion with abstract entities such as god, ancestral soil, class, the
nation, the race, the religious community.

The result is the anaesthetisation of individual consciousness in states of ritual,
trance, ecstasy, or fanatical obedience. In this limbic, atavistic relationship with
the world life-enhancing, genuinely creative faculties give way to life-thwarting,
destructive ones based on sado-masochism and narcissism. What tends to bring
out the negative potential of the human psyche are periods of disequilibrium
which rudely disrupt the relatively stable sense of ‘home’ afforded by a sustainable
culture or society in which the psychic dichotomies and tensions at the heart of
human existence have lain dormant. The need to restore a new equilibrium will
then tend to be satisfied not by healthy (individuated, creative) frames of reference,
rootedness, unity and effectiveness, (benign belonging), but by neurotic (symbiotic,
destructive) ones in which the integrity of the ‘home’ can only be maintained
through the demonisation and even war against the ‘other’, (malignant belonging).

The Ambivalence of Belonging

Fromm’s psycho-anthropological analysis provides a broader context within which
to understand less methodologically elaborated articles postulating a basic human
‘need to belong’ (Baumeister and Leary 1995). It also resonates harmoniously with
the analysis of the human condition of another major 20th century commentator on the human condition and the unique biological and cognitive substratum that underpins it, Arthur Koestler. Very much in the tradition of the French philosophes, Koestler devoted the last two decades of his life to establishing a positive vision of human potential compatible with the findings of modern science. A central concern of The Ghost in the Machine (1970) is the physiological basis of human psychology, his interpretation of which places special emphasis on the poor neurological coordination between the neocortex/mesocortex (in which the higher functions of the brain are located) and the phylogenetically older ‘animal’ brain constituted by the limbic system. It is this ‘archicortex’ which is responsible not only for the body’s basic regulatory mechanisms but also for our instinctive, visceral (i.e. ‘gut’) emotions. The direct result of imperfect ‘wiring’ between the three brains are the major dysfunctions which can arise in human beings’ relationship with external reality and bring about what he calls ‘the predicament of man’.

To simplify crudely Koestler’s subtly argued and extensively documented hypothesis, human beings are endowed with two basic drives, that of selfassertiveness and the opposite one of selftranscendence, which enable them to be both autonomous individuals and members of a social hierarchy such as the family or the tribe. A healthy relationship with the world in all its aspects, i.e. one based on harmony and creative symbiosis with it rather than possessive or destructive urges towards it, depends on a delicate balance of the two drives which allows people to experience themselves simultaneously as unique, independent personalities and as integral parts of larger social entities, both equally vital for the continued dynamism and cohesion of all human societies. However, because of the ‘paranoid’, ‘delusional’ streak in the human makeup, both the selfassertive and selftranscendent drives can assume a pathological aspect when they take on an obsessive, nihilistic form inconsistent with the demands of survival and irrespective of the damage they inflict on fellow creatures. Ironically, it is the perversion of selftranscendent emotions, not selfassertive ones, which have been largely responsible for the chronicle of atrocities which human beings have inflicted on each other down through the ages. The fanatical certainty of serving a ‘higher cause’ allows the perpetrators of ‘inhuman’ deeds to act not on their own behalf but as subordinate parts of a hierarchy, whether human or metaphysical, which absolves them of personal responsibility and invests their actions with the sense of fulfilling a ‘transcendent’ purpose or mission.

34 Though not trained as a scientist he developed a deep concern for the implications of the natural sciences for an understanding of human nature, as is shown in his two major explorations of human consciousness and creativity, The Act of Creation (Pan Piper, 1964) and The Ghost in the Machine (Pan Piper, 1970) as well as his contribution to Beyond Reductionism. New Perspectives in the. Life of Sciences (Macmillan, 1969).
As a symptom of how the capacity for self-transcendence can be perverted, Koestler cites the widespread use of human sacrifice in traditional cultures, a notorious example being that of the Aztecs, who annually sacrificed between twenty and fifty thousand young men, virgins and children so that the sun would not die. The basic mechanism at work in such a culture (fortunately, the majority of societies in history have not been the product of this kind of institutionalised paranoia) is that individual self-transcendent emotions are no longer sublimated through ritual and tradition into mature, humane integration with the external world. Instead they express themselves via a culturally reinforced collective regression to an infantile type of projection which abolishes the all-important affective distinction between part and whole to produce a potentially destructive identification with the suprapersonal entity (in this case the elaborate narrative myths of Aztec culture which became lived realities for Aztecs and their victims). In such circumstances the human urge to belong and the thirst for meaning is channelled into a sense of unquestioning oneness with a depersonalised social myth which deprives individuals of a creative, ‘human’ and humane relationship with the world. This turns them into tools of ritual violence in the name of an abstract cause or delusory collective purpose, a lived myth.

The Physiology of Belonging

It is this line of argument which leads Koestler to consider two phenomena which are crucial to an inquiry into the psychology of (modern) communities of belief: the emergence of political ideologies and of crowd psychology. Because the structural defects in the neurology of the brain and its affective apparatus have not repaired themselves through evolution, the decay of religions and the rise of science have not resulted in a general trend towards human beings enjoying a more rational, integrated relationship with society. If anything their predicament has deepened:

Religious wars were superseded by patriotic, then by ideological, wars, fought with the same self-immolating loyalty and fervour. The opium of revealed religions was replaced by the heroin of secular religions, which commanded the same bemused surrender of the individuality to their doctrines, and the same worshipful love offered by their prophets. The devils and succubi were replaced by a new demonology: subhuman Jews plotting world dominions; bourgeois capitalists promoting starvation. (Koestler 1970, 273)

The secularisation and fragmentation of modern society has generated periodic waves of collective commitment to ideologies in which some individuals become caught up in the type of group mentality which often goes by the name ‘crowd psychology’, even if, as a result of the uncanny strength of the human mythopoeic faculty which allows the monk alone in his cell to still feel embraced by the love of
God, someone does not need to commingle physically with a crowd to be part of a mass movement (writing before the age of the World Wide Web and social media, Koestler could never have imagined how far virtual communities would prevail over ‘real’ ones to provide a sense of belonging). By the twentieth century conditions in some parts of Europe were right for the enlistment of millions of ordinary citizens in the battle for ‘the Classless Society’ or the ‘Millennial Reich’. They were lured not by their egotism, but by their unselfishness, their idealism, their urge to place their lives in the service of a higher cause and so solve their personal existential crisis generated by the objective breakdown of their society, their ‘world’. Their secular creeds could allow them to feel they belonged to a ‘national community’ or ‘socialist community’ as intensely as any religions in the past were able to convince believers they were part of a community of the saved.

Both the Fascist and the Soviet myths were not syncretic constructions, but revivals of archetypes, both capable of absorbing not only the cerebral component but the total man; both provided emotional saturation. (Ibid., 293)

Applied to both traditional and modern belief systems/ideologies in general, Koestler’s theory implies that genuine affective commitment to any of them is an act of self-transcendence. What distinguishes the content and consequences of that commitment is first, whether the ideology encourages integration (the retention of individuality, critical distance, humanity, the embrace of the ‘other’), or identification (blind obedience, fanaticism, suppression of individual conscience, the rejection of the ‘other’); and second what the precise mythic object of integration/identification is.

The major Western and Eastern religions/metaphysical systems, no less than secular liberal humanism, when not contaminated by toxic spiritual forces (e.g. by worldly corruption and ambition, patriarchy, fanaticism, misogyny, chauvinism or capitalism) are integrative ideologies. So is communism in principle, though since Lenin all communist regimes have tended to operate as an identificatory ‘state religion’ in practice, despite the theoretical stress on a universal classless and stateless society as the ultimate goal of humanity.

In the case of fascism, its core myth of the regenerated national community led by a revolutionary elite calls a priori for an act of identification which excludes a vast array of demonized others from humanity, a neurologically based mischannelling of the human drive for selftranscendence. This engenders a paranoid, dualistic mindset conducive to boundless idealism and fanatical devotion towards the embryonic new or reborn nation, coupled with ruthless violence directed at its
alleged enemies. All three Abrahamic religions have repeatedly demonstrated throughout their histories their profound ambivalence, their capacity to be both the source of astounding levels of integrative humanism and of fanatical identification with the ‘sole Truth’ to the point of hatred of ‘infidels’. Meanwhile state socialism, so ‘integrative’ on paper, has proved catastrophically identificatory in many of the totalitarian experiments to impose it as the basis of a new world and new order. Whether interpreted in an identificatory or integrative way the human need for belonging is satisfied, but with radically different consequences.

‘Inhumanity’ and Transcultural Humanism

Taken together, Fromm and Koestler offer a comprehensive explanation for the paradoxical, Janus-headed behaviour of human beings throughout their history, both destructive, cruel, barbaric, ‘inhuman’ and almost in the same breath creative, compassionate, sublime and ‘humane’. Though our analysis has been unashamedly secular and scientific, the paradoxical, ambivalent nature of the human need to belong could also be modelled using the metaphysical cosmologies of any religious or metaphysical world view that gives an account of the presence of ‘evil’ in the world as the enemy of ‘good’, whether Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism or Christianity. The narratives of destruction and creation, of identificatory and integrative belonging, interweave their way through our species’ time on earth like the double-helix structure of DNA. There is a continuous history of war, colonisation, subjugation, enslavement, persecution and genocide which taken on its own would suggest that human beings are intrinsically violent, territorial, xenophobic, and sadistic (Wistrich 1999). The chronicles of the past are thus littered with examples of cultural, ethnic, or religious ‘communities of destiny’ where the corollary of belonging to an ‘in-group’ was the license to commit atrocities on unimaginable scales of cruelty and sadism on ‘out-groups’.

Running alongside and intertwined with this story, however, is the less familiar one of individual human beings, and at times entire communities, repeatedly demonstrating their capacity for rising above their visceral sense of being able to belong only to one exclusive kinship system, group, ethnicity, culture, language, faith, or way of being so as to engage lovingly and creatively with the humanity of those of other cultures. Pathological forms of xenophobia and ethnocentrism have thus always coexisted with the potential for xenophilia and what I propose to call ‘transcultural humanism’, whether religious or secular. Just how ancient this capacity is can be glimpsed in the Epicurean Inscription of Diogenes of Oineanda,

35 Fascism is thus not, as Nolte argued in The Three Faces of Fascism (1969), ‘resistance to transcendence’, but the result of succumbing to a perverted and peculiarly modern identificatory form of it.
a forerunner of secular humanism, which dates back to the 2nd century AD, which declares:

We Epicureans bring these truths, not to all men whatsoever, but only to those men who are benevolent and capable of receiving this wisdom. This includes those who are called “foreigners,” though they are not really so, for the compass of the world gives all people a single country and home. But it does not include all people whatsoever, and I am not pressuring any of you to testify thoughtlessly and unreflectively.

And finishes:

Fear of the gods; fear of death; fear of pain; fear of slavery to those desires which are neither natural nor necessary. The day will come when none of these shall interrupt the continuity of our friendships, and of our happiness, in the study of philosophy. In that day, wise men will tend the Earth, in a life close to Nature; our agriculture will provide for our needs, and we, and those who are our friends, will live as gods among men. (New Epicurean. com 2013)

Nor is such a benevolent vision of the human capacity for peaceful, productive coexistence across cultures just a bucolic utopia. Erich Fromm’s The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness produces a wealth of anthropological and psychological evidence to demonstrate the presence of such a capacity throughout history, even if its effects constantly risk being overshadowed and obliterated by hatred, strife and destruction. Perhaps the most powerful testimony to the millennial power of integrative belonging and transcultural humanism is to be found not in the sphere of politics or anthropology, but in the histories of language, pottery, mythology, weaving, cooking, dance, trade, multilingualism, mixed marriages, multicultural and multi-faith societies, heredity, and genetics. All of these point to a constant process of histoires croisés, of transhistorical and transcultural phenomena, of cultural and religious hybridisation produced by a profound, innate capacity of human beings to communicate, trade, love, marry, work, learn, and create cooperatively across ethnic and cultural borders and divides. Recently empirical evidence has come to light that Homo Sapiens overlapped with and interbred with Neanderthals before they became extinct, which may have boosted ‘our’ capacity to cope with cold climates. In other words that human beings have a proven capacity for interaction and symbiosis even with another species (Callaway 2014).

**Modernity and Belonging**

It is generally agreed that rise of a globalizing modernity — that nexus of the rise of science, rationalism, urbanisation, literacy, the machine age, mass communications
and transport systems, mass social mobility, materialism, and intensified inter-
cultural exchange — has had a devastating impact on traditional religious societies
and the sense of belonging they afforded. Max Weber saw rationalisation as
‘disenchancing’ society, Emile Durkheim as creating ‘anomie’, Joseph Schumpeter
as a process of continual ‘creative destruction’, Peter Berger as eroding the ‘nomos’,
the sacred canopy, Anthony Giddens as disembedding humans from time and
space, Zygmunt Bauman as creating an age of ambivalence, of the ‘liquefaction’ of
time and space, Marshall Berman as creating a ‘vortex’ of shifting, swirling realities,
as making ‘all that is solid melt into thin air’, a phrase taken from Karl Marx’s
Communist Manifesto.

Such a world of flux, of proliferating and conflicting realities obviously places a
permanent stress on, and even a profound threat to, a naïve, unreflecting sense
of belonging, generating for those not protected by a solid nomos or overarching
sacred canopy the need either to distract themselves constantly from the pain of
naked being, or to find a new source of total belonging and culture, of purpose and
mission, however temporary. But whatever ‘hold’ individuals may find on meaning
and purpose life, it is constantly being undermined by scepticism, relativism, the
liquefaction of reality, thus provoking a deep nomic crisis in the life of individuals
with a particular need for coherent meaning and identity in life. If they are brought
within a religious or ideological ‘home’, this crisis may drive them into the defensive
or aggressive fanaticism necessary to protect a beleaguered set of traditional values
and beliefs. However, those without a faith who desperately seek a new source
of belonging and purpose will tend either to be prone to bouts of despair and
depression, or become engaged in various forms of addictive behaviour to numb
the pain. The third possibility is that they solve the nomic crisis differently: by
seeking out a new life mission, by finding a creative activity driven by their craving
for meaning, or by zealously adopting a new belief system which allows them to put
back up the fallen sky protecting them from nihilism. This new belief system may
be integrative or identificatory.

Abundant evidence for non-identificatory, integrative, transcultural responses to
the nomic crisis of modernity is to be found in the realm of the experimental
art which poured forth at the turn of the twentieth century and which known
under the heading ‘modernism’: artists as different as van Gogh, Satie, Magritte,
Kafka and Kandinsky sought to find visual or literary images for the tormented
experience of transcendence under modernity or asserted the hidden presence of
a spiritual reality invisible to the materialistic mindset. Movements too, such as
Nietzscheanism, theosophy, social reformism, feminism, Freudianism, rationalist
architecture, Constructivism, Surrealism, all sought to emancipate subjugate groups
within society and usher in a new age, and can also be seen as forms of social or
political modernism, rebellions against the growing disenchantment or nihilism of modernity (Griffin 2007, Turda 2010).

Yet even some forms of integrative modernism already contained the seeds of identificatory politics: Futurism allied itself with Fascism, and Constructivism with Bolshevism even after the murderous impact of Soviet totalitarianism had become evident, while positive eugenics and social hygiene, which sought to liberate humankind from physical degeneracy, and which was supported by socialists and nationalists alike, was already by the 1900s giving rise to dystopian scenarios from a humanistic perspective with suggestions of campaigns of negative eugenics in which the dysgenic would be sterilised. Meanwhile cultural and biological forms of militant ultranationalism and racism were in the air and would explode into the orgy of slaughter and ‘sacrifice’ on behalf of the organically conceived nation in the First World War as energies liberated from the decay of theological Christianity and Islam became liberated to be channelled into defending the ‘nation’ or ‘people’ and asserting its rights to exist at the expense of the mere individual.

The 1930s saw the rise of two ‘modernist’ states that between them would directly or indirectly lead to the deaths of millions of soldiers and even more millions of civilians in the pursuit of their utopias, because these were identificatory utopias, based on fostering collective fanaticism in support for or collective submission to visions of a radical new order, an alternative modernity which would bring about a temporal and anthropological revolution: a new era and a new man.

To belong affectively to and identify with the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft or the Soviet Union, and later the Maoist Revolution meant colluding with genocides, or actively contributing to them, the extermination of demonised others in their millions who had been stripped of their humanity by an identificatory political religion. Meanwhile miniature versions of Nazi and Stalinist terror regimes were created by the Croatian Ustasha, to be followed after the war by several socialist societies which translated the integrative promises of socialism into pretexts to build a terror state, the most obvious contemporary example being North Korea, a strange blend of personality cult and state socialism where the demonised other is, as under Pol Pot, the Korean people itself.

With or without the backing of a spontaneous mass movement of populist support, such regimes originate in the urge to protect ‘the home’, ‘one’s own kind’ from outsiders, the threat of the foreigner who becomes dehumanised in the process of institutionalizing and militarizing the defence of the ‘homeland’ or ‘ideal society’. In their compulsion to defend liberal values, purportedly democratic states can also succumb to the temptation to become identificatory sources of belonging in their appeals to patriotism and readiness to commit war-crimes on behalf of
‘civilisation’, as the mass killing of civilians by Britain and the US in both world wars and the Second Gulf War exemplifies, not to mention the horrors inflicted on the Vietnamese in the Vietnam War.

Jihadism is the latest manifestation of identificatory belonging to erupt into modern history, spawning Isis in its defence of the imagined community of a global Caliphate conceived as under attack from the ‘West’, yet destined to triumph over the decadence of the world and save it from moral decadence and apostasy. If our only yardstick for judging the state of ‘belonging’ in the modern world was current affairs a casual observer could be forgiven for thinking that only identificatory forms of it had prevailed.

**Transcultural Humanism under Modernity**

Yet look again. The double helix of belonging is still there in a world pullulating with initiatives to reach out across the barriers of race, culture and religion to create a better world, and establish ‘the compass of the world’ as a single country and home’ for all people. The United Nations, Amnesty International, Oxfam, Médecins sans Frontières, interfaith and intercultural groups such as the Dialogue Society, the continuous work of liberal newspapers, TV stations, educationalists, and social workers in many democratic societies to oppose racism, social exclusion for many ‘out-groups’ are just the more conspicuous expression of the countervailing Velvet Revolution of transcultural humanism. Mixed marriages are becoming increasingly common throughout the democratic world, moderate forms of Christianity and Islam vastly outweigh exclusive fanatical and fundamentalist forms statistically, no matter how hidden by the headlines, the fusion of cultures through sport, music, cooking and ethnic groups is becoming more powerful throughout the non-totalitarian world, multilingualism is soaring, social contacts between those of different faiths and the tolerance that goes with that continue to form an irresistible force for humanistic change defying all those who try to crush multiculturalism or otherness in the name of Tradition or Purity.

When the same news bulletin reports both on the advance of Isis in Syria and on the departure of NHS and British army volunteers from the UK to fight the Ebola epidemic, then we see the double helix of belonging at work. In fact the modern age has brought more and more scientific refutation of the assumption that human beings are by nature aggressive, violent and territorial. Modern social scientists such as Robert Lifton in his *The Protean Self* have refuted naïve premises about the incapacity of human beings to accommodate plural cultural identities and ‘selves’, an ability which lies at the basis of integrative multiculturalism, multi-nationalities, multi-lingualism, and transcultural or transfaith intercultural relations and families. History has unearthed numerous societies which were already melting-
pots of different races and cultures, notably Baghdad, Alexandria, and Southern Spain in the Middle Ages. Modern genetics and DNA research has systematically deconstructed and refuted the notion of biologically separate or pure races and emphasised the extraordinary intermingling of racial groups that has occurred in prehistorical times mixing and merging genetic material, even in countries allegedly of ‘pure’ race such as Japan.

It is thus far from utopian wishful-thinking, but rather entirely empirically based if three individuals who suffered persecution by a military regime, communist state, and Jihadist fanaticism respectively have become brilliant advocates for a transcultural humanism. In her speech to Oxford University made during the ceremony which conferred on her an Honorary Degree, Aung San Suu Kyi stressed the humanizing impact of her time there as a student through its revelation of the best of human beings, namely their capacity to transcend culture and gender:

The most important thing for me about Oxford was not what I learnt there in terms of set texts and set books we had to read, but in terms of a respect for the best in human civilisation.

And the best in human civilisation comes from all parts of the world. It is not limited to Oxford; it is not limited to Burma; it is not limited to any other country. But the fact that in Oxford I had learned to respect all that is the best in human civilisation helped me to cope with what was not quite the best.

Because what is not yet quite the best may still, one day, become the best; it may be improved. It gave me a confidence in humankind. It gave me a confidence in the innate wisdom of human beings – not given to all of us, but given to enough of us for the rest of the world to share, and to make use of it for others. (Oxford University 2012)

Vaclav Havel, once prisoner of the Czechoslovak Soviet Puppet State for his dissident activities as agitator and playwright, and now the president of the Czech Republic, formed from the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, wrote the following about identity for the New York Review of Books:

What a person perceives as his home can be compared to a set of concentric circles, with his ‘I’ at the centre. My home is the room I live in, the room I’ve grown accustomed to, and which, in a manner of speaking, I have covered with my own invisible lining. I recall, for instance, that even my prison cell was, in a sense, my home, and I felt very put out whenever I was suddenly required to move to another... My home is the house I live in, the village or town where I spend most of my time. My home is my family, the world of my friends, the social and intellectual milieu in which I live, my profession,
my company, my work place.

My home, obviously, is also the country I live in, the language I speak, and the intellectual and spiritual climate of my country expressed in the language spoken there. The Czech language, the Czech way of perceiving the world, Czech historical experience, the Czech modes of courage and cowardice, Czech humour ... all these are inseparable from that circle of my home. My home is therefore my Czechness, my nationality, and I see no reason at all why I shouldn't embrace it since it is as an essential part of me as, for instance, my masculinity, another aspect of my home. My home, of course, is not only my Czechness, it is also my Czechoslovakness, which means my citizenship. Ultimately my home is Europe and my Europeanness; finally it is this planet and its present civilisation, and, understandably, the whole world.... ...I certainly do not want, therefore, to suppress the national dimension of a person's identity, or to deny it, or to refuse to acknowledge its legitimacy and its right to full self-realization. I merely reject the kind of political notions that attempt, in the name of nationality, to suppress other aspects of the human home, other aspects of humanity and human rights. (Havel 1991)

Finally, the comments by Salman Rushdie on those with an identificatory relationship to their Islamic culture and religion, written while still in hiding from those keen to carry out the *fatwah* on his life. He commented that standing at the centre of the novel *Satanic Verses was a group of* British Muslims, or ‘not particularly religious persons of Muslim background’, struggling with issues of identity, community and belonging. Rejecting ‘identificatory’ Islamist and Salafist notions of Muslim identity, he affirmed that

*The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combination of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelisation and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Melange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that, is how newness enters the world. Throughout human history, the apostles of purity, those who have claimed to possess a total explanation, have wrought, havoc among mere mixed up human beings. Like many millions of people, I am a bastard child of history. Perhaps we all are, black and brown and white, leaking into one another, as a character of mine once said, *like flavours when you cook.* (Rushdie 1992)

**Inferences for Transcultural Dialogue in Britain**

The argument developed in this article has a number of implications for discussions of inter-community dialogue in contemporary Britain. First, to postulate the capacity of human community of different religions and non-religions to coexist and enrich each other’s worlds through their interaction is not wishy-washy idealism
but a historical and genetic fact, so that pseudo-scientific assertions that human beings are *naturally* aggressive, territorial, exclusive and that cultures cannot mix are empirically wrong. There is particular irony when such assertions are made by ‘racists’ in Britain, since every aspect of Britishness — the genetic makeup, culture, food, literature, language, and even the weather — is a product of synthesis and mongrelisation. Thus there is a human predisposition towards dialogue and cultural transfer.

Second, as long as the uniqueness of a culture is asserted in an integrative spirit as just one of an individual’s sources of belonging and ‘sacred canopy’, and the principle of multiple identities is recognised and promoted throughout society in education, jobs, the media, and institutions, then multi-culturalism can be a source of newness and mutual enrichment, and everyone can celebrate having a ‘hyphenated’ identity with plural belongings and self-descriptions. But this means actively combating identificatory relationships with one’s home culture or one particular identity which lessen the humanity of the other and can encourage prejudice and inhumanity towards children, women, disadvantaged individuals and ‘outsiders’. In other words liberal tolerance in a democratic society does not mean embracing all cultures unconditionally, but accepting them only on condition that their practices are not illiberal. For faith communities this means rejecting fundamentalist interpretations of religion leading to hatred and violence, just as it means for a secular white society combating racism towards ‘immigrants’.

Third, the spirit to be aimed for in all attempts at ‘dialogue’ should not be one of mutual caution and fear, like the dialogue between a divorcing couple, but one of curiosity, celebration and openness, like the conversation of two people fascinated with each other. A society fostering multiple identities can be a source not of confusion and insecurity but of a heightened sense of vitality and humanistic love. It is the way awareness of other cultures and other faiths can deepen the humanistic content both of a religious belief and of atheism that should be the premise of dialogue, not just the need to overcome suspicion and fear. But it is vital that the representatives of all faiths and non-faiths accept the potential for violence, hatred, and war contained within their world view when it is interpreted in an identificatory mind-set. Gottfried Lessing’s play *Nathan the Wise Man*, in which three sons are given a ring of gold, only one of which is the ‘true’ ring *but none is told which is that ring*, was written as a metaphor for the coexistence of the Abrahamic faiths and still could be a seminal text today.

In a modern age posing a permanent threat to identity and belonging, especially to the descendants of immigrant communities, it is vital that the integrative transcultural humanism latent in religious and secular society prevails over fixed, single, identificatory identities. Otherwise, Europe, exposed to mounting
demographic and ecological pressures from outside, might well degenerate into a Fortress in its response to the developing world, while hosting degenerating ethnic, sectarian and communal tensions from within the citadel. In the British context for integrative belonging to remain in the ascendancy means not just fostering more dialogue between communities, but encouraging greater shared knowledge of each other, and deliberately intensifying the resources of pluralistic humanism whether secular or religious, within the various communities so that it becomes associated with the strong sense of belonging, meaning and identity that so many crave.

Alan Henning was beheaded by an IS executioner in September 2014 by ‘Jihadi John’, possibly the ex-rapper Jinn, aka British Muslim, Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary. Henning left his secure job as a taxi driver to work for aid convoys in Syria bringing relief to families in extreme distress. He embodies the best of a visceral sense of belonging to be found within transcultural humanism. His assassin incarnates the psychotic nature of extreme identificatory belonging. The future of humanity will be played out through the clash, not of civilisations, but of ways of belonging to this world.
Bibliography


Collective Identity, Muslim Identity Politics and Multiculturalism

Anisa Mustafa

Abstract
Interest in Muslim identities and citizenship has intensified with every renewed moral crisis precipitated by events such as the Rushdie affair, 9/11 and 7/7, generating questions about the dangers of too much diversity. Identity has also been at the centre of Muslim political struggles for equal citizenship in Britain, attracting critical evaluation from both progressive and conservative interlocutors who contest the reification of group boundaries that are inevitable with identity politics. In this paper I present a case study of identity politics by young adult British Muslims which I argue is based on a distinctly post 9/11 social movement aimed at turning negative difference into positive difference. Drawing on insights from both social movement theory (Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Melucci, 1995; 1996) and theories of multicultural citizenship (Modood, 2007, 2010; Phillips, 2007; Young, 1990, 2000) I will reveal how participants in my doctoral study recognised themselves as a collective group whilst highlighting the complexities of producing such a unifying entity. This paper also intends to demystify the salience of faith identities among British Muslims, highlighted in existing literature, by drawing attention to the political dimensions of such identity constructions and challenging some of the essentialist and damaging conclusions drawn from loyalty to Islam. Understanding the political positioning of Muslim faith identities underlines the continued importance and relevance of the politics of recognition based on group identities.

Introduction
Interest in Muslim identities and citizenship has intensified with every new moral crisis precipitated by events such as the Rushdie affair, 9/11 and 7/7 (Abbas, 2007; Brown 2010; Choudhury, 2007; Modood, 2010; Thomas, 2009), generating

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questions about the dangers of too much diversity (Goodhart, 2004). Identity has also been at the heart of Muslim political struggles for equal citizenship in Britain, attracting critical evaluation from both progressive and conservative interlocutors who contest the reification of group boundaries that are considered to be the inevitable and unavoidable product of identity politics (Modood, 2007, 2008; Solomos, 2001; Young, 1990; 2000).

In this paper I present a case study of identity politics by young adult British Muslims, which I argue is based on a distinctly post 9/11 social movement aimed at turning negative difference into positive difference. Drawing on insights from both social movement theory (Melucci, 1995; 1996; Crossley, 2002; Della Porta and Diani, 2006) and theories of multicultural citizenship (Modood, 2007, 2010; Phillips, 2007; Young, 1990, 2000) I will reveal how participants in my doctoral study recognised themselves as a collective group whilst highlighting the complexities of producing such a unifying entity. This paper also intends to demystify the salience of faith in the identities of British Muslims, highlighted by existing literature (Ameli 2002, 2004; Choudhury, 2007; Hussain and Bagguley, 2005; Lewis, 2007; Modood et al, 1997; Roy, 2004) by drawing attention to the political dimensions of religious identification and challenging some of the essentialist and damaging conclusions that are drawn from loyalty to Islam. Focusing on the political structuring of Muslim faith identities reveals the enduring significance and relevance of the politics of recognition based on distinct groups despite the obfuscating presence of hybridity and intersectionality in participants identities. While the multiple identifications revealed by participants were much more consistent with the given understandings of identity in contemporary social sciences (Brubaker, 2005; Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1993, 2005; Sen, 2006), these were greatly eclipsed by the salience of a Muslim collective identity.

The paper is based on analysis of interviews with 34 male and female British Muslim activists, aged between 17 and 37 years, engaging in a range of mobilisations from anti-war activism to voluntary and charity work in the Midlands region. Participants hailed from different social backgrounds, revealing divergent understandings of what it means to be a Muslim in contemporary Britain, from those who claimed Islam played a definitive and all-encompassing role in their life to those who admitted to being atheists with a cultural attachment to faith based rituals and customs. This multiplicity of religious practices and attitudes sometimes created personal conflict as well as political strife but despite such fissures participants defended a distinctive ‘Muslim’ identity against the perceived threat to them as a group, in a climate of intense post 9/11 Islamophobia.

The paper is organised into four sections beginning with a discussion on the paradox of essentialism and how it impinges upon Muslim identity politics in contradictory
ways. In this section I touch on the salient debates on identity politics to which the paper seeks to make a contribution, both by challenging some of the prevalent forms of essentialism that deny Muslim diversity and agency, as well as arguing for the continuing relevance of primary group identities that anti-essentialist scholars contest. Following this I present my analysis, starting with findings that reveal the centrality of collective identity for participants and its active production through processes shaped by the agency of participants. In the next section I highlight the complexities of faith identification which confound essential ideas about Muslim identity politics and finally by examining the role of faith as a political ideology that informs an emergent social movement shaped by the post 9/11 political context.

**Muslim Identity Politics and the Essentialist Paradox**

Muslim identity politics is often subject to two competing kinds of critiques both involving the notion of essentialism. The more immediate and consequential to the lives of ordinary Muslims is the form of essentialism operating in dominant public and policy discourses which frame them as a ‘problematic’ and ‘troubling’ presence that threatens ‘the values of individualism and freedom said to define Western nations’ (Morey and Yaqin 2011, Location10). Often seen as ‘the most difficult of all foreigners to integrate’ (Sartori in Grillo 2005, 24) due to their ‘alien values’ (Kundnani 2007, 126) Muslims have been caricatured and stereotyped by the West for centuries as vividly detailed by Edward Said (1997, Location3435) who even before 9/11 identified a common frame used by the West for representing Islam as ‘medieval’, ‘dangerous’ and ‘hostile’. This framing has been vigorously reanimated in contemporary narratives fixing Muslims into a homogenous category that obscures the vast diversity of people who share an Islamic background (Lewis 2007; Modood 1997, 2007; Phillips 2007; Sen, 2006). As Ansari (2009) has highlighted in London alone there are Muslims from over 50 ethnic backgrounds speaking different languages, who vary significantly in their social characteristics, making assumptions about common values, beliefs and practices unsustainable. Consequently Ansari (2009, 4) states that ‘Thus any presumptions of Muslim homogeneity and coherence which claim to override the differences between rural and urban, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, do not necessarily correspond to social reality.’

However, following 9/11, and even more so after 7/7, reductionist thinking about Muslims has been ascendant where ‘the propensity for extremism and violence of a small segment of politicised Islam is magnified and projected onto Muslim communities around the world’ (Morley and Yaqin 2011, Location 266). Stereotypes about Muslims are not just confined to media and public circles but also find expression in policies and discourses emphasising their ‘culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands’ (Modood, 2003, 100) which fan the flames of the
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‘retreat from multiculturalism’ (Joppke, 2004, 237). While multiculturalism always had its detractors, two events hastened its political demise; namely 9/11 and street disturbances involving Muslim youths in northern British cities in the summer of 2001. Following these incidents multiculturalism came under increased attack for fuelling ‘self-segregation’ which was seen as the cause of the British riots as well as a ‘slippery slope’ to ‘terrorism’, (Kundnani, 2007, 124). Spurred by anxieties over the threat to national unity posed by too much difference and diversity, the state has initiated measures like community cohesion (Abbas, 2007; Alexander, 2007; Brown, 2010) and immigration controls (Kundnani, 2007). These have largely targeted Muslims on the basis of stereotypes about their potential riskiness and incompatibility, generating ‘significant, if vaguely formulated, suspicion of Muslim people in general’ (Sen, 2006, 61). As Abbas (2007, 298) has pointed out after 9/11:

At the level of the nation state, popular discourses have been focusing on culturally essentialist notions of “the Muslim” for example, based on the perceived problems of “arranged marriages”, “cultural relativism” and “self-styled” segregation. It is a victim-blaming pathology that is saturating public opinion.

This partly explains why interest in Muslim citizenship has often coalesced around the identities of Muslims, since arguments about the incompatibility of Muslims in the West often hinge on the values, culture and beliefs of Muslims in what Roy (2004) refers to as the misguided culturalist approach. This is the argument that all the problems associated with Muslims in the West are linked to Islam, or in other words Islam is the problem (Blair, 2013; Harris, 2006; Phillips, 2013). The growing significance of faith as a primary source of identity for Muslims, particularly among the young, (Ansari, 2009; Choudhury, 2007; Lewis, 2007; Parekh, 2008; Thomas, 2009) has further provoked disquiet as this is often equated with rejection of Western values and culture or conflated with support for terrorism (Mythen et al, 2009; Thomas and Sanderson, 2011). Such reductive conclusions prevail despite growing evidence that European-born Muslims are more inclined to interpret their faith in a secular and individualised ways, rejecting traditional models imparted by parental cultures (Cesari, 2007; Ramadan, 2009; Roy, 2004). This suggests a myopic view of Muslim identity politics with little understanding of the complex and multiple identifications of young Muslims and how these interact in the political and civic domain.

Ironically, while this kind of essentialism is thought to contribute to the common view of Muslims as ‘the enemy within’ (Abbas, 2007, 295), the other side of the coin is that Muslim identity politics itself generates criticism for being essentialist, as evident in the academic objections to multiculturalism. Supporters of extant
emancipatory struggles, including feminism (Okin, 1998 and Pollitt, 1999 in Phillips, 2007) and the politics of redistribution (Fraser, 2001; Harvey, 1996 in Young, 2000), argue that the kind of identity politics that galvanises demands for multicultural citizenship are based on essentialist arguments that reinforce social stereotyping. Fraser (2001) has criticised the identity model of recognition politics because it emphasises the ‘group identity as the object of recognition’ (Fraser, 2001, 24; original emphasis) pressurising members to conform to the group identity and inhibiting complexity and diversity. Solomos (2001, 209) has also warned of the ‘divisive and destructive aspects of the move towards “identity politics” which can ossify the boundaries of identity and obscure the cultural and historical production of differences by representing them as natural and immutable. Adding credence to this critique is the important work of scholars who have challenged accounts of identity that prioritise any single dimension by highlighting the multiple, fluid, and shifting dimensions of social identities (Brubaker, 2005; Brah, 2007; Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1993, 2005; Sen, 2006). According to the anti-essentialist position the problem with multiculturalism is that it is based on groups and cultures that ‘do not exist’ (Modood, 2007, 90). However, despite the attendant risks of reification defenders of multiculturalism maintain support for such identity politics on the basis that:

Not only is there no inherent reification in politicized ethnicity but for theorists to latch on to the reification in the confused or crude accounts that agents give of their activities and beliefs is actually to over-homogenize and essentialize the beliefs that people have. (Modood, 2007, 97)

Similarly, Anne Phillips (2007) asserts that while an over emphasis on culture and group identity can be reifying, simply ignoring cultural and identity claims does not make social differences disappear, since they are often the result of discrimination against certain groups and its members even when they have no interest in being defined in that way. Phillips (2007) claims groups become politically relevant when their differences are the basis on which they suffer inequality often with attendant structural disadvantages. Without denying the importance of hybridised and intersectional identities, Modood (2007, 97) insists on taking group identities seriously but instead of treating them as essential or fixed he suggests that the ‘coherence of a group’ be seen as ‘akin to family resemblance’. Arguing that anti-essentialists often overlook the ways in which social actors themselves prioritise certain aspects of their identities in particular contexts, Modood (200, 112) states:

As with class, so with other forms of groupness; politics can play a large role in creating a certain kind of collective identity and action but would be unlikely to succeed if some element of shared circumstances and/or ways of living were not already present and could be drawn upon to weave a political
Research by O’Toole and Gale (2013, 139) has supported these claims with empirical examples of the ‘continuing vitality’ of group-based identities which take ‘collective political forms’. In other words while the plural and intersectional quality of identity is undeniable and in fact crucial to Muslim identity politics, there continues to be a persistence of primary identities in political struggles which should not be ignored (Castells, 2010; Modood, 2007; O’Toole and Gale, 2013). In the following analysis I will attempt to add further empirical support to this argument.

Diversity and Intersectionality in Muslim Identifications

In this section I will uncover the complexities of producing a collective identity by exploring how contradictions in participants’ accounts were resolved in ways that did not undermine the underlying coherence of a valued and primary identity. Such tensions were evident in the contingent ways in which participants’ identified with groups but also how they differentiated themselves from group members in different contexts. The case of Romana is particularly illuminating in representing the complexities of grounding a collective identity. Romana grew up in predominantly white area, where she struggled with her Muslim identity because of the feeling that ‘everybody hates us’. At University Romana discovered a network of Muslim students and societies through which she regained confidence in her faith identity.

Romana: Since I’ve come to University, especially over the last two years I’ve sort of felt like- I feel a bit sad that I’ve lost that like I’ve forgotten how to pray and I’ve forgotten like I’ve forgotten surahs (holy verses) and things and like I’d really like to learn it again.. and I feel like sort of being involved in all these Muslim… sort of projects and all these things that like involve Muslims I feel like I can sort of engage with it and like slowly come to that point where I can re-learn what I’ve lost.

In this passage Romana identifies strongly with a collective Muslim identity because this allows her to reclaim an important dimension of self that had previously been repressed due to experiences of racism and Islamophobia. The reference to ‘Muslim’ projects and activities establishes a distinct group to which she belongs and where she can regain what is essentially a ‘lost’ part of her being through identification with others who share her experiences. This resonates an understanding of collective identity as a process of active production through nourishing interactions with others in the identity group (Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Melucci, 1995; 1996). However, in the next extract Romana goes on to describe how this network could also be the source of a contradictory sense of marginalisation and exclusion.
Romana: Yeah I mean like there’s people like me who like, like the people that did like lose their way a little bit like you’re, you feel sort of isolated from the like sort of main Muslim group like ISocs (Islamic Societies) and things you feel like, you feel a bit like they look down their nose at you and they don’t see you as one of them so you’re sort of, you’re sort of in limbo a little bit and like you find your own group eventually but like it’s sort of like you’re not really sort of accepted by them because you’re not quite as religious as them.

While in the earlier extract Romana actively relates herself to a collective Muslim identity through differentiation with the rest of society that is seen as discriminatory, in the second extract she reveals that differences in religious interpretation and practice can create disparities of belonging leading to disunity within the group. While the different ways in which Romana describes her relationship with other Muslim students and activists might appear to be contradictory, this tension can be understood through a conceptualisation of identity as fluid and dynamic, which can be unified and static in some contexts while polycentric and relational in others. Even though the concept of identity ‘remains semantically inseparable from the idea of permanence’ (Melucci, 1996, 72) more recent scholarship has emphasised its fluidity, creativity and plurality (Brubaker, 2005; Brah, 2007; Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1993, 2005; Sen, 2006). In addition to understanding identities as multiple, where people can belong to different types of groups, Modood (2007, 118) posits an element of ‘individual variability’ contending that ‘not all group members, even in the case of any one group, are all members in the same way.’ Romana’s variable sense of belonging can be understood as representing two different subjectivities shaped by shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, where collective identity functions like ‘a field which expands and contracts and whose borders alter with the varying intensity and direction of the various forces that constitute it’ (Melucci, 1996, 76). Whereas in the first extract racism and marginalisation produces groupness, in the latter statement variation in religious practice fragments it. A similar struggle was evident with Kasim, who was one of two first generation migrants in the study.

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

Here Kasim is describing the difficulty of building solidarity with other British Muslims because his experience of racism as a first generation migrant is qualitatively
different from second and third generation migrants. Despite these dissimilarities Kasim saw himself as a member of the local (City) Muslim community, although unlike Romana this was not based on strong religious affinity.

*Kasim:* Yeah I’m saying that third generation, fourth generation migrants that if you are talking to them about racism their concept is quite different they would go well...yeah we are Pakistani or not even Pakistani we’re Muslim so.......the.......the way they perceive it is different it has...changed but the more you talk to them the more you interact with them the things will become clear but yeah this is absolutely right that being Muslim you are going to be discriminated... ... yeah he won’t call himself Bangladeshi or even I mean even his family comes from Bangladesh or Pakistani or Indian or anything like that or Black or Asian even sometimes, he asserts that he’s a Muslim..... (Researcher: What do you call yourself?).........I’m Black Internationalist (laughs) yeah I mean I would use being – I would say that I’m a Muslim for specific purposes but that’s only for those purposes yeah.

In this extract Kasim reveals that he identifies much more strongly with the identity label of ‘Black’ but the Muslim identity label also occupies a strategic position in his politics determined by the ubiquitous threat of Islamophobia. Kasim’s manoeuvrings to situate his identity in common ground in relation to others facing similar discrimination conveys some of the complexities and intersectionality inherent in the production of collective identities. Kasim neither shares the strong connection to faith identity nor does he experience marginalisation in the same way that his peers do. Yet it is difficult for Kasim to disassociate from the Muslim label because of the fact that ‘being a Muslim you are going to be discriminated’. The following quote reveals how despite these tensions he is able to invoke a collective Muslim identity.

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

In this extract Kasim resolves the differences that separate him from other Muslims by uniting them under the ‘primary identity’ of ‘migration’ which allows him to transcend divisions and unite with a ‘Muslim’ category marked by universal discrimination. These cases highlight the personal struggles that are masked by the apparent stability of a collective identity as well as the active processes behind its production. As Brah (2007, 145) has elucidated it is possible ‘one can proclaim a Muslim political identity and feel that one has things in common with other Muslims. But at the level of subjectivity, one may experience things quite differently from those whose political visions one may share.’ The political importance of these
efforts to negotiate between shifting boundaries of identification is highlighted in
the following extract where Basma defends a collective Muslim identity despite
tensions over the terms of membership.

_Basma_: Politically I’m aware that…like for example this, these issues I will
not speak about externally to kind of BME or mainly Muslim circles anyway
but I know the importance of maintaining a solidarity and a community
because…historically I understand that…to a certain extent each member is
like a victim of a history and for example issues with gender can be traced
back to so many other kind of historically colonial incidents anyway and…it
yeah so, so like in a sense I’m not aggressive but I try to understand and I
know that I have to be there in those spaces regardless of how uncomfortable
a (ISoc) speaker’s making me feel by saying I have to- not looking at me in the
eye but saying you know ‘sister at the end of the day if you’re not wearing the
head scarf you’re not going to think that is a respectable practising Muslim
woman’ so you know having to deal with that, I know I have to be there
even if I am the only like one of five for example in order to open that space
up for, for others because I don’t want them to, to feel both the internal and
external marginalisation. Here Basma reveals how collective identity has to be negotiated, asserted and
maintained through constant effort and struggle. Groupness is drawn by a line
between what can be spoken about internally within ‘Muslim circles’ and what
must not be said externally. Basma is referring to her experience of attending Islamic
Society events where she is marginalised and criticised for not wearing a head scarf.
The qualification that this issue can only be discussed within BME circles conveys
implicit knowledge of the sensitivities and controversies surrounding the role of
women in Muslim communities. Basma even attempts to mitigate the damage her
critique may do to the Muslim collective identity by suggesting ‘issues with gender’
have their roots in colonialism. The presence of such defensive and qualifying
statements highlights the tension between Basma’s faith and gender identity. The
fact that this tension is resolved in favour of maintaining solidarity within the
collective Muslim identity is revealing of the priority it has in the specific context
of pressures of marginalisation. This is suggestive of a political dimension in the
production of collective identities.

The distinctive ways in which participants related to the identity label of ‘Muslim’
reveals that this was not a given or uncontested group but rather its coherence had
to be achieved through the participants’ efforts to resolve conflicts between multiple
and intersecting identities, reflecting the ‘active process’ (Melucci, 1995, 44) that
often remains invisible in the stable and unified public persona of a group. These
narratives reveal that collective identity has to be understood through a ‘relational’
rather than ‘substantialist logic’ (Young, 2000, Location 1059) meaning it is not
automatically and unconsciously generated from a single marker of group identity but rather is constantly negotiated and shaped in relation to different internal and external forces and conditions. Producing collective identity involves boundary work where the parameters between inside and outside can shift depending on the temporal and contextual configuration of different dimensions or vectors along which collective identity is being constructed. This was evident in the way participants contracted the boundary of inclusion when describing divisions within the group but expanded it when referencing distinctions with the wider society. The way in which a collective Muslim identity was produced with an implied homogeneity, which was not always experienced personally, suggests that the production of a collective identity had a great deal of importance to the participants.

**The Role of Faith in Identity Politics**

To highlight the political dimension of faith in the identity of young Muslims I now want to focus on discourses where participants explained their activism by elevating Islam as the primary category of identification. This takes the discussion beyond the production of collective identity to its core contents. This discussion is important for demystifying the salience of faith in Muslim identity politics which has often been cited as evidence of Muslim disloyalty to their countries of settlement (Parekh, 2008; Werbner, 2000) particularly in relation to the contested concept of ‘ummah’. The notion of the *ummah* literally describes a global Muslim community, signifying a collective Muslim identity that functions like a stateless nation. Muslim loyalty to the *ummah* has prompted recriminations that as Muslims ‘privileged the *ummah* over the nation-state, they were far more interested in global Muslim causes than in their fellow citizens, and could not be trusted to be good citizens’ (Parekh, 2008, 8). It is useful therefore to examine how participants’ invoked this concept in describing their motivations to act.

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

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

Here the ummah is cited as the impetus to mobilise but also acts as a collective identity that appears to subsume all the other forms of identification. However, the way in which ummah is being deployed in these accounts is highly politicised since it is being constructed as an object of oppression, persecution and injustice that is in need of defensive action. This is revealed by the references to ‘stand up for what’s right’ and supporting the ‘persecuted, oppressed’ all of which bring the ummah into being as a collective that is being challenged and threatened. What is also significant is that the threat being posed is not a distant one but is linked to experiences closer to home through references to ‘the grassroots people’ and the ‘collective people’ with whom the participants interact in a British context. The spatial and temporal context of the ummah in these discourses suggests that the concept did not have the kind of atavistic and totalising influence that is often ascribed to it in mainstream discourses (Roy, 2004; Parekh, 2008; Phillips, 2007) but rather indicates its’ provenance in the present politicisation of Muslim identities at home as well as on the global front. Roy (2004, 40) has argued that the assertion of faith identities among Muslims in the West is linked to processes of modernisation rather than a retreat to tradition, indicating particular forms of religiosity which are ‘based on individual practices, on ethics and not on culture’. The diverse identifications with faith, revealed by young Muslim activists in this study, point to such individualised and ethical, rather than cultural, interpretations of Islam in the production of collective identity. Religiosity was framed by choice and agency in relation to contemporary social challenges and demands on young Muslims, rather than with deference to tradition or community pressures as the following quotes reveal.

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

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

These discourses underline the role of religion as a unifying force capable of generating a collective identity where other forms of identification were weak and exclusionary. In Hanif’s account religion has become the common frame of reference where ethnic and cultural belonging has become diluted and confusing and underscores the differences rather than similarities between minorities. For Haseena faith fostered a sense of belonging and community at university because she was uncomfortable engaging in the typical social rituals of student life based on alcohol consumption. Haseena describes her relationship with other Muslim students using the spatial concept of ‘circle’ which is suggestive of a periphery marking out the group but this boundary is not drawn with religious markers since she specifies that group members are not particularly religious. Rather this represents a space where the marginalisation experienced in relation to the wider student body is experienced and jointly mitigated.

The above accounts not only highlight the diversity of ways in which young Muslims identify with their faith, they also draw attention to the role of faith as a political resource to build a stable sense of self through constituting a ‘project identity’ as defined by Castells (2010, xxvi) ‘when social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, in so doing, seek the transformation of overall structure.’

The role of the ummah as a motivational force in generating a positive identity for Muslims was evident in the way it was cited as driving factor.

Arya: That is my goal isn’t it...the reason why I’d want our ummah to go back to the way it was first of all is to please Allah (God)...second of all because...because of my love for the Prophet and my love for the sahaba (his companions) you know that idea of the Prophet coming at this time and seeing the state we’re in, it’s painful I’d hate for that to happen, that’s why I’d want to do my best...to try and achieve what he once achieved.

This quote demonstrates the value of faith as a powerful symbolic and ideological resource drawn on to resist the challenges Muslims face, encapsulated in the frustration expressed over ‘the state we’re in’. The ideal of a once glorious ummah not only produces and defends a collective identity capable of unifying diverse individual interests and subject positions but also projects the positive achievements of Muslims, reflecting Mythen’s (2012, 408) contention that ‘ummatic identities
**Dania:** I think young people coming up post 9/11...everyone- we all-everyone has very much ...developed the understanding and, and kind of been able to...so resist that kind of oppression in different ways and we have created our own narrative in which...which is easier to deal with this and it's one that is just kind of, “ok this- this is bullshit what they're saying is not right”, we don't like- we don't live it- Muslims don't believe it like we're not, we're not even going try and bow down to and say oh no, no we're not terrorists or whatever, people just doing, people are just living a kind of a resistive identity I think.

Here Dania is describing a collective Muslim identity fashioned through resistance to the prevalent ‘oppression’ resulting from Muslims being cast as potential terrorists in the wake of 9/11. Dania is also revealing the nature of Muslim opposition as adopting the form of a ‘resistive identity’ which presents itself as a refusal to engage in the political debate on hegemonic terms where even the denial of terrorism would be to ‘bow down’. Dania’s perspective reverberated in participants’ political
narratives and actions, meaning the forms of mobilisation that the participants opted to engage in reflected such a resistive identity without being explicitly stated. In the following extract Yasir reinforces the view that Muslim collective identity has been conditioned by public attitudes and prejudices.

**Yasir:** I think after 9/11 it kind of just singled out Muslims, Muslims became the prime target for everyone and you know before 9/11 you had the sense of community where at least everyone who was a minority, everyone your kind was just like oh well we all get it at some point but after 9/11 it was like Muslims, including Muslims, who couldn’t remember a time when Blacks and Irish and...sort of Asians were treated differently were suddenly the target and it’s- it got to a point where for a time you had other communities also turning on Muslims who should have known better.

Here Yasir marks the importance of 9/11 Islamophobia in framing Muslims as a distinct group in contrast to the past when social discrimination tarnished all minorities with a similar brush. This view of collective identity as being generated from becoming a ‘prime target’ echoes Bourdieu’s (in Sen, 2006, 27) view that ‘social magic can transform people by telling them that they are different’. The presence of such exclusionary logic in the everyday lives of the young activists was also evident in accounts of distressing racist incidents as Sara describes.

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

As this analysis reveals, many participants viewed Islamophobia as having roots in 9/11 which they believed was directly related to Muslims being seen as potential terrorists. References to a ‘moral panic’ (Parekh, 2008, 11) over the presence of Muslims in Europe pre-date 9/11 but these discourses suggest a paradigm shift taking place in its aftermath, resounding academic claims of a ‘post 9/11 crisis in which the integration and loyalty of Muslims are the greatest challenge’ (Modood, 2007, 20). While few of the participants described post 9/11 stigmatisation and marginalisation as the sole explanatory factor in their activism, the recurrence of themes related to the War on Terror indicates that these factors played a very important role in the political subjectivities of these participants. The foregoing
discussions have presented an overview of how participants’ constructions of collective identity could be linked to shared experiences and perceptions of Islamophobia which transcended and blunted the divisive presence of internal diversity and intersectionality of identities.

This perception of an external threat helps to explain the highly politicised role of faith in solidifying the boundaries of collective identity as owned and asserted by these participants. The political role of faith was further evidenced by the strategic and tactical interpretations of Islam which corresponded with the different dimensions of Islamophobia participants were concerned with, which in turn influenced the forms of activism they prioritised. In other words forms of activism were oriented towards resisting and overturning specific stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslims which influenced the way in which faith was interpreted and invoked in discourses.

\textit{Abid:} I think my religion plays a very active role in what I do socially, cause if you look at back at the time of the Prophet I mean he was very much involved in his community though a you know thriving businesses and market places and you know mosque leaders, there was always something going on and going back to that I mean there’s a famous story usually narrated about the woman that constantly threw rubbish on the Prophet when he used to pass on the way to the mosque. One day because you know one day she fell ill and she didn’t throw the rubbish at him you know the Prophet actually inquired about her and that’s a good story that really, really does go around in a lot of the mosques and madrasas (faith schools) nowadays to teach the people you know the compassionate side of Islam and you know just show how generous you should be even if someone’s you know beating you down.

In this quote Abid is justifying his community activism through charitable work with youth and homeless people, not only with Muslims but more widely in the community, by relating this to the actions of the Prophet Mohammad. The Prophet’s example acts as a motivating force but also promotes an image of Islam that contradicts negative stereotypes of Muslims as citizens who ‘do not wish to and cannot integrate’ (Parekh, 2008, 11) or contribute to the communities in which they live. Abid’s reference to the Prophet’s compassion towards a woman who persistently hurled garbage at him in the street also implicitly suggests that despite the burdens being placed on Muslims their faith teaches them mercy and generosity towards antagonists. This can be seen as a reversal of the frequently cited image of the angry, reactionary Muslim youth that has dominated media and public commentaries on Muslim identity politics since the Rushdie Affair. Within Abid’s narrative there is a mutually constitutive relationship between religious motivation and the aims of activism. Similarly other participants’ interpretations of their faith played an ideological role in reinforcing their political objectives.
Saif: God told you the first word in the Quran says ‘to read’, that means that you're naturally going to learn and question and challenge, including the existence of God... now that's the first sign of a believer, I believe is questioning or doubting and then you realise that if any.. any ideology which says to you first of, go and read must be pretty confident within itself that you know what, it's true. Come on man let's just take it, we're academics and that and we realise that the truth - you get to the truth if you read and this is allegedly what God's saying you know, go and read and you'll find God.

Irum: Faith is the reason I got involved because I felt it was part of my duty to do so and faith is the reason I got involved because I feel like I need to protect it from the damage and the punches and the kicks that it's getting and faith is my tool to defend what I’m doing because a lot of people will say what I’m doing is un-Islamic and then I’ll say well actually not really and then you know like Aisha Rozinha (Prophet’s wife) she did this that and the other and Prophet’s first wife Khadija was this that and the other and you know Rabia al Basri was one of the most famous mystics and writers and you know the first two universities that were opened were by Muslim women so all these things.

For these participants faith provides a sound reasoning and justification for their respective activism choices. Saif’s pursuit of activism through academia is based on emphasising learning as one of the most basic tenets of Islam which also addresses critics who see it as regressive and primitive faith. Irum’s objectives to empower Muslim women are bolstered by examples from Islamic history that challenge both internal and external forms of essentialism which are typically employed to limit their voice and agency. Irum’s reading of her faith resists pressure from within Muslim communities for women to conform to particular models of femininity but also projects an image of Islam that challenges the widely held view that it is a religion that suppresses women.

These discourses can be seen to bring both faith and civic or political activism in a harmonious conversation with each other in ways that also coincide with resisting the aspects of Muslim collective identity that are currently the basis of stigmatisation. These personal and considered readings of faith give credence to Roy’s (2004, 10) contention that the most important question regarding Muslims in the West is not ‘what the Koran says but what Muslims say the Koran says’. The accounts presented above suggest that rather than Islam dictating the politics of these participants the relationship was reciprocal, with political choices often influencing interpretations of faith, at least discursively in the context of this study. These findings challenge reductionist assumptions that ‘one’s identity necessarily defines one’s politics’ by highlighting how ‘identity grows out of and is transformed by action and struggle’ (Solomos, 2001, 202). What connects these different approaches to faith is the
strategic interpretation and projection of Islamic values and practices to resist the denigration of valued aspects of personal identities. This points to collective identity being shaped by and into a political project to defend stigmatised identities, where faith acts as a powerful cultural and ideological resource to unify the different intersectional and hybridised identities valued by participants.

**Conclusion**

This paper has presented empirical evidence from an ethnographic study of young adult British Muslim political and civic activists to address two competing critiques of identity politics, both centring on the dilemma of essentialism. Firstly it has challenged the culturalist and reductionist view of ‘Muslims’ as a homogenous category by exploring how this collective identity is consciously and actively constructed by activist participants through processes marked by complexity and ambiguity, signifying the multiple and relational nature of social identities. It was also argued that the diversity of ways in which faith is activated and inscribed in such a collective identity highlights its political dimension in a post 9/11 context. Secondly, the paper has also responded to questions about the risks of reification in prioritising singular dimensions of groups or identities by highlighting the political contingencies that make identity politics as a politics of recognition crucial to Muslim participants in this study. This was elucidated by revealing how stigmatised identities are defended by invoking strategic understandings and interpretations of faith to challenge the specific aspects of Muslim denigration in post 9/11 Islamophobia.

The importance of a collective Muslim identity to the political and civic mobilisation of these participants reflects Iris Marion Young’s (2000, Location 1329) understanding of the efforts of marginalised groups to revalue and reclaim identities through cultural politics that ‘often involves individual and collective exploration of the meaning of a cultural group’s histories, practices, and meanings’. Such identity politics can fortify the boundaries between groups drawing censure for dividing and undermining the broader universal project for social justice and equality among marginalised citizens (Fraser, 2001; Young, 1990, 2000; Phillips, 2007). However, it is worth reiterating Young’s contention that such efforts do not intrinsically carry political significance and that such differentiated identities become politicised when cultural expressions are thwarted or threatened as participants in this study revealed in defending stigmatised identities through projecting particular forms of religiosity aimed at resisting exclusion and discrimination.

These strategies also speak to Solomos’ (2001, 201) assertion that when cultural racism manifests itself in demands for assimilation into the nation, subordinate groups use difference to ‘authorise their own representations’ and ‘seize the category’
and invert it by attaching positive rather than negative value to it. An appreciation of the significance of ‘difference’ as a ‘normative starting point’ for understanding the cultural politics of young Muslims is important (Modood, 2007, 37) as it mitigates the inherent paradox of identity politics driven by the need to both challenge essentialist ideas about the group and reinforce them by asserting and amplifying differences (Modood, 2007; Phillips, 2007). Modood (2007, 39) insists that the concept of ‘difference’ rather than culture or religion should be prioritised in appreciating the demands of identity politics, as this is ‘to recognise that the difference in question is not just constituted from the ‘inside’, from the side of the minority culture, but also from the outside, from the representations and treatment of the minorities in question.’

The complexity and agency involved in producing a collective identity demonstrates that for participants’ in this study a collective Muslim identity was not only a priority but one that merited taking on all the attendant struggles and strife associated with such a project. These findings invoke and support previous scholarship which has highlighted the ‘continued relevance of group-based politics among young people’ (O’Toole and Gale, 2013, 156) where Islam acted as an ‘anchor identity’, around and through which other expressions were routed and mediated (Mythen, 2012, 397). There was also support for the argument that the relevance and significance of such primary identities is linked to ‘shared experiences of racialised discrimination’ (O’Toole and Gale, 2013, 156) which somewhat inhibited the expression of multiple and hybridised identities in political discourses. While it is possible that other valued dimensions of identity may take precedence in other contexts it is also worth considering Mythen’s (2012, 402) suggestion that for young Muslims in Britain today the space for ‘the dynamism of hybridity’ to thrive has become very limited. Security concerns have made transcendence from ‘the essentialism of the original culture’ into the ‘third space which enables other positions to emerge’ (Bhabha, 1990 in Mythen, 2012, 395) much more challenging for Muslims.
Bibliography


Reconceptualising Mass Migration Within the Primary School History Curriculum Master Narrative for a Broader Sense of Connection and Belonging to England and English History

Marlon Moncrieffe

Abstract

The teaching for learning of English history in primary schools is argued as fundamental for developing a sense of national identity. It seeks to achieve this by presenting a version of the past for its recipients. However, it has also been argued that English history in primary schools via the national curriculum is constructed upon a master narrative that is exclusive in its presentation of a dominant Anglo-centric and nationalistic version of the past. After considering discourses surrounding this debate, the paper will draw upon significant research evidence which has uncovered how teachers of primary school history desire the inclusion of studies concerning a multi-cultural diverse England in the revised English national history curriculum. These findings will be discussed in considering the opportunities and the challenges faced by primary school teachers developing their practice and pedagogical approaches for reconceptualising the revised primary history curriculum. The teaching for learning of mass migration by minority-ethnic groups of people to England over the ages is presented as an example to illustrate how a focus on the broad and diverse experiences of these, through historical inquiry, could be made by primary school teachers and children to engage in developing a broader sense of connection and belonging to England and English history.

Introduction

This paper begins by discussing the professional and public discourses concerning the purpose and intentions of history education in the primary school. The professional discourse of history considers the subject as a disciplined study for developing inquiry skills of students, whilst the public discourse views teaching

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history in primary schools as a means to foster a sense of unifying national identity for students (Harris and Reynolds 2014). The position of historical inquiry adopted by this paper can be understood as situated within the application of a historical consciousness, (Clark 2014; Ahonen 2005; Seixas 2004) a concept illustrated as a process by which ‘people make connections between the past and the present, which consequently affects what they believe is possible in the future’ (Harris and Reynolds 2014, 2). Historical consciousness therefore makes central to its inquiry personal (micro) histories and experiences. When these are recognised, acknowledged and interpreted, they can then be juxtaposed against the larger (macro) common view account of history, enabling analysis, re-interpretation and a critical evaluation of historical themes and events. This paper argues that it is an approach to the study of history that can potentially offer a route for opportunities to identify and recognise congruent patterns of experience from the diverse accounts of mass migration by minority-ethnic groups of people in England over the ages. The argument is made that this approach to historical inquiry via the primary school curriculum is potentially a common thread for developing an understanding of mass migration in the past, present and future, and where a sense of connection and belonging to England and English history can potentially be sewn.

**Professional and Public Discourses and the Teaching of History in the Primary School**

It is the potential of history as a powerful cultural medium to transmit ideas, ideologies, values and beliefs for moulding identity, collectively and individually, which influences the reason for its study via the national curriculum (Nichol and Harnett 2011a; Seixas 2007; Barton and Levstik 2004; Marwick 1989). What it means to think historically is a central theme to an ongoing debate (Harris and Reynolds 2014) in education which has in opposition professional and public discourses, both concerned with teaching history in the primary school (Harris 2013; Osler 2009). The professional discourse is a position that considers national history as a construct (Lee 1992) and is critical of the way in which a positivistic version of the past has been put together, arguing that historical inquiry should demonstrate multiple perspectives to allow for broader analysis and critical evaluation in deconstruction of the content under scrutiny (Price 1968). On the contrary, public discourses view the priority of history to be concerned an in-depth acquisition of the historical record (Hirsch 1987) generally based upon the celebratory story of a nation. The tension between these two competing discourses points to the educational site as the field in which this theoretical struggle manifests (Mohanty 1994). In the context of this paper, it is the potential influence on and of primary school teachers pertaining to their classroom practice; their subjectivities and their own implicit or explicit use of historical consciousness to inform their
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pedagogical approaches that will be considered further.

With primary school classroom practice, it appears that influence of the public discourse position has been prioritised where teaching for learning English history being framed by what has been described as a ‘master narrative’ (Nichol and Harnett 2011a, 106). The ‘master narrative’ concept stems originally from a 17th century Whig interpretation of national history (Evans 2011; Nichol and Harnett 2011a; Butterfield 1931) transmitted in primary school classrooms through textbooks via the work of Unstead (1962) and through the writing of Marshall (2005) first published in 1905. Marshall’s (2005) narrative presents a series of stories considered central to the myth and legend of English history (Nichol and Harnett 2011a). This was approved by the British government’s Board of Education in 1904 as a ‘master narrative’ of the nation’s history. Now, 100 years later, it has been raised to public consciousness by the coalition government, championed by the former Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove (Gove 2010) and hailed by Prime Minister David Cameron as his favourite childhood book (Hough 2010).

Despite the above endorsements and celebratory perspective placed upon Marshall’s (2005) narrative of English history, it has also been interpreted as depicting a narrow account of English history (Nichol and Harnett 2011a) which operates educationally to inculcate children with a collective sense of national identity that is based upon a pride rooted in the past. It does this through stories of invasions and settlement by Anglo-Saxons; Viking raids; Christian crusades and the noble deeds of English heroes. The Nichol and Harnett (2011a) perspective can be developed further in application of Post Colonial Theory (PCT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) as frameworks for critical analysis. The former, PCT is based upon a broad set of perspectives which are juxtaposed against one another and involves a range of issues that are often the preoccupation of other disciplines such as of social justice and of history (Young 2003). An explicit objective of PCT is to disturb the order of the world and to threaten privilege and power by demanding equality and well-being for all human beings on this earth (Bhabha 2004; Young 2003). The critical concern of PCT is that the primary school history curriculum in shaping its content through Marshall’s (2005) ‘master narrative’ articulates an ideological discourse of modernity for upholding a hegemonic normality, thus disadvantaging the histories and legacies of other peoples within that same nation state (Bhabha 2004). CRT provides a similar critical perspective of Marshall’s (2005) ‘master narrative’ with the notion that racism is normal in a white dominated society (such as England) and that this is fuelled by a continued legitimacy of oppressive structures in that society (Ladson-Billings 1998). The CRT argument would be that the primary school history curriculum mass migration focus being placed solely upon teaching for learning of a white European experience is founded upon white privilege, operating
to present an exclusive ‘master narrative’ account of history, ultimately making
invisible broader minority-ethnic group experiences and accounts of history in that
society (Delgado and Stefanic 2012). Both PCT and CRT point to the fundamental
relationship between the power of policymakers (the coalition government position)
and use of the ‘master narrative’ within primary school curriculum for history by
teachers in the classroom. PCT and CRT perspectives identify the ‘master narrative’
of English history as a powerful medium for the reinforcement of propaganda,
agendas, ideas, ideologies, values and beliefs (Delgado and Stefanic 2012; Bhabha
2004). The primary national curriculum for history is worked as a tool to transmit
the hegemony (Gramsci 2012) of the policymakers and the ruling class in society
using curriculum guidance, potentially influencing decisions and choices made by
primary school teachers in their practice and pedagogical approaches to teaching
for learning.

The current political position concerning the use of a Anglo-centric (Osler 2009)
‘master narrative’ for teaching history is not a fresh approach by the coalition
government, but in fact derives from New Labour 1997 to 2010 recommendations
for history teaching in primary schools. Osler (2009) discusses the New Labour
government rhetoric which places a greater urgency (Osler 2009) on the need to
reinforce the national story since the 7/7 incidents in London 2007 (Straw 2007)
identified as led by minority-ethnic English born Muslims and further in fighting
the so called war on terror defined as the struggle against Islam, commonly known
as Islamophobia (Gottschalk and Greenburg 2008). Implicitly, perhaps this could
be seen in the rhetoric used by the New Labour leadership of the time and in the
words of Prime Minister Gordon Brown who said:

We should not recoil from our national history – rather we should make it
more central to our education. I propose that British history should be given
more prominence in the curriculum – not just dates places and names, nor
just a set of unconnected facts, but a narrative that encompasses our history
(Brown 2006, 1).

By focusing on the phrase ‘our history’, it becomes debatable whose history and
whose historical accounts and experiences in England this is actually referring to.

The complexities in the use of a ‘master narrative’ for the study of English have
been considered by Maylor, et. al. (2007) concerning the concept of ‘cultural
diversity’. The authors have explored a range of issues concerning the teaching of
history in relationship to the development of national identity and particularly
the importance of teaching history that recognises the significant contribution of
minority-ethnic groups to the development of national identity (Maylor, et. al.
2007). Their findings suggest the historical and cultural perspectives of ethnic
minorities are being suffocated by the prescriptive teaching of history through what they define as 'the social dominance of particular ethnic or national groups in a nation-state' which ultimately causes the 'marginalizing of other ethnic and national groups' (Ibid 2007, 55). The perspective of Osler (2009) adds to this concern by arguing that the purpose of teaching history should be to provide opportunities for students to share and develop their broad critical skills:

The making of history is complex. Questions of power and differing interests and perspectives are central. Within the classroom the examination of primary historical sources enable learners to develop critical skills which are, of course, essential skills within a democracy. This is a strength of history education that would be lost if a facile British story of shared values were to be promoted as a single dominant narrative. This is not a reason to neglect aspects of British history, or to avoid subjects such as growth and decline of empire, but to recognize that there are competing truths and accounts which students should be encouraged to examine critically (Osler 2009, 97).

Osler’s (2009) view appears to be situated close to or even amongst the PCT and CRT perspectives. It builds on concerns of a dominant Anglo centric primary national curriculum for history retold via a ‘master narrative’ which has been described as a failure by successive governments to encourage curriculum policies to combat cultural ignorance, ethnocentric attitudes and racism (Tomlinson 2005). Osler (2009, 85) writes ‘teaching history needs to be reframed, so as to recognise that students are not only citizens of a nation-state but are also emergent cosmopolitan citizens living in an age of globalisation and universal human rights’.

From this view, the pedagogical concern then should be for primary school teachers to check and disturb their practice surrounding the national curriculum for history, reconceptualising their approaches to pedagogy, so as to recognise and acknowledge the broad and diverse cultural histories of different people within English society. A potential route to this could be via historical consciousness as an approach to historical inquiry and through broader and deeper study of mass migration and settlement in England by minority groups over the ages.

Further, in application of practice for primary school teachers, the usefulness of the Marshall (2005) ‘master narrative’ within the primary school history curriculum must be critically evaluated to fully inform pedagogical approaches. This needs to include critical discussion concerning what value should be afforded to this ‘master narrative’ and its potential use or mis-use in the twenty-first century primary school classroom, particularly with its articulation of not so much an anachronistic version of English history but its version of the past that is written from a narrow, unapologetic, triumphalist and colonialist perspective. Primary school teachers taking and applying the modernist perspective would accept, value
and celebrate the accounts for what they are, leaving them unchallenged, and could be comfortably fixed in the present with that particular version of England over 100 years ago when the accounts of the Marshall (2005) ‘master narrative’ were written. However, primary school teachers taking and applying a more critical post-modernist perspective (Sexias 2000, 2007) and approach to historical inquiry would suggest that the ‘master narrative’ of Marshall (2005) be deconstructed to allow for a broader contextual understanding of the time and place in history from which it was written. Critiquing that particular English society, the values, beliefs and ideals held at that time of publication further would allow for questioning the contemporary reinforcement of the Marshall (2005) ‘master narrative’ version of English history.

Taking and applying both modernist and post-modernist perspectives to practice is a process of criticality that the primary school teacher would require the skills in conceptualising their pedagogical approaches to teaching for learning English history. An approach to this by the primary school teacher via the application of historical consciousness for historical inquiry could assist teaching for learning in the primary school classroom, by teaching children about the past and helping them to relate this to their present and individual perception of place and self in English history. With micro histories and macro histories juxtaposed, a broader discourse and deeper dialogue in considering the England as a nation for a future could be made.

Mass Migration in the Primary National Curriculum for History

This paper will now discuss the potential in teaching for learning about mass migration by minority-ethnic groups of people to England over the ages. By doing so, it considers how a redefinition of the ‘master narrative’ assists with reconceptualising practice and pedagogical approaches to teaching for learning with the primary national history curriculum.

By using the term mass migration, what is being considered in this paper is the movement and settlement of a large group of people from one geographical place to England over a specific time frame. This could include: Germanic tribes of people commonly known as Anglo Saxons in their movement during the fifth century; the descendants of Vikings from Scandinavia commonly known as the Normans of the eleventh century; and more recently in the early twenty-first century England, this includes large groups of people migrating from Eastern Europe including the Polish (Rapport 2002; Miles 2005; Winder 2013). The mass migration experience to England could also perhaps also include that of white South African people who since the 1990s after the abolition of the apartheid regime in their country, have
seen them make England their home, both on temporary and permanent levels (Dustmann and Weiss 2007). The movement of minority-ethnic groups of people to England post-second world war from nation states linked to the former British Empire such as: India, Pakistan and Jamaica, could also be considered part of the mass migration phenomenon (Winder 2013). Such examples of mass migration by minority-ethnic groups to England are not exhaustive. This demonstrates that through the study of mass migration in England and English history there is a potential for much historical inquiry into the diversity of these lived experiences. It is via discrimination, and difference that incongruency may be found in the diverse circumstances of mass migration. This could be interesting for study in the primary school. However, what could potentially be of greater value for a sense of connection and belonging to England and for study in the primary school is the examination for congruent versions, accounts and experiences of mass migration to England. For example minority-ethnic groups and tribes of people such as the Anglo Saxons, Normans and Vikings of 900 to 1500 years ago placed in juxtaposition with more contemporary minority-ethnic groups of people who have migrated and settled in England during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Mass migration of minority-ethnic groups of people to England is and has always been part of a fluid ongoing and continuous movement over the ages and is not fixed or exclusive European migration as what may be suggested by teaching for learning guidance in the primary school history curriculum. On encountering the ‘master narrative’ and mass migration within primary school history curriculum guidance, explicit focus is on the ‘settlement by Anglo Saxons and Scots…Viking raids and invasions…’ (DfE 2013a, 207) pointing to white European privilege. This observation raises concerns towards the invisibility and absence of historical moments, stories and legacies of mass migration by non-white European minority-ethnic groups of people as well as those groups of people (both white and non-white) who have mass migrated to England over the ages.

Recent research conducted by (Nichol and Harnett 2011b) has uncovered that teachers of primary school history desire the inclusion of studies concerning the evolving history of a broad and diverse ‘Multicultural Britain’ (see Race 2011) in the revised English national history curriculum. The Nichol and Harnett, (2011b) findings disclose a top ranking response of 87% of primary school teachers surveyed who expressed a desire for further professional development on ‘Multicultural Britain’. This response was closely followed by ‘Diversity’ where 71% of teachers considered this as a key aspect of their professional development. From the same study, when primary teachers were asked about aspects of history teaching currently included in their classroom practice and what they and their schools prioritised, it is significant that components of the primary history curriculum known as ‘Diversity today’ at a response of 51% and ‘Multicultural British history’ at a response of
34% were prioritised in the bottom three alongside ‘Gender history’ of all twelve categories. These findings verify the suggestions made by Maylor, et. al. (2007) of marginalisation and suffocation in curriculum areas where cultural diversity could provide greater learning enrichment. Further research is currently being carried out by Moncrieffe (2014) on whether primary school teachers consider there to be implicit or explicit mass migration teaching for learning guidance within the primary school history national curriculum and the extent to which primary school teachers may or may not interpret these as exclusive in focusing on minority-ethnic white European representation.

**Primary School History National Curriculum Opportunities and Challenges**

Within the revised primary school history curriculum guidance, the development of the primary school teachers’ voices concerning what they consider to be deficiencies in the teaching for learning of English history does not appear to have been acted upon explicitly. However, the primary school history curriculum does present primary school teachers with an opportunity for ‘the study of an aspect or theme that extends pupils chronological knowledge beyond 1066’, suggesting that this should be explored and studied as a genuine and ‘significant turning point’ in the history of the nation (DfE 2013a, 207). This provides primary school teachers a time-period of 948 years from which to select a ‘significant turning point’ in English history for classroom study. Such a scope of potential coverage is extremely broad. Nonetheless, an opportunity such as this could indeed be invested in by primary school teachers to connect and link together the significant episodes of minority-ethnic mass migration in England over the ages to the current date. However, there are challenges to the ideal of a broader representation of the mass migration experience in England in primary schools. The denial of specific and relevant resources could be considered as a barrier to this. However, this potential concern has been addressed by educational groups such as Runnymede who have recently produced materials concerning the contemporary migrant experience to England which encourage teaching for learning on this theme in the primary classroom (see Runnymede 2012). Perhaps the greater challenge is for primary school teachers to check and if necessary disturb their personal and cultural attitudes towards the issue. This point is made as research evidence (Sossick 2010; Harnett 2000) into the pedagogical choices and decisions made by primary school teachers suggest that these are generally directed and influenced by their own history and background experiences. These include what may be the dominance of their personal and cultural heritage which can determine the level of subjectivity directed and afforded to their practice for informing their approaches to teaching. Of this consideration and in taking and applying Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of ‘cultural capital’ in relation to
the struggle for value and currency within the field of study (history), Nichol and Harnett (2011a, 116) write: ‘History’s role in the education of its pupils directly depends upon the historical ‘cultural capital’ of the teachers and its more pervasive influence upon their knowledge, behaviours, beliefs and attitudes’. Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of cultural capital is extremely useful here in defining how personal cultural background has a high potential in influencing, shaping and forming the orientation of the ‘political nation, i.e. cultural reproduction of its values, attitudes and beliefs (Nichol and Harnett, 2011a). This suggests that the choice of focus concerning what is considered as fundamental to knowledge when teaching for learning about minority-ethnic mass migration to England or what is deemed as a ‘significant turning point’ could be deeply rooted by the subjectivity and influence of the decisions based upon who is charged with delivering that particular teaching for learning in the primary school classroom. What is significant about this point is that it was last recorded in November 2013 that the primary school teacher workforce had a dominant majority (88%) of a white-British (including English) background (DfE 2013b). Although the extent to which this high majority has the power to shape pedagogical decisions and choices based upon the teaching of primary school history remains speculative rather than indicative, it nonetheless remains an issue that should not be ignored but should be considered potentially as extremely influential. The extent to which the teaching for learning of minority-ethnic mass migration to England via the primary history curriculum may or may not be at the forefront of primary school teachers’ pedagogical approaches to classroom practice (Moncrieffe, 2014) is being researched.

From Disengagement to Developing a Sense of Connection and Belonging to England

Recent statistics and research have demonstrated overwhelmingly that the majority of people today in England classify their ethnic identity as white English (ONS 2011; Jivraj 2013a; Jivraj 2013b). Therefore policymakers behind the primary school history curriculum could be justified in their construction of pedagogical guidance for mass migration in England that appears to represent an identity that the majority-ethnic of society identify with. But this is to the detriment of the minority-ethnic groups in society where research has evidenced minority-ethnic student disengagement in their learning of English history particularly being at odds with national curriculum conceptions of identity expressed in nationalistic terms (see Reynolds and Harris 2014; Grever et. al. 2008). The effect of this disengagement is a sense of exclusion, developing and sustaining for them an identity crisis (Heath and Roberts 2008). This sense of disconnection and a lack of attachment or belonging to nation and national identity felt specifically by minority-ethnic young black children born in England of minority-ethnic African Caribbean parents (ibid).
Research findings from Reynolds and Harris (2014) conclude that students from minority-ethnic backgrounds feel a lack of personal connection to the past by not being able to see themselves in the history they are taught in school. This suggests that the ‘master narrative’ articulated via the English history curriculum causes a historical dislocation in minority-ethnic student engagement as they fail to sense their place, belonging and connection to the England and English history they are told of in their history lessons. As a potential solution to this disconnection, research has pointed to the broader migrant experience in England over the ages as an aspect of historical inquiry for use in schools that could explore and address the current deficiencies and inequalities that have been exposed (Harris 2013; Hawkey and Prior 2011; Nichol and Harnett 2011a; Grever, et al. 2008).

Using and applying historical consciousness as an approach to teaching for learning through historical inquiry on mass migration could enable primary school teachers to develop new concepts around their practice and potentially the development of a critical praxis (Friere 1996). What is meant by this is the emergence of a redefined pedagogy for change that facilitates a heightened critical interpretation and active engagement with primary school history curriculum guidance. With this, in reconceptualising the primary school history curriculum ‘master narrative’ on the mass migration experience to England as a theme of teaching for learning in the primary school, what first needs to be distinguished and addressed are the clear differences in the accounts presented of and by minority-ethnic groups of people of the ages. Currently, the primary school history curriculum affords exclusive value only in the study of what appears to be mass migration by invaders and colonialists who were generally minority-ethnic white European groups of people (Winder 2013). Accounts of mass migration to England by non-white European minority-ethnic groups of people, such as for example the West Indians, who were invited by the British government to work and reside in England, to increase the workforce so as to help bolster the weakened post-world war two economy (Fryer 2010; Phillips and Phillips 1998; Sewell 1998) remain invisible within the primary school teaching for learning content of the national curriculum. Increased study of broader minority-ethnic mass migration accounts such as these to England over the ages could improve balance within this theme of study and address the issue of inequality.

Recognising, acknowledging and valuing differences of mass migration and settlement by minority-ethnic groups over the ages via the concept of Diversity could also address this curriculum deficiency. The concept of Diversity is drawn from Thompson’s (2011) notions of seeing difference as a positive thing. By exposing differences through positive discrimination, this can allow congruent minority-ethnic experiences of mass migration to England a space for investigation.
via historical consciousness for historical inquiry in the primary school classroom. Placing emphasis on the differences in experiences can then be taken and used to seek commonalities for example: in the aims, ambitions and successes of minority-ethnic migrants to England; the conflicts and barriers faced by minority-ethnic groups on their arrival to England. Historical inquiry such as this could allow for a deeper study concerning congruency in the mass migration experience by minority-ethnic groups to England over the ages. Themes of congruency could include: a historical inquiry into minority-ethnic groups over ages aiming to improve upon their life prospects by seeking to increase their wealth when coming to England; a historical inquiry into minority-ethnic groups over ages and their establishment of settlements in English towns and cities; an inquiry into minority-ethnic groups over the ages establishing their houses of faith in maintenance of their religions. Developing congruency of experience with congruency of experience using the theme of mass-migration to England could be an effective and exciting method for historical inquiry within the primary school classroom that could also influence deeper engagement with those students who have become dislocated with learning, because this type of historical inquiry begins with aiming to understand the now through a sense of self and place by looking back at the past via the means of historical consciousness.

Summary

The phenomenon of mass migration by minority-ethnic groups of people to England in the past; the present and the potential of this for the future continues to impact on creating English history. What now needs to be considered by policymakers and primary school teachers is the extent to which a broader interpretation and understanding of the mass migration phenomenon can be used to develop and build upon current primary school national curriculum guidance. There is potential in recognising congruent realities from the deep bank of diverse mass-migration experiences to England over the ages and this approach to study could offer much value for enhancing professional practice and approaches to pedagogy when teaching about English history in the primary school. Teaching for learning about the mass migration experience to England by minority-ethnic groups of people to this current day matched to the phenomenon in England over the ages invites primary school teachers and their students to focus upon and to develop historical inquiry into their own personal realities of being that has been influenced by their migration experiences. An inquiry as such has the potential to be traced through their parents, extended down the line to their grandparents and even further, allowing the concept historical consciousness to drive the personal historical inquiry. Experiences and accounts derived from this inquiry can be shared and potential congruent realities of mass migration can be explored. From
this, a sense of connection and belonging to each other through mass-migration to England experiences can be fostered.

The extent to which the phenomenon of mass migration in England impacts on our daily lives in England is perhaps difficult to measure, due to the multiplicity of variables, most of which are often taken for granted. Generating a broad and deep meaning of the phenomenon through new approaches to pedagogy in education can assist our understanding. Mass migration by minority-ethnic groups to England leaves traces over time. Each episode of this could be considered a significant turning point in English history and therefore has the potential to redefine and contribute to an enriched English ‘master narrative’ for the twenty-first century primary school classroom. Policymakers and primary school teachers should strive to place a greater importance upon teaching for learning about diversity in similar experiences of English people such as mass migration to England. Guidance and practice such as this should be central to reconceptualising the study of this topic in the primary school via the primary school history national curriculum.
Bibliography


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This publication comprises the papers accepted for the academic workshop on the theme of ‘Sense of Belonging in a Diverse Britain’ organised by the Dialogue Society’s Birmingham Branch and Coventry University’s Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations. The papers presented here are draft papers submitted and printed in advance of the workshop to be held in autumn 2014.

‘Sense of belonging’ is a phrase often heard in discussions on social cohesion and, in particular, instances of its breakdown. Questions about the sense of belonging were asked following the urban disturbances of summer 2011 as well as in the wake of terrorist attacks committed by those born and raised in Britain.

In this workshop, we invited contributors to shed light on the nature, causes and effects of a sense of belonging and of its absence in minority and majority communities alike. We sought to examine the impact of a lack of sense of belonging, both in extreme cases such as crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as in a more general context. The Dialogue Society sees a broad and seemingly reasonable consensus that a sense of belonging is vital for a thriving and peaceful society, and accordingly wishes to contribute to illuminating its character and effects, as well as exploring how a sense of belonging can be cultivated.