The London School of Economics and Political Science

Veiled Threats: Producing the Muslim Woman in Public and Policy Discourse in the UK

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Abstract

This thesis looks at how 'the Muslim woman' is produced in social policy discourses in the UK. It is a qualitative study based on interviews, observation and interpretive analysis of policy material. It focuses specifically on initiatives to empower Muslim women in order to combat terrorism which formed part of the UK's Preventing Violent Extremism Agenda (Prevent). In January 2008 the National Muslims Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG) was established and Local Authorities were encouraged to fund projects aimed at 'empowering Muslim women'. The thesis begins by situating the research within a wider policy framework. At the national level it relates to debates on community cohesion, Britishness and multiculturalism; at the global level it relates to the UK's involvement in the 'war on terror'. The research examines local inflections in how the initiatives worked in practice, considering the impact of diversity within diversity. A key objective of these initiatives was to 'give the silent majority a stronger voice'. The thesis considers the extent to which this objective was achieved, particularly in relation to the establishment of NMWAG. Through an analysis of the initiatives overseen by NMWAG it considers how empowerment is conceptualised and, therefore, also by definition, disempowerment. It suggests that empowerment is positioned as individualised in the form of neoliberal meritocratic aspiration. At the same time, however, it is collectivised in relation to religious affiliation; Islam emerges both as a source of disempowerment and as a potential solution. The thesis argues that these initiatives have worked to privilege religion at the expense of other salient axes of difference, particularly those embedded in socio economic and regional variations. Moreover, this privileging constitutes part of a broader gendered anti-Muslim racist rhetoric. Finally the thesis argues that deconstructing the trope of 'the Muslim woman' and attending to the differences between Muslim women opens up the possibility of building solidarities across religious boundaries and harnessing an "alternative politics of recognition".

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CCCS	Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
CLG	Communities and Local Government
DFID	Department for International Development
DV	Domestic violence
EMW	Empowering Muslim Women
ETTO	Equal to the Occasion
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FM	Forced marriage
ICRC	Inner Cities Religious Council
MINAB	Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board
NMWAG	National Muslim Women's Advisory Group
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
SBS	Southall Black Sisters
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum
WAF	Women Against Fundamentalism
WLUML	Women Living Under Muslim Law

Chapter 1: "Muslim women: your country needs you!" Gendering the UK's 'War on Terror'

Introduction

I was standing in the courtyard garden of the V & A with a group of school girls. They were from a girls' school in east London and had been taken there as part of a local authority funded project. I had met the organiser, Sophia, through one of my interviewees and she was a member of the Three Faiths Forum, an organisation set up in 1997 to encourage friendship, goodwill and understanding between people of different faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). The girls had done their morning's activities, a worksheet that needed to be completed whilst looking at the exhibits, and were having their lunch. It was a beautiful sunny day and they were glad to be outside. As we sat on the grass, I chatted to one of the volunteers and around me the girls made the most of a day off school. Boisterous, although not rowdy by any means, they drew attention from other visitors to the museum, principally, I imagined, as all the girls were dressed in their school uniform of black jilbabs. Suddenly, someone in the group suggested that they should all have their photo taken. The group assembled in makeshift lines. As the designated photographer shouted 'cheese', a number of the girls struck hyper stylised model poses, static vogue-ing. As various girls stuck out their legs and balanced precariously on the grass, brightly coloured trainers and jeans could be seen beneath, their scuffed Adidas bags slipping off their shoulders.

The poses were perhaps unsurprising given that the school trip was part of a project called Faith and Fashion. As exuberant as the girls were, as much as the girls appeared to enjoy the day, and as passionate as the organisers were about the

value of what they were doing, the question nonetheless remained. What could an event looking at Faith and Fashion possibly have to with combating terrorism?

1.1 Empowering Muslim Women

In January 2008, Hazel Blears, Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) announced initiatives to empower Muslim women. She encouraged Local Authorities to use some of the £70m funding they had been given to 'prevent violent extremism' to 'empower Muslim women'. In addition a government advisory board was established, the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG). NMWAG consisted of 19 handpicked Muslim women representing a wide spectrum of communities, professions and traditions, from which the government claimed it could seek advice on issues affecting Muslim women. This number was subsequently extended to 25 after an open application process.

NMWAG was specifically tasked with overseeing three work streams. The first was a role modelling project designed to raise the aspirations of Muslim girls. Its focus was to present Muslim women who had achieved success in atypical careers as role models. There were six regional road shows (3 of which I was able to attend) and a booklet featuring 12 successful women was produced and a website was launched called Our Choices.[1] Secondly, there was a project aimed at improving the religious understanding of Muslim women in society as part of a wider project on 'Faith Capacity'. They were also involved in a project to develop the capacity of women in issues of "theological disclosure". I refer to this project as theological interpretation. Thirdly, there was a campaign to increase the civic participation of Muslim women through training and mentoring, and this project was linked to the work of the Councillors' Commission to increase the number of black and minority

[1] Available at www.ourchoices.org.uk and featuring 12 role models from non-traditional careers (including a scientist, a civil engineer and the first Muslim woman to play rugby for England).

ethnic women councillors. I will use the acronym EMW i.e. 'Empowering Muslim Women' to refer to the broad policy initiative which includes the three work stream within NMWAG's remit, as well as local authority projects funded through Prevent which were focused on Muslim women and girls. The EMW initiatives, in conjunction with parallel initiatives for youth under the remit of the Young Muslims Advisory Group (YMAG), were part of an agenda to "give the silent majority a stronger voice."

In trying to explore how Muslim women's empowerment might in any way be related to combating terrorism I approach the subject from three angles. To begin with, I contextualise the initiatives within a broader policy landscape and relate them to developments in relation to: at the national level, multiculturalism and debates on Britishness and community cohesion; and at the global level, the 'war on terror'. Secondly, the logic of these initiatives is premised on the basis that Muslim women need empowering. I, therefore, look at how 'empowerment' in the context of these initiatives was characterised and equally, how disempowerment was framed. Thirdly, I assess how the EMW initiatives worked in practice and whether they did in fact help to "give the silent majority a stronger voice".

My research questions can be framed as:

1. How is the 'the Muslim woman' constructed in the EMW/Prevent and wider policy agenda?
2. What are the underlying rationales for this policy initiative?
3. How did such initiatives work in practice?

The broad objective of this research is to consider how Muslim women and girls are being constructed in contemporary racialised and gendered political discourses in the UK. My research considers how the Muslim woman is "socially constructed" through an analysis of contemporary UK policy discourse. I look at how the idea of the Muslim woman has emerged at a particular time and in a particular context. In

The Social Construction of What, Hacking (1992) cites the work of Moussa and her analysis of how the 'Woman Refugee' was constructed in early 1990s Canada. Just as 'the woman refugee' exists within a matrix of ideas as well as a complex of institutions and material factors, so does the 'Muslim woman'. My research looks at the "Muslim woman" as she emerges from the discourse in policies, focused either implicitly or explicitly on her, as a "neat cultural icon...over messy historical and political dynamics" (Abu-Lughod 2002:783).

To analyse these policy initiatives I used two qualitative research methods: textual analysis and interviews. These seemed the most appropriate for answering the research questions I have set out above. Simply, the textual analysis considers relevant policy documentation, parliamentary debates and political speeches. It explores "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (Hall 1992:291). The other part of my research consisted of interviews with policy actors involved in these initiatives. Data was collected between January 2009 and July 2010. (See Chapter 2)

Additionally, the way in which Muslim women were discursively constructed through the EMW initiatives needs to be seen in the context of a broader policy agenda both domestically and globally. In the following section I discuss this and explore some of the themes which arise such as debates about the death of multiculturalism, multi-faithism and how these pertain specifically to Muslim women.

1.1.2 Policy landscape

1.2.1 Prevent and CONTEST

The 2005 London bombings prompted a broad range of policy responses from the New Labour government. One of these was the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda (or 'Prevent'). Prevent itself was part of the Home Office's counter-

terrorism strategy which consists of the 'Four Ps': Pursue (to stop terrorist attacks), Prevent (to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism), Protect (to strengthen our protection against terror attack) and Prepare (where an attack cannot be stopped, to mitigate its impact). Prevent's general focus was on "stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists". Local Authorities and the police were granted funding to work with local communities in order "to build resilience" against extremism. One of the things they were encouraged to do was to give "the silent majority a stronger voice in their communities". The Prevent agenda, as part of a wider counter terrorism strategy, arguably formed part of the UK's 'War on Terror'.

The Prevent Strategy (DCLG, 2007: 6) itself consisted of five key strands which were as follows: *Challenging* the violent extremist ideology and supporting mainstream voices; *Disrupting* those who promote violent extremism and supporting the institutions where they are active; *Supporting* individuals who are being targeted and recruited to the cause of violent extremism; *Increasing* the resilience of communities to violent extremism; and *Addressing* the grievances that ideologues are exploiting.

Even when EMW was being launched, the Prevent agenda was already being criticised on a variety of levels: for demonising the Muslim population as a whole, creating and perpetuating in particular anti-Muslim racist stereotypes, and for securitising the race equality agenda. The Prevent agenda, as the counter terrorism agenda more generally was undoubtedly gendered. That is, it was predominantly focused on young men, albeit implicitly, yet there has been very little overt discussion regarding this. Whilst at a very superficial level "empowering Muslim women" seemed like a laudable venture, the initiatives intrigued me. I did not doubt the presence of marginalised women who were Muslim in the UK. Nor did I doubt the presence of 'violent extremism' (even if assertions regarding its extent were questionable). I was more interested in the relationship between Muslim women's empowerment and counter terrorism. I sought to analyse how this policy

initiative was intelligible; the common sense assumptions upon which it relied; and how it fit within a wider historical policy trajectory. Finally, and most significantly, in the absence of any directly relevant measurable outputs, what were its effects?

1.2.2 Community cohesion and 'Britishness'

Prior to Prevent, the UK's race equality agenda was dominated by the community cohesion agenda. Multiculturalism had been strongly critiqued for allegedly leading to communities living 'parallel lives' (Cantle 2001) and a society 'sleep-walking into segregation' (Trevor Phillips, Chair of CRE 2005). As a result, since the urban unrest of 2001, the idea of 'community cohesion' has emerged as the dominant paradigm of 'race relations' governmental policy and practice (Solomos 2003, Kundnani 2002a). These policy developments are inherently contradictory. On the one hand, community cohesion is a policy imperative to overcome the boundaries purported to exist between different communities, i.e. to make sure everyone gets along[2]. On the other, the Prevent strategy is focused exclusively on an imagined Muslim community (although in late 2009 its remit was widened to refer to all types of terrorist threat, in response to criticisms of its Muslim-centric nature). However, since 2005 the role of securitisation, or what Gilroy has called "securitocracy"[3] and the specifically problematic ways in which Muslims have been talked about, means that, although talking about communities enables language to be deracialised (Worley 2005) it often refers to talking exclusively about Muslim communities[4]. Equally it could be argued that they were guided more by a desire to manage the

[2] Interestingly I have also seen the term 'community cohesion' invoked to refer to something very different, in fact the opposite of the way it is used in policy language. In a souvenir brochure marking the granting by OFCOM of the first 24 hour licence for a Bengali language radio station in Europe, *Betar Bangla*, the term was used to suggest that "community cohesion" was about cohesion *within* the Bengali language community.

[3] Multiculture In Times of War, Professor Paul Gilroy, 10 May 2006 LSE.

[4] The urban disturbances in the northern cities of Oldham, Blackburn and Bradford involved clashes between predominantly Muslim male youth against the police and white male youth.

risk of terrorism rather than a desire to address racial inequality (McGhee 2005). In addition, as Fortier has argued, the cohesion agenda "fails to recognise any claims to difference…as political…in terms of the relational, material, symbolic and cultural variations and power relations that position people and groups differentially in terms of access to, and uses of, resources" (2010:27).

The 7/7 London bombings and concerns about 'home-grown' terrorism have widely been seen as a problem of ethnic and religious diversity. In response, there have been increasing government appeals to foster 'Britishness' to counter future terrorist acts and a resurgence in the idea of nationalism as a cohesive force (Brown 2006). Within this new nationalism, different 'others' are constructed and, as Gilroy (2000) argues, whilst both 'Asians' and 'West Indians' are deemed to be threatening, the threats they pose have been articulated differently. Asians are conceived as having fully formed, alternative national identities, whereas African-Caribbean communities have been characterised by a relative 'absence of culture'. Anthias and Davis (1992) consider the role which gender plays in nation building or imagining a national community (Anderson 2006). Scharff (2011) shows how gender constructions of white British women are formed in opposition to 'disempowered' Muslim women. This allows Britishness to be negatively defined by focusing on what (or who) needs to be integrated or assimilated. Such policy initiatives form part of a broader imperative to define national (and European) borders against a background of racism, and post-colonial guilt, rather than 'women's liberation', as Joan Scott (2007) has discussed in relation to the veil debate in France. In addition, much of the responsibility is on women to change 'culture' seeing as it is located within the private and domestic arenas of home and family (Worley 2005).

1.2.3 The 'war on terror' and global politics

EMW is situated within the PVE and counter-terrorism policy agenda and can be seen in the context of the global 'war on terror'. As Khan describes, "the

transnationalised governmentality of the 'war on terror' has become inflected within the discursive vocabulary of racism" (2006:184). Further, both Bhattacharya (2007) and Razack (2008) consider how the role of gender has been incorporated in this, emphasising the way in which feminism has found a strange bedfellow in neoliberal imperialist projects throughout the Muslim world.[5] Specifically, Razack considers how the "imperilled Muslim woman" is one of the three stereotypes that has been characterised as part of the 'war on terror' (the other two players being the 'dangerous Muslim man' and the 'civilised European') and that the 'barbarism of Islam' is principally evident in the treatment of women in Muslim communities (2008:84).[6] Specifically, I am interested in how feminism, or at least a particular variety of feminism, may be implicated in the process of racialisation. Feminism has been instrumentalised such that "Western sexual freedoms are strategically deployed so as to support notions of civilisation and superiority," (McRobbie 2009:1). This research analyses how this *faux feminism* "displaces possible solidarities, with a reinstated hierarchy of civilisation and modernity" (ibid: 27).

These discourses are also widely reflected in development perspectives where some of "the political edge of feminism has been lost" (Kabeer 1999). The Department for International Development (DFID) is involved in a 5 year research programme focused on Women's Empowerment in the Muslim context. This is related to securitisation projects based on the idea, as expressed by Monshipouri and Karbasioun (2003), that women's struggle is at the vanguard for human rights and suggests that internal reforms to secure women's emancipation, provide the most reliable safeguard against terrorism.[7]

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[5] See Abu-Lughod (2002) for a critique of the role of anthropology in this.

[6] See Armstrong (2002) for a hyper- emotive account of the lives of women in Afghanistan under the Taliban.

[7] Interestingly, Oliverio and Lauderdale (2005) in stark contrast to this view cite research that women's emancipation may in fact *increase* the number of women terrorists.

1.2.4 The death of multiculturalism and the rise of multifaithism

One of the key developments which has taken place during this period is 'de-secularisation'; it has been suggested that we are moving from multiculturalism to multi-faithism[8] and that civil society is becoming increasingly de-secularised (Patel 2008; Yuval-Davis 2009). Patel (2008) has argued that the entrenchment of faith communities represents a particular threat for women. I return to these issues in the concluding discussion at the end of the thesis. Macey cites the Rushdie affair as the watershed which involved a "shift away from *demands for equality* on the basis of race/ethnicity to *demands for special treatment* on the basis of religion" (2010:39) (my emphasis). This referred to demands about extending existing blasphemy laws to accommodate non-Church of England religions.

Furbey et al (2006) suggest that formal recognition in public policy of faith communities and faith organisations was first reflected in the Inner Cities Religious Council (ICRC), established in 1992. However, this ignores the long history of links between the state and church in the UK and the normative position of the Church of England. The presumption that Britain is 'secular' is brought into question by the fact that religion has an 'established' position in the structure of the state (Modood 1997); many of the normative ideas about the British nation have religious underpinnings e.g. the fact that the monarch is the both the Head of State and the Head of the Church of England, the existence of voluntary aided (Church funded) schools, and Christian acts of worship in schools. One consequence of this 'Anglican privilege' may be that there is no system of formally recognising that 'other faiths' exist (McLoughlin 2005). This suggests, therefore, that requests for

[8] Omoniyi & Fishman (2010) define multifaithism as the "institutional recognition of multiple faiths by the state and the granting of equal rights and protection to devotees by law."

accommodation by minority religions might in fact represent a desire for 'equality' rather than 'special privileges', as stated by Macey (2010) above.[9]

Despite this suggestion that religion is superseding 'culture', it is worth noting that many Muslim (and other religious) 'communities' continue to be organised around ethnicity. There are sectarian divergences within the Muslim population, between Sunnis, Shias, Ismailis and Sufis, for example, and many mosques are organised around these distinctions. In addition, however, although there are mosques which serve very diverse ethnic minority communities, historically in the UK they have largely been established by particular ethnicities in specific geographic locations. There are 10 or more different mosques in Southwark alone organised by ethnicity – Somali, Nigerian and Ivorian, as well as the longer established Turkish, Pakistani and Bangladeshi mosques. This suggests that the separation between 'faith' and 'culture' (based on common sense understandings of these terms) is rather more complex. If religion has supplanted 'culture' then why are mosques organised like this? Arguably, language, and the geographical concentration of those with a shared ethnic heritage, and access to resources, seem equally, if not more, influential.

1.3 Muslims in the UK

The Muslim "community" in the UK is vast, multifaceted and deeply variegated. This variegation is the outcome of changes in migration patterns. Migrants from the former colonies and their settled descendants have been joined by participants in more recent episodes of 'economic' migration and the migration of those seeking asylum. In addition to postcolonial Muslim migration from Pakistan and Bangladesh, the UK has more recently experienced migration and settlement from

[9] Moreover, the history of the Muslim presence in the UK is much longer than is often recognised. The first Muslims date from early as the 12th century with the first English convert in the 16th century and the first purpose built mosque (in Woking) established in 1889 (Ansari 2004).

smaller Muslim communities from non-Commonwealth countries, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as Morocco and Bosnia. Although there have been attempts to study these newer groups in government sponsored research, in broad policy terms there has been little recognition of the variety within the 'Muslim community', not only in terms of ethnicity or religious sect, but also religious (non) observance, socio economic background, gender, sexuality or age. As I outline later in the thesis, within social policy discourse there are occasional references to Muslims as "a community of communities" without any meaningful consideration of the implications of that multiplicity.

The second half of the chapter explores other contextualising themes which discursively produce the Muslim woman. It looks at this in terms of both historical and contemporary policy contexts.

1.4 Muslim Women and Empowerment

"Common sense is unsystematized, inconsistent and contradictory" (Lawrence 1982 :79).

When discussing how the trope of the 'oppressed Muslim woman' is constructed at a particular historical moment it is important to attend to the continuities and discontinuities with earlier and concurrent gendered racisms. I argue that the theme of empowering Muslim women has resonance because of prevalent discourses around the insurmountable incompatibility of Islam and feminism and, as I shall go on to discuss, the incompatibility of feminism and multiculturalism. This theme has widespread perennial appeal and [10]. It feeds into common-sense understandings and builds on the racist stereotypes of South Asian women in the British postcolonial context.

[10] Nor is it one that will disappear, as I explore in the conclusion to this thesis in relation to the Arab Spring.

As Errol Lawrence argues, the relationship between such "…common sense notions, like common-sense ideologies generally, are not just carried round in people's heads. They are embedded within actual material practices" (CCCS 1982:76). In this research therefore, I have also explored the idea that, "in consequence of being so classified, individual women and their experiences of themselves are changed by being so classified" (Hacking 1999: 11). To some extent the research hopes to engage in a process of "disalienation", that is, "the unmaking of racialized bodies and their restoration to properly human modes of being in the world." (Fanon cited in Gilroy 2004:45.)

Despite being a 'buzzword', the term 'empowerment' lacks explicit and conclusive definitions (Ette 2007). Feminist perspectives on empowerment, whilst not homogeneous, include more layered and multi-dimensional approaches that depart from perceiving empowerment as part of a liberal atomistic privatized form of citizenship (Honig 1999) which is inseparable from individualism and consumerism (Rowlands 1997). Instead, feminist interpretations emphasise collective empowerment, or 'power-with' (Rowlands 1995) and psychological forms of empowerment, or 'power-from-within' (Stacki and Monkman 2003[11]), and are more concerned with the social context of power.[12] Empowerment requires the challenging of patriarchal power relations that result in women having less control over material assets and intellectual resources (Batliwala 1994).

1.4.1 Something old, something new: colonial antecedents

The majority of Muslim women in the UK are of South Asian origin and as Brah has described, in order to fully understand the life experience of Asian women, "it is necessary to analyse the social processes through which gender differences have been constructed and reproduced against the background of colonialism and

[11] cited by Rowlands 1997

[12] ibid

imperialism" (1992:68). In considering colonial discourse, I have drawn on postcolonial theorists, such as Said, Bhabha and Spivak. Although strongly criticised for being totalising and ignoring the "internal dynamics of Western tradition" (Lele 1993: 45), Said's concept of Orientalism remains useful in framing my work, particularly the way he describes how descriptive accounts normalise colonial others and fix communities in a timeless present (Childs & Williams 1997). Fanon (1968) and Nandy (1988) too speak of how the colonised are constructed as childlike, requiring guidance from their Western superiors, and this theme of infantilisation underlies much of the discourse in this policy arena. I suggest that the 'Muslim community' as a whole, and Muslim women in particular are infantilised (Brown 2011).

Historically (and specifically in the British context), South Asian women have played a key role in the production of difference between the West and the Rest (Hall:1996; Puwar and Raghuram 2003; McLintock 1995). The language of feminism and the 'liberation of women' has been used by colonialists to define a boundary between the liberated West and the barbaric East[13] and it can be argued that melodrama marks the place of South Asian women in popular, official and academic discourses (Puwar 2003:22). Colonial justifications for social policy interventions included bringing universalist Enlightenment values to the 'dark continents', and there are clear parallels with contemporary humanitarian interventions (Chandler 2002), as well as in domestic policy discourses. As Spivak (1988) has articulated, there is a long tradition of 'white men saving brown women from brown men' and comparisons can be drawn with social interventions in relation to South Asian women.[14] Spivak's oft-quoted phrase could be extended to include 'white women' alongside white men; there is a growing body of literature

[13] Notwithstanding the considerable variations within the potentially totalising discourse of the West and the rest.

[14] Mani (1998) has for example considered the way in which women were in fact marginal to the debate on *sati* and that the British imperative to abolish it stemmed more from the moral civilising claims of a colonial power and a negotiation with patriarchal Brahmin Hindu elites.

on the role of discourse and gender in the colonial era and the impact of colonialism on the development of first wave feminism (Sangari and Vaid 1989; Jayawardena 1995; Levine 2004; Powell and Lambert Hurley 2005; Midgely 2007).[15]

More recently in post-Britain, the Asian woman has been perceived as disadvantaging her children . Pratibha Parmar writes how Asian women are problematically conceptualised as,

> ...*non-working wives and mothers, whose problems are that they do not speak English, hardly ever leave the house, and find British norms and values ever more threatening as their children become more 'integrated' into the new surroundings. Their lives are limited to the kitchen, the children and the religious rituals, and they are both emotionally and economically dependent upon their husbands* (1982:250).

Moreover, this passage remains salient, thirty years on, particularly if the term 'Asian' is replaced with 'Muslim'. [16]

[15] Ahmed (1992) and Lazreg (1994) explore these themes in colonial feminisms in the Egyptian and Algerian contexts respectively. Given the increasingly diverse composition of Britain's Muslim population, which now includes non-South Asian migrant heritage Muslims, these other histories of feminism and colonialism have resonance.

[16] See also "The common sense image of the Asian mother is similar. She is isolated from the beneficial effects of English culture because her movements are circumscribed by custom, and she therefore invariably fails to learn English. She is viewed as particularly prone to superstitious beliefs and, being more traditional than the other members of her family, is also more 'neurotic' in her new urban setting…it is worth noting here how the Asian mother is presented…as the main barrier to the integration of her children into 'wider British society'." (Lawrence in CCCS 1982:78)

1.4.2 Islam and Feminism

Even within the category South Asian, Muslim women are positioned as being in particular need of empowerment. The role of religious fundamentalism on patriarchy in a number of religious communities has been documented (Sahgal & Yuval Davis; 1992 WLUML 2001) and there is a particularly prevalent discourse about Islam and gender equality more generally (Razak 2007; Fernandez 2009; Kumar 2012). This discourse is widely established in the broadsheet liberal media (Toynbee 2001; Hari 2007; Burchill 2010). As Afshar writes, "feminism…is hailed as the ultimate weapon of the British middle class hegemony and is at its most pernicious where Muslim women are concerned" (1994:145). There is also a large body of popular literature, which Donohoue Clyne (2002) calls 'airport fiction', on the themes of oppressed Muslim women and generalised Muslim misogyny (in Muslim countries) that has allowed much vitriol to be cast on Islam from 'within' (Darwish 2006; Hirse Ali 2006; 2007, 2010) and 'without' (Fallaci 2002).

The issue of the compatibility of gender equality and Islam is a contentious one arousing much debate (El Saadawi 2007; Ahmed 1992). There are diverse views across the spectrum and broadly speaking it is possible to distinguish between 'Muslim feminists', for whom religious and feminist beliefs are separate yet can coexist, and 'Islamic feminists', for whom religion itself is seen as a source of feminist empowerment. This latter position has been powerfully critiqued and it is argued that a postmodern anti-Orientalist stance is as dangerous as an Orientalist reading of Muslim women since it relies on an uncritical acceptance of Islam and a one dimensional, naive representation of the Muslim woman as emblematic of cultural revival and authenticity (Moghissi 1999). It is not clear, however why this equally simplistic interpretation of Muslim women is the only response to anti-Orientalism. The problem in both interpretations is essentialism, an ahistorical, analytically unsophisticated understanding of 'Muslim women', and an

unwillingness to deconstruct the category of 'Muslim woman' (Brah 1996, Ahmad 2003).

It is not my intention to either prove or disprove the empowering potential of Islam. Instead, I will explore the relationship between Islam and feminism in the context of discussions about multiculturalism. In much sociology of religion literature, 'religion' and 'culture' are deemed to be inseparable. Kurtz, for example, argues that "any given religion is also part of a people's culture" and even in a secular state he argues that it constitutes at least "a part of the culture" (2007:12). By contrast 'religion' and 'culture' and the relationship between them are conceptualised rather differently in this social policy arena both in the policy literature and by practitioners.

1.4.3 The problem with multiculturalism…and feminism

The issue of managing 'diversity' has aroused much debate (Kymlicka 1995) and within this, the compatibility (or otherwise) of multiculturalism and feminism is perceived as particularly problematic. In her polemic article *Is Multiculturalism bad for Women?* Okin (1999) argues that the two are fundamentally opposed and that granting 'group rights' fosters cultural relativism. Beckett & Macey (2001) argue that some cultural and religious 'traditions' are in direct conflict with the struggle for justice and equality. Their presentation of domestic and homophobic violence as a 'cultural practice' particular to Muslims is highly problematic (although not unusual) since it suggests that such violence is "normal and widely endorsed behaviours in minority communities (Dustin and Phillips 2008: 419). [17] And, in their analysis of the discourse on 'honour killings', Meetoo and Mirza have suggested that "within the discourse of multiculturalism, women 'fall between the cracks'" arguing that 'race' and ethnicity are prioritised as gender differences and

[17] See Bawer (2006) who uses the issue of gay rights in an Islamaphobic invective (whilst at the same time acting as an apologist for US Christian fundamentalist homophobia).

inequalities are rendered invisible (2007: 197).[18] These are not new issues and have been extensively discussed at different times. (Carby 1982; Anthias and Yuval Davis 1992; Brah 1996).

Sassen (1999), in response to Okin, talks about the need to consider the differences between 'intracultural gender inequality' and intercultural power relations, whereas Honig (1999) questions the idea of absolute difference in terms of the incidence or severity of patriarchy, arguing that privilege is not uniformly distributed along one axis of difference (i.e. 'culture' or religion). Schachar (2001) and Volpp (2001) also provide extensive critiques of this position. Volpp (2001), building as she does on the work of 'Third world ' feminists Mohanty (2003) and Narayan (1997), criticises the way in which 'culture' is invoked for anything that happens to Third world or immigrant women and questions the 'asymmetrical ascription of culture' which assumes that 'other' cultures are frozen static entities (2001:1190). She also makes clear that multiculturalism comprises primarily male articulations of gender-subordinating values (Wilson 2006) whilst ignoring feminism from within minority cultures.[19]

Both Okin (1999) and Macey (2010) can be criticised for the problematic way in which they characterise multiculturalism and the way in which minority women might suffer in that context. The emphasis on *inter* group differences at the expense of intra group differences is problematic. However, I would argue that this is not necessarily particular to multiculturalism. Anywhere where group rights are invoked this problem will occur. It is a question of what that group is and how the boundaries of that group is defined. The 'problems' of group rights which might apply in the case of multiculturalism also apply to feminism. Just as middle-class

[18] It is also perhaps disingenuous to cite cultural sensitivity when, as Razack (2008) argues, the invisibility of violence against minority women is in fact an illustration of racism in service provision and authorities' racist tendency to naturalise violence against South Asian women.

[19] Volpp also highlights that African-American 'communities' are seen to be dominated by women and are pathologised for not being patriarchal enough.

black and Asian people might benefit disproportionately from ethnic minority entry schemes, working class women lose out where policies focused on women in effect privilege middle class women.

This debate about 'multiculturalism vs feminism' therefore creates a false dichotomy in which we are asked to choose between prioritising either gender or 'race' equality. However, this is not in fact a choice at all since it presupposes that all black people are men and that all women are white, i.e. that racism is not an issue which affects black women. In spite of the extensive work that has been done by black and postcolonial feminists to highlight this thorny issue (in the academy as well as through activism), mainstream understandings continue to position the two separately. The key, however, is, as Anne Phillips has argued, that "multiculturalism can be made compatible with the pursuit of gender equality and women's rights so long as it dispenses with an essentialist understanding of culture" (2007:9). This thesis will consider how these debates apply in relation to multifaithism in the concluding chapter.

Consistent with this dichotomy, the EMW initiative is conducted in a fairly narrow framework of empowerment 'within the community' rather than in society at large. Although there are parallel initiatives about increasing the number of Muslim (and other BME) women councillors, even these approaches are positioned within the framework of representative politics by changing the voice of who is qualified to represent 'the Muslim community'. In this sense, they conform to the very multicultural policy paradigm new Labour purported to want to move away from (discussed below). They are engaged with as women in Muslim communities rather than as Muslims in the UK, or women in a patriarchal *society* (not just community) or insecure citizens in a world with policed borders.

Afshar argues that empowerment is a process that cannot be "done to or for women" (1997:4) and that it must emerge from women themselves. The EMW project was ostensibly run under the direction of the National Muslim Women's

Advisory Group which comprised 19 'inspirational' Muslim women, and so might appear to meet Afshar's criterion. However, 'empowerment' is only sought in relation to religious affiliation and in so far as it relates to the Prevent agenda. In this research I examine the relationship between religious affiliation and marginality (and of course, the link with terrorism) considering: what factors constitute marginality; the extent to which religion was a salient factor; the effects of invoking religion if the prefix Muslim is merely a descriptor; and specifically the factors which were being ignored.

The suggestion in the social policy discourse is that feminism is part of a civilisationist discourse in which feminism represents modernity. This perspective claims ownership of and responsibility for feminism as a Western value ignoring a whole history of black feminist critiques of white Western feminism and also the existence of 'native feminisms'. Liberal feminism ends up becoming equated with the West and is thus even less likely to be accepted by those for whom the West represents the source of neo colonial and imperial adventures. By making it about women's rights they then further build on the idea that this is something 'we' have which they do not. This becomes another way of delineating the line between 'them' and 'us'. This resonates with Inglehart and Norris (2003: 65) citing Polly Toynbee: "What binds together a globalized force of some extremists from many continents is a united hatred of Western values that seems to them to spring from Judeo-Christianity".

Given this wider policy framework, the research explores how this discourse of multifaithism, which privileges religious affiliation, operates in this particular policy sphere and interrogates the underlying presumptions of its explanatory value. By contrast, I emphasise a more intersectional perspective. Stemming from this, and in the light of debates about multiculturalism and feminism, I necessarily engage with discussions which position gender and 'race' as continually in tension. My interpretation of 'intersectionality' follows that of Brah and Phoenix in which they emphasise that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into

discrete and pure strands and instead consist of “complex, irreducible, varied and variable effects …[ensuing]… when multiple axes of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts” (2004:76).

During my research, through discussions with interviewees, there were variations between those adopting an overarching definition of Muslim, and those speaking about a particular ethnic group in a city or region of the UK with very specific experiences of migration and settlement and disadvantage. On occasion, there were slippages between the two. The argument is not necessarily that we should differentiate more keenly by different ethnic group or different sect, but rather that we should be problem focused and then consider difference within that. I argue that we should disentangle the various problems encountered by ‘Muslims’ and other groups of people to deal with those problems. So, problems arising from citizenship status and socioeconomic status should be addressed principally through those lenses, rather than ethnic or religious group identity.

Summary of thesis

The following chapter looks at the methodological rationale for using both discourse analysis and semi structured qualitative interviews and describes what was done. It also sets out how my research is informed by my feminist and anti-racist politics and explores the theme of misrecognition. It describes how data was gathered, how interviewees were found and interviews structured, and provides details of observation undertaken. The chapter also describes some of the practical problems experienced during the research, as well as some of the ethical and political issues that were encountered.

The remainder of the thesis is based on an analysis of the data. Chapter 3 analyses the social policy discourse associated with the EMW initiatives. Based on policy

documentation around the subject of Empowering Muslim Women and the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda, it looks at the articulation of gender within nationalist discourses in the UK by addressing the way in which the 'Muslim woman' is constructed in social policy discourses in the post 7/7 era. It situates the EMW initiatives and the wider Prevent agenda in the context of contemporary racialised nationalist discourses in the UK, specifically about Britishness, community cohesion, immigration and multiculturalism. These debates are themselves situated within wider global discussions considering Huntingdon's Clash of Civilisations. Despite the rhetoric that the 'war on terror' was not about Islam, I show how Islam is blamed and the fault is collectivised to Muslims who are Othered. I describe how these discourses are gendered and argue that the intelligibility of the EMW initiatives relies on constructing a homogeneous 'Muslim community' as problematic, particularly vis a vis the perceived position of women in it. I show how policy literature is imbued with these discourses, either explicitly, or through an absence of discussion on gender. Since the projects cannot be evaluated in terms of success against their stated objectives of preventing violent extremism, I analyse what work these discourses do instead.

Chapter 4 highlights the way in which particular local circumstances affect how policy initiatives are received and implemented and that, within these geographic variations, issues such as class, ethnicity and citizenship status are also important, intersecting with gender and religious identity. Through analysis of case studies, the chapter reflects on the importance of recognising 'diversity within diversity'. In particular it will compare policy delivery in local areas where Muslims constitute the only minority population (and are broadly from one ethnic or social class background) with policy delivery in areas where Muslims constitute a more diverse category (in terms of ethnic origin, citizenship status and class, for example), and where they are not the only minority ethnic group in a local area. It will suggest that both are problematic because religious identity is privileged at the expense of building potential solidarities with other disadvantaged groups.

Chapter 5 examines the success of the objective to 'give the silent majority a stronger voice'. Firstly, it questions the idea that Muslim women have been absent from the political arena and have needed the state's intervention in the form of such initiatives to be empowered. It explores interviewees' understandings of Muslim women's silence in relation to those suggested by policy discourse, considering the ways in which the state's attempt to 'give voice' worked in practice. It is focused on the establishment of NMWAG and the way in which NMWAG operated in practice. I argue that the operation of such initiatives worked instead to constrain Muslim women's voices, restricting 'voice' to a narrow range of speakers, speaking about a narrow range of issues.

Chapters 6 and 7 address the way in which respondents conceptualised 'empowerment' in relation to Muslim women. Broadly speaking I suggest that empowerment is both individualised and collectivised. Chapter 6 illustrates how empowerment, as envisaged in the context of the role models road show, is seen as part of an individualistic, aspirational, neo-liberal project in which education and employment combine to provide access to consumer citizenship. It introduces the impact of cultural barriers on individualised empowerment and the concept of communal mothering, illustrating how the discourse of empowerment rests heavily on the trope of mothering. In relation to any 'non-cultural' form or source of possible marginalisation, Muslim women become individuals and need to take personal responsibility for how they deal with those particular challenges. Therefore, structural inequalities that Muslim women may experience as a result of their socio economic positioning or citizenship status (which are further exacerbated by regional variations) are not seen as something which needs to be dealt with collectively.

Chapter 7 develops the theme of 'collective barriers'. It analyses research participants' views regarding Islam as both a source of disadvantage, as well as a potential source of empowerment. It focuses on the theological interpretation work stream of the EMW initiatives, examining how it worked in practice. Muslim

women's empowerment acts as a proxy for integrating what is assumed to be a culturally homogeneous yet inassimilable community. The chapter discusses the consequences of this privileging of religion to the exclusion of other salient factors, focusing on experiences of religiously motivated discrimination, as well as the impact of this on solidarity with other BME women's organisations. What might be considered collective but 'secular' forms of oppression, arising from different class positions, are instead considered as individual challenges which need to be overcome. In this way, important structural inequalities which are not based on religion which impact on (some) Muslim women's lives are written out of the analysis.

Finally, the conclusion assesses the research findings against the underlying methodological approach. It draws together the most salient themes of the thesis and analyses them in the context of political developments post-Prevent. Furthermore, it discusses the way the research findings can contribute to emerging debates on multifaithism. It ends by considering the limitations of the research and suggests avenues for future work.

Overall the thesis argues that policy focused on 'Muslim women' collates together all women who are Muslim, a disparate and multiply-differentiated group and *de facto* attributes any problematic issues to religious affiliation. The policy literature refers to over 800,000 Muslim women in the UK. This includes a range of women from various ethnicities and different religious traditions and sects as well as converts or 'reverts'. Diversity at this level is explicitly recognised. Equally, if not more importantly, this figure includes Muslim women based in different parts of UK, from varying socio-economic backgrounds and with different citizenship statuses. These variations are, however, not explicitly recognised. What emerges in the EMW discourse is that Muslim women are discursively produced within the wider policy landscape as in need of empowerment, as victims of oppression. At the same time (some) Muslim women emerge as potential agents of change. Whilst clearly there are women who are both Muslim and marginalised, these

efforts to engage them do so solely in relation to them as Muslim women via advocates who may or may not adequately represent them. Consequently, other aspects of their multidimensional identities, on both subjective and structural levels (Brah 1992; 1996), are ignored. The idea of empowering 'Muslim women' presents Muslim women's lives as removed from class, ethnicity, region, age, sexuality and race. This research project is therefore arguably a "historically rooted and forward looking consideration of intersectionality" (Lewis and Brah 2004). As well as perpetuating anti-Muslim racist stereotypes, such policy discourses, focused on religious affiliation alone, also obscure continuities with earlier racisms, as well as other axes of social division in society, such as class and regional inequalities, which also affect non-Muslims. This engagement, which is restrictive and externally prescribed, in conjunction with the underlying discourses therefore represents a form of colonisation, which "implies a structural domination and a suppression – often violent- of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question" (Mohanty 2003:18).

Chapter 2: (Mis) Representing Muslim Women

> *Reflection on how social phenomena get defined as problems in need of explanation in the first place quickly reveals that there is no such thing as a problem without a person (or groups of them) who have this problem: a problem is always a problem for someone or other* (Harding 1987:6)

Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the study by outlining the methodological considerations that informed the research strategy and its implementation. It is divided into two sections. The first looks at knowledge production, analysing the 'whys' of the research topic and the chosen methods. It considers the methodological concerns and theories underlying my research questions and the rationale for using discourse analysis, semi structured qualitative interviews and observation, as well as discussion of my own location in the research. The second half of the chapter is focused on the 'hows' of data collection and practice. It explains how I constructed the data and some of the practical problems I experienced. Despite this convenient ordering there is a relationship between knowing and doing (Letherby 2003:2-3) which will be brought out in my discussion.

Overall the research is informed by feminist and anti-racist politics. Feminist research recognises that ethical considerations should run through the entire research process. I discuss these as they emerged throughout the research process from its inception to its final presentation, including in relation to the choice of topic, responsibility to the interviewees and the issue of power in the research relationship, particularly in terms of representation. There is a "relative dearth of reflection and debate on the range of methodological problems and dilemmas that

confront those engaged in research in relation…to contemporary forms of racism" (Bulmer and Solomos 2004:1). I explore these alongside those raised by feminist theorists and draw on postcolonial feminists such as Mohanty (1988) and Sandoval (2000). A methodological perspective informed by anti-racist and feminist politics is a necessary corollary of research which critiques the nature of contemporary racialised and gendered discourses surrounding 'Muslim women' in UK social policy.

2.1 The Research Strategy

> *Political language…is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. (Orwell 1946)*

This section sets out the rationale for the research questions and my chosen methods and the relationship between them. I also discuss my location within the research detailing how the research is informed by feminist and anti-racist methodologies.

2.1.1 The 'Muslim woman' question; victims or heroines?

I begin by situating the research within an ever growing academic body of work on Muslims. In doing so I explain why I have undertaken this particular research project. I provide a broad overview and critique of the existing research mainly in the UK and discuss the problematic nature of the relationship between policy and research in relation to Muslims, particularly in the post 9/11 and 7/7 era[20]. I explain

[20] In Fez, Morocco, I was discussing tourism in the aftermath of 9/11 with the owner of a *riad* . He said he had witnessed a surge in tourism to the region in the immediate aftermath with travellers explaining that they were motivated by a desire to understand the events of 9/11. This shows how even at the most common sense level that understanding "Muslim culture" becomes a necessary part of understanding Islamic terrorism.

how this informs my position which, combined with my strong interest in policy making, provides the impetus for my research questions.

Any analysis of 'Muslim women' needs to be situated within more general research on Muslims in the UK. Here the issue is complicated by the fact that research on Muslims as a specific category has emerged only recently. Although Ansari (2004) provides a comprehensive historical account of Muslims in the UK since the 1800s, sociological research specifically about 'Muslims' in the UK is a relatively new phenomenon. Since historically the UK's Muslim population is of South Asian origin, research on South Asians in the British context necessarily referred to Muslims, even if they were not explicitly described as such. The more recent focus on 'Muslims' as a category in sociological research reflects political developments both nationally and globally. In 2001 a question about religious affiliation was included in the UK census for the first time and provides a source of quantitative research on Muslims (Hussain 2008). Early information from the 2011 census shows that the UK's Muslim population has increased from 3% to 4.8%, making it one of the fastest growing and youngest populations.[21] Abbas et al (2005) consider a range of issues affecting Muslims in Britain and Modood too has written extensively (2003; 2005; 2007) on "British Muslims" (see also Joly 1995). As Alexander has argued,

> *The conceptual mapping of 'the Muslim menace' which links suicide bombers with extremist Muslim clerics and recent 'riots', articulates a very specific imagination of 'the Muslim community' in Britain - one which is marked by both gendered and generational difference* (2003: 3)[22].

[21] Presentation at New Muslims conference at the University of Manchester (8.3.13) by Stephen Jivraj 'Muslims in England and Wales: Evidence from the 2011 census'.

[22] Cited in McGhee (2005)

Research reflects these gendered and generational differences[23] amongst Muslims. There is, for example, a "widespread popular fascination with Muslim masculinity" (Archer 2003: 1). This mirrors policy concerns about Muslim masculinity specifically, as opposed to masculinity more generally, in the wake of the 2001 urban disturbances and 7/7 bombings (Lewis 2007; Choudhury 2007). These events are pre-dated, however, by the Rushdie affair, the Gulf War and urban unrest in the mid-1990s (Modood 1992; Macey 1999; Alexander 2000; Malik 2009) but all combine to present Muslim male youth as contemporary folk devils (Salgado-Pottier 2008).

By contrast, a lot of the research around Muslim women is focused on education and employment opportunities (Haw et al 1998; Dale et al 2002; Peach 2006) and the issue of inter-generational relationships (Afshar 1994; Basit 1997). The research on Muslim women reflects the dichotomous paradigm of religion as empowerment or religion as oppression (Afshar et al 2005, IHRC 2006; Werbner 2007). Ramji (2007) looks at the way religion, as social capital, is used differently by young British Muslim men and women whereas Dwyer (1999) and Brown (2006) consider how the formation of an articulated "Islamic" identity in the public and private spheres by some Muslim women enables them to negotiate and acquire rights in new and transformative ways. Ali et al (2008) interestingly note that Muslim women were more likely to report themselves as feminist in comparison with Christian women.

Since Muslims as objects of research tend to be concentrated in specific urban locations, much of the research on Muslims is as much about the places in which the research is undertaken. This can be seen in the focus on East London (Begum 2008) and Bradford, for example. Whilst individually the place specific research takes into account local factors, the findings are frequently homogenised and

[23] Although as I discuss in Chapter 6 in relation to mothering, it is not always a question of generational *difference*; it is also a question of the transmission of 'pathologies' *across* generations.

extrapolated to the Muslim population as a whole, a point which many respondents noted.

There is a small but emerging academic literature on Prevent (Kundnani 2009; Husbands and Alam 2011). Some important critical work has been undertaken focused on the institutions and discursive framework which are employed in relation to how suspect communities have been produced, drawing on parallels with the Irish community in the post IRA period (Nickels et al 2009; McGovern 2010). Katherine Brown (2011; 2013) refers to the gender blindness in the counter-terrorism agenda and provides a powerful critique based on her analysis of policy documents. Brown has also looked at the way the New Labour government had, as part of its security concerns, appropriated Muslim women's campaigns to gain access to mosques. She argues that "the instrumental use of gender by government has had the impact of relegating Muslim women's political activism to a sideshow" (2008: 487). However, she adds that the experiences and political participation of Muslim women challenge dominant discourses, refusing to fit easily into idealised versions of the 'good Muslim woman'. Dustin and Phillips (2008) have considered the efficacy of policy responses designed to deal with the issue of forced marriage, which again draws attention to the problematic way in which the state engages in these topics. Allen and Guru also undertook a critical study of NWMAG describing it as "an intensive care patient struggling to survive" and concluding that it was "more akin to 'political fad' than it was in achieving any real meaningful political empowerment (2012).

I set out this research in order to situate my own work but remain conscious of the problematic way in which such research is often framed. Knowledge production does not exist in a vacuum. Deeply entrenched inequalities are reflected in policy and academic concerns. Ladner, referring to research on African-Americans, writes that there is no recognition that deviant pathologised communities are products of social policy; that they do not exist outside of it. She says that such communities "…are involved in a dynamic relationship with their physical and cultural

environment in that they both influence and are influenced by it" (1987:76). Equally within the UK Muslims have been problematised in both contemporary policy discourse and, by extension, academic research, and this process has been clearly gendered.

Back et al refer to the "penumbral regions that link mainstream social science to social policy design, think tanks and journalism" (2009:2) and there is unquestionably an iterative relationship between policy and research. Research informs policy but equally, policy steers research, particularly since it is often accompanied by funding. In the case of research on Muslims, the current political climate, both nationally and globally, means that there is considerable governmental interest in funding research around radicalism and its possible causes. Much of the contemporary research landscape, therefore, conforms to the 'Muslim as problem' paradigm.

Given this, I had ethical concerns regarding undertaking research in this field and myself contributing to reinscribing "new racist ideologies of essential cultural difference" (Alexander 1996: 13-14) in the production of anti-Muslim rhetoric. I had thought, for example, of developing my earlier postgraduate study which analysed a House of Lords debate on 'honour killings'. I was concerned, however, that by focusing on these themes I could potentially be colluding in the way in which forced marriage and honour related violence have been constructed as Islamic 'cultural practices' (see Macey 2010) rather than crimes within a continuum of domestic violence and child abuse. By contrast, this research project offers a critical alternative to the marginalisation/deviance paradigm apparent in much academic (policy-driven) research on 'race'. It is "an expressly political project aimed at creating knowledge about the social relations and practices of domination, white supremacy, and exploitation for the purposes of challenging and changing these systems" (Hughes 2005: 205). The research questions directly draw attention to that dynamic relationship between policy and practice. It constitutes feminist research since it offers "…alternative origins of problematics,

explanatory hypotheses and evidence, alternative purposes of enquiry, and a new prescription for the appropriate relationship between the inquirer and his/her subject of inquiry" (Harding 1987: vii)

2.1.2 Discursive formations; interviews and text

Different research topics are best served by different methods and approaches (Letherby 2003:2). This section outlines the rationale for choosing my methods for researching EMW. I chose to analyse policy texts; conducted semi structured qualitative interviews and undertook observation to look at how the Muslim woman is constructed in social policy discourse in the New Labour era. Again I draw on wider theoretical debates within feminism to support my use of these methods.

Researching the way the Muslim woman is produced in policy discourses reflects how the 'turn to language' in sociology has "stimulated understanding that contemporary racism has taken on a 'new' form that is now rarely associated with ideas of superiority and inferiority, but is constructed on notions of 'natural difference' and incompatibility (Barker 1981)"[24]. The research sought to analyse how, in the contemporary geopolitical climate, the idea of 'the Muslim woman' is used as a marker of difference between 'the West and the rest', signifying the inherent incompatibility of Muslim 'culture' with Britishness. As a feminist I was particularly concerned at the way in which feminism, albeit a liberal individualistic variant of it, has been appropriated to this end. I discuss my own position in greater detail below.

As Cameron has argued, "…to detach language from its historical, cultural, and social roots, to think of it as outside individual and societal control, is a certain route to political quietism – a sense that nothing can really be changed" (2001: 19).

[24] cited by Phoenix (2004:38)

Discourse represents a site of struggle, where forces of social (re)production and contestation are played out (Lazar 2005:4). Therefore, to demonstrate how women are represented and constructed in and by language is a political act (Zalewski 2000). As Cameron argues, "…names are a culture's way of fixing what will actually count as reality in a universe of overwhelming, chaotic sensations, all pregnant with a multitude of possible meanings" (2001: 12).

I chose to focus attention on discourse in the political arena because of the ways in which political or elite racism validates 'popular' racism. There have been studies of the (mis)representation of Muslims and Islam in the world media (Said 1997) and the elite press in Britain (Richardson 2004; Poole and Richardson 2006). Whilst arguably the media is more pervasive, it is not, however, always the more influential of the two; political discourse derives considerable power from both its scope and legitimacy and is a key constituent of elite racism (van Tijk 2008: 55). Moreover, there is clearly a relationship between the state and the media and the two doubtlessly interact; it is certainly true that many people's understanding of political discourse is negotiated via the media. However, within the media, politicians have preferential access relative to the public more widely. And, not only is what politicians say widely reported on, politicians themselves occasionally take on the role of columnists themselves, both in the broadsheets and the tabloids.[25] In addition, as the on-going Leveson enquiry illustrates, the relationship

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[25] See for example "*A Minefield of Myths called Immigration*" in The Daily Mail by Vince Cable (19.4.2010) http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1227829/VINCE-CABLE-A-minefield-myths-called-immigration.html ; *"It IS great to be British: Gordon Brown reminds us Brits why we should be so proud of coming from these great isles"* by Gordon Brown in The Daily Mail (4.5.2009) http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1176983/It-IS-great-British-Gordon-Brown-reminds-Brits-proud-coming-great-isles.html#ixzz1JQ0vEr8j
And "*The golden thread that runs through our history*" by Gordon Brown in The Guardian (8.7.2004) http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2004/jul/08/britishidentity.economy
And for Tony Blair: "*What I've learned : Tony Blair reflects on the lessons of his decade as Britain's Prime Minister."* In The Economist (31.5.2007) http://www.economist.com/node/9257593?story_id=9257593
And David Blunkett see *Don't let the families of immigrants flock here in a free-for-all* in The Sun, (28.7.2009) http://davidblunkett.typepad.com/speeches_articles/2009/01/dont-let-the-families-of-immigrants-flock-here-in-a-freeforall.html

between politicians and media is far from innocent. Furthermore, in the post 9/11 climate, as Butler argues, there has been a growing acceptance of censorship in the press and while the media "report the 'voice' of the government for us…[their]…proximity to that voice rests on an alliance or identification with that voice" (2004:1). More critically, as I explore in the empirical chapters, government policy establishes a framework within which individuals and 'communities' operate in terms of political engagement; it, therefore, produces them as subjects of social policy.

In addition, I undertook interviews and (participant) observation in order to enrich my research (Cameron 2001: 140) through triangulation of different qualitative methods. In this way I have been able to bring different kinds of evidence to bear to my chosen topic. Interviews are socially constructed and are a very particular way of producing knowledge. Broadly my intention was to look at how discourse constitutes everyday practice, rather than simplistically compare the language of political discourse with that used in 'everyday life'. This builds on the idea that "as discourses are relational systems of meaning and practice that constitute the identities of subjects and objects" discourse analysis should look at the "creation, disruption and transformation of structures that organise social life" (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:2).

My decision to use both textual analysis and qualitative interviews is informed by these wider debates and concerns. In using the methods I have chosen I am attempting to capture both the discursive and material aspects of the role of the Prevent agenda on 'the Muslim woman'. The advantages of interviewing lie in dynamic conceptualisations of a policy in practice which can "provide a particularly salient exposure of the varieties of subjectivities and varied articulations" (Griffin 2007:228). In my interviews, therefore, I considered the proposition that "the relationship between discourse and the social is a dialectical one, in which discourse constitutes, and is constituted by, social situations, institutions and

structures" (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:11) Sara Ahmed (2004) suggests that, "the non-performativity of institutional speech acts requires a new approach to the relation between texts and social action". She calls for an 'ethnography of texts' whereby "we need to follow them around" to track what texts do. In contrast, I am more focused on the relationship between respondents and the multiple texts which produce the discursive formations within which they are produced and operate.

This project is, therefore, not about language alone. It is also about the way that policy operates and is practiced and has real effects and consequences. As the empirical chapters will demonstrate, changes in policy language are not mere semantics; such changes influence and affect how people can access resources. This analysis draws attention to the role of government in creating, perpetuating and reifying particular racial categorisations. It is not a policy evaluation in the sense of measuring outcomes, principally because there are no 'outcomes'. Instead, I analyse how the policy works at a symbolic level.

The paradox of critiquing language is, however, that I too am caught by the existing vocabulary and the underlying shared meanings. Such deconstructions, as Alcoff (1988) argues, "must pertain to all subjects, or they will pertain to none" thus paradoxically "threatening to deconstruct the feminist subject as well as the female subject." This raises the problem that if I deconstruct the 'Muslim woman', conceivably I also deconstruct 'the anti-racist feminist'. It highlights a key theoretical concern which is to avoid the essentialising tendencies of cultural feminism on the one hand, and the deconstructive, nihilistic trends of poststructural feminism on the other.

By cultural feminism I mean the idea that gender differences are essentialised and biologically determined as explored in the work of Echols and Mary Daly. Cultural feminism suggests that women and men are essentially different but that attributes more often associated with women are denigrated in a patriarchal

society. It could be argued that Islamic feminism, which I discuss in Chapter 7, is consistent with this idea. The problem with this approach is that it does not criticise the fundamental mechanism by which patriarchal power is used to perpetuate sexism. The theoretical framework of this thesis is underpinned by a post structuralist perspective, which emphasises social explanations for gender differences. As Alcoff has highlighted, however, this perspective results in 'nominalism' i.e. the idea that the category woman is a fiction and that feminist efforts must be directed towards dismantling this fiction. She writes that "in their defense of a total construction of the subject, post structuralists deny the subject's ability to reflect on the social discourse and challenge its determinations". Furthermore, paradoxically it makes gender invisible.

One response to this dilemma is a focus on positionality and to be aware that subjectivity is not produced by external ideas, values, or material causes, but by one's personal, subjective engagement in the practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance to the events of the world (Alcoff 1988). This also raises the issue of objectivity which I have discussed earlier on in this chapter. Haraway's (1988) work on 'feminist objectivity' or situated knowledge is relevant here both in order to elaborate my own constructions of the data, as well as those of my respondents. Just as my own knowledge is situated, so is that of the respondents. In keeping with Haraway and others, the theoretical approach to this study "privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing". The following section explores my own positionality in greater detail.

2.1.3 Locating myself in the research

> *"Knowing is not so much about the assemblage of existing knowledge as it is about recognizing our constitution as 'ourselves' within the fragments that*

we process as knowledge; 'hailing' and being 'hailed' within the discourses that produce us and the narratives we spin…" Brah 1999

The best feminist analysis places the researcher in the same critical plane as the subject to the extent that "…the researcher appears not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete specific desires and interests" (Harding 1987: 9). In this section I want to highlight explicitly how my own subject position relates to the topic of my research (that is, the origin of the problematic as well as the purposes of my enquiry) and explore in more detail how the influences of my own position are embedded within the research process itself.

As an Economics undergraduate in the UK in the early 1990s, I took a paper in Sociology in my second year. An area that interested me then was educational achievement and in my final year my dissertation focused on ethnic minority achievement and entry into the labour market. I was keen to explore the relationship between 'race' and class and academic achievement. I understood that 'race' was a disadvantage i.e. there was an ethnic penalty, and as emerging research at the time showed, the so called Asian 'success' story hid a wide variation in achievement. The hitherto tidy analysis of Asian success and 'Black' failure relative to the white majority norm, as outlined in the Swann Report,[26] gave way to a more complex picture. 'Asian', it emerged, encompassed both high achieving East African origin Asian and Chinese, as well as low achieving Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, as the new data categorised people. Equally, the category 'Black' included qualification-rich Black Africans as well as 'under-achieving' and 'over-excluded' African-Caribbeans. Moreover, there were significant variations within each of these categories according to gender too (Mirza 1992). Clearly in this case, greater disaggregation potentially offered a better way of identifying the problem and, therefore, potentially the solution.

[26] which had begun its life as the "Rampton Report: West Indian Children in *Our* Schools" (my emphasis).

Whilst I recognised the value in greater disaggregation, this new picture did not, however, correlate with my own experience of the Bangladeshi 'community' in north London in which I grew up. That experience was more in keeping with the undifferentiated Asian success story. As an economics undergraduate the explanatory possibilities of class appeared very attractive to me, even if it seemed to be absent from the academic literature on underachievement at the time. As Jordan-Zachery (2007) writes, "I was drawn to the concept of intersectionality before I even knew what it was". Over time the discourse of Pakistani and Bangladeshi 'failure' across a variety of social indicators, including educational achievement, became attributed to their shared religious heritage. Rather than ethnicity or 'race' we have religious 'identity' perceived to be a key distinguishing factor.

As an 'ethnicised'[27] woman who has gone from being merely '(South) Asian' to 'Bangladeshi' to appearing as 'Muslim' in policy discourses, these changes and what they have meant have undoubtedly played a role in my dynamic consciousness. As a result of my own position as someone who was once positioned as one thing, but is now positioned as something else, I am unable to disregard the fact that discourses change and are the product of particular historical moments; it is not the case that "racial divisions…[are] anterior to politics" (Gilroy 2004:35). The fact that these categories change illustrates the historical specificity of particular racial categories. Equally, however, I recognise that I have agency which is not just the product of discourses external to me, even though that agency is placed within particular discursive configurations at particular moments in time. Even though subjects are socially constructed in discursive practices, they nonetheless exist as "thinking, feeling" social subjects and agents "capable of resistance and

[27] I am using this term as defined by Meetoo and Mirza (2007) to emphasise the *process* of racial objectification. "Thus *being* or *becoming* 'ethnicised' brings into play the power relations that inform and structure the gaze of the 'other' which, we suggest frames the women's experience."

innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject positions and practices" (Weedon 1987:125).

It might, therefore, be apt to characterise my research as stemming from narcissistic *mis*recognition or what Adrienne Rich calls "psychic disequilibrium"[28] in that nothing I have ever read about myself is true. When responding to the census I have identified myself as a 'Muslim'. However, the distance between my own subjective awareness of myself and other Muslim women of my acquaintance *vis á vis* the representations of Muslim women in UK political discourse is striking. It is this disequilibrium or misrecognition that has strongly motivated this research and the research questions that form its basis. It is also a theme I was keen to detect amongst research participants. Bhatt (2004) also highlights that research grounded in the politics of identity may be guilty of perpetuating and reifying the very categories and essentialisms it attempts to deconstruct. The fact that I self-identify as a Muslim is not to suggest that it necessarily gives me any special access or insider knowledge. This status is "neither an emblem of 'authenticity' nor of 'innocence'" (Alexander 2004: 136). I do, however, think there is a relationship between my own subject position and the type of research I am conducting.

Aside from my position of privilege as a researcher, there are two aspects of who I am that are worth noting here: my 'Muslimness'[29] and the fact that I was previously a civil servant (albeit not in a related policy area). I would argue that my Muslimness, possibly obvious to others from my name, if not my appearance (no visible signifiers such as a hijab for example), has been a factor influencing access. I explore these two factors in the second half of the chapter through discussion of my research experiences. Whilst wary of overanalysing my positionality, as Harding notes, "introducing this 'subjective' element into the analysis in fact increases the objectivity of the research and decreases the "objectivism" which hides this kind of

[28] cited in Rosaldo (1989: ix)

[29] I am using the term 'Muslimness' rather than 'religion' or 'religious identity' because I think it more accurately captures how I myself relate to my religious identification.

evidence from the public" (1987:9). By highlighting these issues I am certainly not claiming that I have any more authority as a result of having worked in government or as a result of my Muslimness, only that my findings and analysis are produced through this. That is, my knowledge is situated.

Having discussed my proposed research strategy, I need to clarify what the study does not offer. It does not claim to be an evaluation of the policy. Nor is it an intervention into the debate about the empowering effects of religion; nor is it a commentary on whether Muslim women need empowering. It was a small scale study analysing pertinent texts and using in depth interviews with different people at various levels of the policy chain. Not only were the initiatives on a small scale, I interviewed a wide range of disparate people. Nonetheless, recurrent themes emerged which support the pertinence and relevance of this research. Its findings are underwritten by the broader theoretical framework.

2.2 Implementing the research strategy

This section describes the process of constructing the data. It begins with what texts I chose to analyse and my decisions for doing so. It also outlines the methods by which I gathered qualitative interview data and some of the practical problems I experienced in doing so. In addition it also sets out other information that I have used in my analysis and how this data was constructed. I began with collating the texts. I originally thought I would conduct my research in two stages: firstly, a discursive analysis of the policy field before secondly embarking on interviews and observation structured around the themes emerging from the policy literature. In practice, however, the experience was more iterative.

2.2.1 Analysing the texts

On one level this task was simple in that there were very few policy documents relating specifically to women. My focus was a government publication called

Empowering Muslim Women: Case Studies published in January 2008[30]. This was an output of the *Preventing Violent Extremism Action Plan* (April 2007), in which the Government committed itself to the publication of a document on effective initiatives to strengthen the role that Muslim women play in their communities. The booklet provided a snapshot of projects involving initiatives to empower Muslim women to play a role in their communities and wider society. The projects fall into a number of categories, reflecting the routes through which it is imagined that Muslim women may be empowered: *economic participation, education, civic participation* and *arts, culture and sports*. In addition, it includes a number of projects that are underway which allegedly directly support women in playing a pro-active role in *preventing violent extremism*. I analysed this in the context of other documents which referred to women. These included press releases, and articles by politicians, as well as related policy documents. I also looked at transcripts of speeches given by politicians.

EMW is positioned within a broader social policy framework. Policies targeted at Muslim women are situated within wider debates on immigration, community cohesion, integration and nationalism. This demanded consideration of a broader range of texts, highlighting the importance of 'intertextuality' in analysing discourse; that is, recognition that all text and talk is situated within a complex of other texts. Talbot defines the term as one which "expresses a sense of blurred boundaries, a sense of a text as a bundle of points of intersection with other texts" (2005: 168). Such an analysis is clearly important if one accepts that "a political project will attempt to weave together different strands of discourse….to…organise a field of meaning so as to fix the identities of objects and practices in a particular way"(Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 3) (See **Annex A** for list of texts analysed).

2.2.2 The research interviews and observation

[30] http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/empoweringmuslimwomen

Research participants were recruited via use of civil service contacts, as well as attendance at the role model road shows and a Prevent conference in December 2009. I would meet people at conferences and they put me in touch with their colleagues or people who they thought might be useful. Some individuals I met had a lot of potentially relevant contacts, and while they themselves chose not to be interviewed by me formally, they provided me with contact details of people they knew were or had been involved in Prevent or associated policy areas.

In total, I undertook 25 interviews between 2009 and 2010. I was able to interview five members of NMWAG, two anonymously. In addition, I interviewed a range of people indirectly or directly involved in the policy: local authority Community Cohesion Officers, Community Police Officers, civil servants, journalists, and activists and third sector workers from BME women's groups (secular & Muslim). I provide a full list of interviewees at **Annex B**.

In March 2009 I also attended an Equalities and Human Rights Commission conference (in Birmingham as it was organised by the West Midlands Regional Office). Its objective was to recognise Muslim women's roles and contributions to society to mark International Women's Day. The conference was part of a programme to promote 'new voices' and the Commission's work to empower the unheard or marginalised. I attended the quarterly NMWAG meeting on 22 February 2010 which was followed by a networking lunch for the members of both NMWAG and YMAG.

Between January and March 2009 I attended 3 of the 6 road shows set up 'to empower Muslim girls'. This allowed me to meet a number of role models and members of the partner organisations. I attended a Prevent conference in December 2009 in Birmingham at which John Denham spoke and where good practice was discussed. Gaining access to some of the other work streams was harder (and not only for me; one of my interviewees complained about not being able to get access to the 'sexier' topics of theological interpretation, for example). I

also attended one of the workshops and school trips funded by Prevent that had been organised by the Three Faiths Forum. The project was called Faith and Fashion; I attended the workshop at the school and the school trip to the Victoria and Albert Museum exploring ideas about modesty in a historical context. My interviews and observation took place in London (Newham, Brent, Ealing and Westminster), Bristol, Cardiff, Birmingham, Bradford and Manchester.

During the road shows, a number of role models (all of whom were Muslim women) went to six different cities in the UK and spoke to predominantly Muslim school girls about their own career paths and life experiences in an effort to raise expectations and 'empower' Muslim girls. The format of all of the road shows followed broadly the same pattern. There was an introduction by a member of NMWAG or someone from the Council. This was followed by a plenary session in which a number of role models spoke about their experiences. Afterwards there were a number of breakout sessions where girls had the opportunity to engage with the role models at a more individual level. The day ended with closing comments from the organisers and there was an opportunity for the girls to ask any final questions. I was able to watch the day's proceedings and sit in on the breakout sessions. Some of the role models gave out their contact details to the girls so that they could get in or stay in touch after the road shows should they wish to. Finally, the girls were asked to complete feedback and evaluation forms which were compiled in the evaluation report produced by Equal to the Occasion, the organisation tasked with delivering the project.

I had a basic interview plan which asked questions around the following themes: what empowerment means (in relation to Muslim women); potential barriers to success; how Muslim women are represented in public policy debates; how projects on role models, theological interpretation and civic participation affect Muslim women (and girls). These were prefaced with particular questions about respondents' own experiences in relation to the EMW initiatives. Given the diversity in respondents' own positions, I allowed discussions to develop in their

own way. This was partly pragmatic because I spoke to a wide variety of people, with various backgrounds in policy and different positioning in relation to the Prevent strategy and New Labour; a rigid questionnaire would not have sufficed. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. (See **Annex C** for information sheet provided to interviewees.)

Research participants have the power to deny or gratify access and responsiveness to my request varied; access was inconsistent and untidy. Although I attempted to acquire interviewees systematically, this was much harder in practice than in theory. This also reflected a power imbalance between the researcher and the researched in relation to the commitment to the project. In identifying interviewees, I sought to secure a cross section of respondents across the policy chain. And although I was pleased to have got the opportunity to attend the NMWAG quarterly meeting, I was disappointed at not being permitted to stay on for the discussion with the Minster responsible at the time, Shahid Malik. I had anticipated some difficulties with getting interviews, given the controversial nature of the Prevent agenda. Those closer to central government involvement in policy initiatives and implementation seemed more wary of being interviewed. And even if they agreed to be interviewed, they did not want to be recorded. On one of these occasions I made a note of the meeting and asked the respondent to confirm they were content with what I had written. On the other occasion I took notes and recorded my reflections on the interview immediately after.

It is difficult to know whether it was always reluctance that prevented people from agreeing to speak to me or whether it was just that people were busy. In my written requests for interviews I did ask people to let me know either way, but no one explicitly declined. Instead, on occasion there was initial agreement followed by difficulty pinning people down to a particular date. The degree of tenacity I felt comfortable exerting was tempered by an appreciation of how busy many of the respondents were.

By contrast, those that were quite hostile to the Prevent agenda, or had become disillusioned with it, were not slow in agreeing to be interviewed. Members of the An Nisa Society, which had originally been involved with Pathfinder projects in the early days of Prevent, but who later quite publicly rejected further money in protest, were very happy to speak to me. There could have been other factors influencing interviewees' readiness to speak to me. One member of NMWAG had originally not responded to my requests but became more amenable after she was 'introduced' to me via a mutual colleague. By then, however, she had also resigned quite publicly from NMWAG, writing an open letter to John Denham, then the Secretary of State at DCLG, so I cannot be sure which of these factors led to her agreeing to be interviewed by me.

Whilst preparing for fieldwork I was conscious about this issue of power in the research relationship. Oakley (1981) has argued that interviews should take place in non-hierarchical relationships and "that the interview should be a mutual interaction in which the researcher is open and gives something of herself by talking about herself, by answering questions when asked and perhaps feeding back some findings to respondents when writing up" (Letherby 2003:83). Many of the people worked in the third sector, very often in a voluntary capacity and I cannot deny feeling that I was asking for a lot from them. As such I felt more comfortable in the brief exercises in observation I undertook.

I transcribed the interviews myself and kept a research diary when I attended the road shows and NMWAG meetings.

2.2.3 Analysing and representing the data

My intention had been to establish a priori themes emerging from the discourse in the policy texts in order to inform the interviews. In reality this did not work, partly because of timing, and partly because of the disjuncture between what I had anticipated discussing with interviewees and what in fact happened in practice.

This occasionally proved rather challenging. I analysed the interviews through the lens of some of the major themes emerging from the policy literature. For example, the themes of motherhood and fostering the right type of Islam were clear in the policy literature. The issue of diversity emerged in the literature too although respondents interpretation of what constituted difference varied.

Letherby highlights the importance of reflexivity and emotion as sources of insight (2003: 73). The research, involving in-depth semi structured qualitative interviews with a range of people across the policy trajectory, meant that the relationship between me as the researcher and the researched varied. Such variations were an integral part of the research process and recognise how knowledge is being constructed in this particular research project. As Ali has argued "criticisms of 'subjectivity' obscure the complex relationship between subjects, epistemology, politics and research" whereas "'being reflexive' means not only reflecting on one's own identity, but reflecting on how one's identity relates to issues of power, and impacts on research and respondents" (2006: 476). The following three scenarios principally highlight the diversity of Muslim women and, therefore, the difficulty of talking about 'Muslims' collectively, a theme that runs through my research. Furthermore all illustrate how my 'Muslimness' featured in how the interviewee and I related to one another showing the variation in its impact.

The first of my interviewees was a woman who spoke at a conference I attended so I was aware of her political position. She was of Pakistani origin and considered herself to be a 'cultural Muslim' in that she had been brought up by a practising Muslim mother and secular Muslim Communist father in the UK, although she herself confessed to very little religious practice other than a cursory celebration of Eid. I found her stand to have most in common with my own.[31] I felt that we were

[31] Although, I should add that I find the term 'cultural Muslim' problematic (because it perpetuates the idea that religion can exist outside of 'culture'), I was brought up in an Islamic faith but do not

able to communicate easily and that there was a rapport, particularly as I could empathise with her anti-racist feminist politics and her experiences of being criticised for 'not being Muslim enough' by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

My second interviewee was another Pakistani woman who had jointly established a Muslim women's grassroots organisation. From what I knew about the organisation I anticipated her religiosity and it affected how I approached her as a potential interviewee, using Islamic forms of greeting, for example, and dressing more 'modestly' than I would have otherwise at our meeting.[32] Throughout the interview I sensed she was curious about my background and was trying to place my nationality/ethnicity as she listed different Muslim ethnicities on a number of occasions during our one hour interview, looking, I thought, for some spark of recognition. Her suspense came to an end when, as I was leaving, she asked me where I was from. Clearly from my name she had known I was of Muslim origin, but after spending an hour discussing 'Muslim disadvantage' she wanted to know where I fitted in to her view of the world, given I was a PhD student.

My third 'interview' meeting was interesting. Despite having said that I myself could be identified by my name as a Muslim, I misidentified my third interviewee, an official from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), from her name. I had understood it as a (Hindu) Indian name but was surprised when I met a hijab-wearing Muslim woman. I was more disconcerted by this, at least initially, than I had anticipated. Whereas originally I had been slightly disappointed at her refusal to be interviewed, her unwillingness then seemed more understandable to me, as she was on secondment from a grassroots organisation working with Muslim youth and did not want to say anything where her personal opinion might conflict with the official government line.

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practice although my parents did. And indeed many (although significantly not all) of my extended family and family friends around whom I grew up are of varying degrees of faith and practice.

[32] I discuss this in more detail later on in this chapter.

My previous incarnation as a civil servant both helped and hindered access. On one level it provided me with access to people through contacts I have from my ten years in the civil service[33], although not always. It did not necessarily mean that I always managed to get interviews. It is possible that my background made people expect me to be more cynical of official government lines. On my part, I found myself more able to show empathy with interviewees who had worked in central government; we shared some of the experiences of being Othered in that environment.

Despite not wanting to perpetuate the obsession with what Muslim women wear, it was difficult to escape the fact that it has become an "over determined signifier for the identity of young British Muslim women" (Dwyer 1999). As well as being a dominant theme that came up in policy, in interviews and in the media during the research period, the issue of how I presented myself to others, in terms of what I wore, was also a theme in the research process[34]. I was very conscious of how I was dressed when I met interviewees or attended events or conferences where I might meet potential interviewees. In general, I thought quite carefully about how I tailored my attire depending on interviewees and what the occasion was. I thought about whether I was dressed modestly and found myself very often making a decision based on how religious I anticipated the interviewee to be. I did not necessarily do this out of respect or to avoid causing offence. Instead my concerns were more about how I felt I would be perceived and whether how I dressed might reflect on me negatively. Given the "whole constellation of meanings" attached to wearing "Asian" clothes or "English" clothes (Dwyer 2000) I chose to dress differently with different interviewees. Although initially concerned at my contrivance, I eventually concluded that it was no different to what I and most

[33] Although I never worked in DCLG or the Home Office myself there is a fair amount of mobility within the civil service so my former colleagues have moved between, as well as within different government departments.

[34] For example, there were various discussions in relation to legislating against the niqab and burka in Belgium, Italy and France during this period as well as parallel discussions here.

people do every day. I cannot know whether any of my interviewees noticed or were remotely bothered by how I was dressed.

McRobbie (1982) talks about women's positive responses to researcher interest and involvement as being a sign of women's powerlessness. The idea behind this is that women's voices are not heard enough and so this is reflected in an enthusiasm to participate in interviews. It was in fact, very rare for me to feel that I held power. Having conducted much of my fieldwork, I remained convinced that power in the research relationship is a key area of concern, but not always in the way I had originally anticipated. This power imbalance was reflected in a number of ways. The research design itself led to a sense of powerlessness or absence of control on my part. In preparing for interviews my approach was flexible depending on who I was speaking to. I let people switch the topic as they wanted. Sometimes I would ask warm-up questions to break the ice and would get detailed autobiographical information which sometimes felt as though it would not be relevant and I was conscious that time was often short. On other occasions, when interviewees told me they had plenty of time I worried about whether we could fill the time and, if we were unable to, would that reflect badly on them or me. Generally, everyone I interviewed was happy with the semi-structured approach; it allowed those that were keen to lead the conversation free rein. Some clearly had an axe to grind – issues they wanted to share – and issues I had not originally thought about came to the fore, which was of course the rationale for semi structured interviews. (For example, I got some quite detailed complaints about working with "white middle class women" in the civil service that I had not anticipated.)

Letherby (2003: 78) emphasises the authority of the researcher in selecting and rejecting data at the different stages of the research. In the pre-fieldwork stage, the researcher determines the questions and further selects data during analysis and writing-up. "The full, individual identities of respondents cannot be known during the process of research" (ibid.) illustrating the researcher's power in their ability to select data. Given my own concerns with the way the Muslim women are represented, there are ethical concerns for me in how I represent research

participants' voices. Obviously, I have respected requests for anonymity but I have been concerned about including particular comments and statements which I have found uncomfortable. My strategy for dealing with this has been to ensure that any data I have included is done so in context. That is, both from the point of view of subject matter, but also that it was consistent with the general tone of what they said to me. One advantage of having a smaller number of interviewees has been that I recall the encounters quite vividly. When considering officials I felt less of a sense of responsibility and more a desire to subject their position to scrutiny. I expected there to be 'lines to take' [35] and they were arguably what I wanted to hear.

Many of my interviewees were quite keen to seek my opinion. Given the political nature of the topic and the controversy that had surrounded it, I found it difficult to answer questions relating to my opinion of the work they were involved in. Some were keen to find out my opinion on the work of NMWAG. On one occasion, an interviewee, who was originally the gatekeeper for some non-participant observation I was involved in, and who I had not envisaged interviewing, went for a coffee with me. I asked her whether she would mind me recording her. The interview was more of a conversation and at one point she began recording me as I talked to her about my research.

As McRobbie (1982) has discussed there are "resentment and hostilities" between researchers and practitioners and the potential for recrimination; with academic researchers "…accused of participating in a sphere of 'male' intellectual discourses whilst others are working every day in the 'real world' of practical problems to which some sort of solutions have to be found." Cotterill (1992) also points out the power imbalance between women over the issue of vulnerability when she writes that respondents are never as committed to the research as the researcher. Respondents' control over the research can be seen in the way some interviewees

[35] In this context official arguments generally written by civil servants or advisers for Ministers or press offices to adopt.

opted not to be recorded; it was not a decision I necessarily understood (nor was it helpful). I was also aware that my own particular view of anti-Muslim racism and the imperative to decode and deconstruct was not shared with many of my respondents for various reasons. Some felt that anti-Muslim racism was 'just like any other racism' and should not be identified separately as it detracted from other racisms. Also many respondents were very passionate about what they did and did not necessarily see the bigger picture that I was trying to assess i.e. the unintended consequences of Prevent. There were people who shared my discomfort with the Prevent agenda, but for different reasons, and had no qualms about reifying the idea of a universally oppressed Muslim community.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out the theoretical underpinnings of my research and describes the processes of data collection as well as ethical dilemmas I experienced. I have explained the limitations of previous research which is problematic for conforming to gendered representations of 'the Muslim menace' and explained the underlying rationale for this research. This research examines the process of how social problems are made; the shared common sense understandings on which they are founded and the way in which these ideas are conformed to or disrupted by the people working in that arena or subject to it. By looking at this small scale initiative I have been able to capture a variety of standpoints on the way social policy works in practice: the impact of local variations in the way in which social policy in practice might vary; the impact of new policy and funding and the consequences of financial pragmatism on erstwhile solidarities; the way in which allegedly new innovative, revolutionary ideas draw on common-sense tropes rooted in gendered colonial ideologies as well as contemporary neo imperial ones. I consider whether given the reliance on these genealogies the resultant 'developments' can ever be as transformative as they might otherwise be.

No research is carried out in a vacuum and this research is historically located. Any decisions about establishing a cut-off point were taken out of my hands. In early 2010 there was a Select Committee enquiry into the whole Prevent agenda which had been very critical. As the second year of my PhD (and my interviews) drew to a close there was also a General Election and New Labour was replaced by a coalition of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. At that point it was not clear what the new government proposed, although a review was planned. The new coalition government's decision to dismantle the Prevent programme was a convenient way to delimit the project. In fact, working on a politically sensitive, high profile policy area as a centre-left government ended and a centre-right coalition was established, highlighted the significance of the demise of the Left more generally as the background against which this policy area is set. I return to these pertinent developments in the concluding chapter. I now turn to the empirical chapter focused on analysing the policy landscape.

Chapter 3: Gendered Nationalisms: The 'True' Clash of Civilisations?

> *Ascribing the violence of one's adversaries to their culture is self-serving: it goes a long way toward absolving oneself of any responsibility.*
>
> Mamdani 2005b

> *"the cultural fault line that divides the West and the Muslim world is not about democracy but sex."*
>
> Inglehart and Norris 2003

Introduction

On 15 January 2009, five days before the Bush administration was set to leave the White House, David Miliband, then UK Foreign Secretary, argued that the use of the term 'war on terror' since the September 11 attacks had been a mistake which may potentially have caused more harm than good. In the UK the term had begun to fall out of favour in the Foreign Office as early as mid-2006. By 2007, the Engaging with the Islamic World Unit in the Foreign Office was advising the rest of the UK government to stop using the term 'war on terror'. By contrast, in the US there was widespread support for the phrase throughout the duration of Bush's government. At a very basic level this reflects wider tensions between the US and the UK in their respective approaches as well as different levels of public support for the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. A Foreign Office spokesman said the government wanted to "avoid reinforcing and giving succour to the terrorists' narrative by using language that taken out of context, could be

counterproductive."[36] The use of such militaristic language was counterproductive, contributing to isolating communities; and it encouraged militants' use of the sense of war and a clash of civilisations to recruit supporters. Furthermore the shift in language highlighted the British belief that "we cannot win by military means alone, and because this isn't us against one organized enemy with a clear identity and a coherent set of objectives".[37][38]

The shift in terminology acknowledged the possibilities of language, its "potent persuasiveness" (Steuter and Wills 2008:4). Despite this acknowledgement, however, I argue that the language used continued to perpetuate the discourse of a clash of civilisations. The language and message of Prevent needs to be situated in the context of both the UK's involvement in this wider, more global debate, as well as the national policy terrain. The 7/7 bombings have been described as "….the most horrific manifestation on British soil of a complex Al Quaeda inspired threat to our security" (DCLG 2007:4). As such the Prevent agenda is a local expression of a more global political project against global terrorism. This chapter begins by analysing the social policy discourse associated with the EMW initiatives. It situates the EMW initiatives and the wider Prevent agenda in the context of contemporary racialised nationalist discourses in the UK, specifically about Britishness, community cohesion, immigration and multiculturalism. I argue that the intelligibility of the EMW initiatives relies on constructing a homogeneous 'Muslim community' as problematic, particularly vis a vis the perceived position of women within it. It looks at the way in which the 'Muslim woman' is constructed in social policy discourses in the post 7/7 era.

The research is not evaluative. Instead I consider the 'work' done by the language or discourse of the Prevent agenda broadly (and the EMW initiatives specifically). I analyse the symbolic power of the discourse of the social policy literature in which

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[36] The Observer 10 Dec 2006

[37] Hilary Benn cited in NBC news (14/4/2007) http://www.nbcnews.com/id/18133506/ (accessed on 9 January 2013)

[38] Although notably Gordon Brown continued to use the term (see Afshar 2012)

EMW is articulated. I also include some analysis of politicians' interventions in these and related fields. As I noted in the introduction, social problems are always problems *for* someone. They are constructed by the social policy process itself. This occurs both through the language and the institutions and structures of power involved in the practice of policy. Firstly, the way in which the problem has been defined needs to be understood. Secondly, and not unrelatedly, why particular solutions are posited in response needs to be understood. The intelligibility relies on a shared framing of the problem and a shared vocabulary. The policy objective is to defuse the risk of terrorism and specifically, post 2005, prevent 'home grown' terrorism. In this chapter, through consideration of specific and associated policy texts, I analyse how we are to understand the rationale of Prevent and the EMW initiatives. How can these initiatives "stop people wanting to become terrorists"?

The first section focuses on how, despite emphatic disavowals, the Prevent agenda remains inflected with the wider global discourse of Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilisations'. As such it positions the Prevent agenda in terms of global politics, related national policies around terrorism and immigration, as well as debates around multiculturalism and Britishness. I explore the way in which the concept of 'culture' is invoked and implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) defined. For example, I look at the way that both Al Qaeda inspired and far-right extremism are discussed in parallel even though attempts to highlight their similarities only serve to demonise the 'Muslim community' more acutely. This is partly done through the "asymmetric ascription of culture" (Narayan 1997); the causes of far right extremism are not attributed to British 'culture', whereas Islamic terrorism almost always is. Furthermore, these policy discourses are by their very nature gendered. The risk of terrorist activity is located in young disaffected men, yet the bodies and rights of Muslim women are a crucial defining feature in the quest for shared values and the 'battle for hearts and minds'.

The second section of this chapter, therefore, focuses on the articulation of gender within nationalist discourses in the UK by addressing the way in which "the Muslim woman" is constructed in social policy discourses in the post 7/7 era. This process is multi-layered and complex. In the criss-crossing of various social policy initiatives

she emerges as a symbol of all that is wrong with Britain's ill-begotten multicultural experiment, lacking in agency and unable or unwilling to inculcate the right values in her progeny. I analyse the way in which the involvement of women in the Prevent agenda is justified. I revisit the issue of 'culture talk' (Mamdani 2005b) and the explicit way it is gendered in UK social policy discourse; and how this is affected by the contemporary geopolitical landscape. I show how emphasising or privileging ahistorical decontextualized 'culture talk' allows for the conflation of different phenomena (which are either associated with Muslim communities or attributed to or seen as integral to 'Islamic' or 'Muslim culture'). I analyse how they work to produce a gendered, racialised group within the body politic of the UK at a particular historical juncture.

3.1 A Clash of Civilisations: creating the enemy within

> *This is the problem with unedifying labels like Islam and the West; they mislead and confuse the mind, which is trying to make sense of a disorderly reality that won't be pigeonholed or strapped down as easily as all that.* (Said 2001)

The underlying rationale of the Prevent agenda is set out in *Winning Hearts and Minds (DCLG 2007)*. It begins by categorically stating that this "is not about a clash of civilisations or a struggle between Islam and 'the West'" (DCLG 2007: 4).[39] Huntington's infamous article "*The Clash of Civilisations?"* (1993[40]) has been a controversial yet highly influential framing of post-Cold War global politics. Despite frequent and emphatic denials, analysis of relevant social policy discourses in fact illustrates the persistence of the theme of a 'clash of civilisations'. Huntington suggested that the fundamental source of conflict in a post-Communist era would

[39] See also John Reid speech 28/9/06 where he repeats this and clarifies that "It's not Muslims versus the rest of us".

[40] Foreign Affairs is the Journal of the Council on Foreign Relations whose Board of Directors includes Madeline Albright, Colin Powell Fouad Ajami all of whom form part of the Bush circle that framed the response to 9/11 according to Joseph Power (theorist of soft power) cited in Kumar (2012:125)

be "cultural" rather than primarily ideological or economic (1993: 22).[41] [42] Moreover, although he mentions up to eight different civilisations, Huntington's focus is on Islam as *the* civilisation against which the West must do principal battle. Secondly, Huntington also refers to the 'revival' of religion and the way that it provides "a basis for identity and commitment that transcends national boundaries and unites civilisations" (1993: 26). This argument regarding religion is at once both Eurocentric and deceptive; in many parts of the world religion has never stopped being a salient feature and religion has continued to exert influence in Europe in terms of the role and influence of the Pope and the power of the Church of England.[43] In the context of the Prevent agenda it is only Muslims who are reduced to their religious affiliation ('religious essentialism') despite the complexities and contestations which the rest of my thesis highlights. The language of the ensuing debate clearly emphasised the otherness of the perpetrators and positioned them as the enemy within. Equally, attempts to neutralise the tendency to demonise Muslims, by referring to other types of extremism, only serve to highlight the otherness of Muslims. I argue that as a result of this the Prevent agenda discursively produces Britain's Muslim community as a homogenised 'enemy within'. Furthermore in this section I also discuss how, as a result of the way the 'problem' is framed, 'the solution' is located in educating Muslims about their own religion.

3.1.1 Them and us?

At a national level the Prevent agenda is heavily inflected with debates on Britishness, community cohesion and the alleged failures of multiculturalism. The 7/7 attacks were deemed to be particularly shocking as the perpetrators were British born; a clear link was therefore made between those attacks and the

[41] the "great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural"

[42] Huntington explicitly links culture and civilisation, describing the latter as "a cultural entity".

[43] As can be seen regarding recent interventions by the Church of England on issues of abortion and gay marriage. Equally the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland are described as 'sectarian' rather than communal or religious as they would be elsewhere. The IRA is never, for example, referred to as a Catholic extremist group.

presence of religious and ethnic diversity in Britain. The debate was centred on the question of competing political projects of belonging, where the bombers' citizenship was seen as being in conflict with their religious and national allegiances (Yuval-Davis 2011:1)

In Brown's 2006 keynote speech on "The Future of Britishness" at a Fabian Society conference he made clear that he believed that "…terrorism in our midst means that debates …about Britishness and our model of integration clearly now have a new urgency." He went on to say that:

> *…we have to face uncomfortable facts that there were British citizens, British born, apparently integrated into our communities, who were prepared to maim and kill fellow British citizens, irrespective of their religion- and this must lead us to ask how successful we have been in balancing the need for diversity with the obvious requirements of integration in our society."*

Brown's reference to killing fellow British citizens "irrespective of their religion" attempts to deny that this is about religion; rather he suggests it is about a failure of integration. Tony Blair (2006) also makes the link between terrorism, the alleged failures of multiculturalism and the duty to integrate. He states:

> *..it [the 7/7/bombings] has thrown into sharp relief, the nature of what we have called, with approval, 'multicultural Britain'. We like our diversity. But how do we react when that "difference" leads to separation and alienation from the values that define what we hold in common? For the first time in a generation there is an unease, an anxiety, even at points a resentment that our very openness, our willingness to welcome difference, our pride in being home to many cultures, is being used against us; abused, indeed, in order to harm us.*

The way in which the term 'difference' is invoked suggests a static and decontextualized difference where Others occupy hermetically sealed 'cultures'; it ignores the shifting dynamic understandings of what difference comprises in

different contexts. With its allusions to Frisch's Firestarters[44], this passage clearly illustrates a powerful host/guest metaphor which has historically characterised immigration and race relations policy in the UK (Solomos 2003). It suggests that the 7/7 bombers are guests who have abused their hosts' hospitality, rather than British citizens engaged in acts of (political) violence; it is an expression of Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations' on 'home soil'. [45]

At a global level, defending civilisation was quickly established at the core of the 'war on terror' (Vertigans 2010). In an article entitled 'The Battle for Global Values', also for the journal Foreign Affairs (2007) and published at around the same time as *Winning Hearts and Minds,* Tony Blair sets out his position on what he believes are 'the roots of extremism', as well as 'the battle for hearts and minds'. Blair characterises the struggle not as a clash *of* civilisations, rather it is a clash *about* civilisation.

> *It is an age old battle between progress and reaction, between those who embrace the modern world and those who reject its existence – between optimism and hope, on the one hand, and pessimism and fear on the other*.

This statement is more explicitly couched in Orientalist terms which characterise discussions of the West and the rest (Hall 1997). References to 'an age old battle' that has been in evidence since time immemorial allude to historical confrontations, such as the Crusades. In this way, Blair echoes Huntington by turning 'civilisations'

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[44] Frisch's *Fire Starters* or *Biedermann und die Brandstifter* (1962) is a play in which two characters disguised as hawkers talk their way into people's homes and settle down in the attic, whereupon they set about the destruction of the house. The play was written in the immediate post war period as a metaphor for Nazism and fascism, showing how ordinary citizens could be taken in by evil. The central character is a businessman called Biedermann. The first "hawker" talks his way into spending the night in the attic through a mixture of intimidation and persuasion. Later a second arsonist appears, and before Biedermann can do anything to stop it, his attic is piled high with oil drums full of petrol. He even helps them to measure the detonating fuse and gives them matches, refusing to acknowledge the terror of what is happening and becoming an accomplice in his own downfall.

[45] Bawer (2006) writing in the US uses similar metaphors, describing the ticking time bomb of increasing Muslim "immigrants " as Europe's Weimar moment.

into “shut-down, sealed off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and counter currents that animate human history”, thus ignoring histories of “exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing” (Said 2001). It also ignores the fact that battles between secularism and religion occur *within* civilisations not just between them (Yuval-Davis 2011), and that there are significant rifts within religions between reformist, orthodox, fundamentalist and progressive strands. Moreover, the rephrasing to suggest that the war on terror is in fact a battle *for* civilisation itself is potentially more profound in that it suggests that the alternative cannot even be considered civilisation. It is less than civilised; it is barbaric.

Within the policy literature there is a clear emphasis on ensuring that language is not counterproductive. This can be seen by the fact that, even where there is more recognition of such issues as racism, discrimination and inequality, they are seen primarily in relation to preventing violent extremism rather than as policy targets in themselves. For example, reducing inequalities only seeks to undermine the narrative pushed by Al-Qaida and other promoters of violent extremism, which relies on encouraging a sense of victimhood*. (HMG 2008: 6)* They are not sufficient ends in themselves. The Strategy goes on to say that

> *Likewise it is recognised that the arguments of violent extremists, which rely on creating a ‘them’ and an ‘us’, are less likely to find traction in cohesive communities. (The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England HMG 2008: 6)*

This quote suggests that it is uniquely Al-Qaida inspired ‘violent extremists’ who have created a divisive ethos on these lines. The fact that ‘them and us’ was a key motif of both Bush and Blair repeated *ad nauseam* and *ad infinitum* in the aftermath of September 11th and 7/7 is ignored. At the same time it ignores the fact that the idea of ‘them and us’ is institutionalised in policy terms by Prevent; the policy discourse of Prevent itself isolates the Muslim community in its very foundation. As Ahmed writes, the “the slide of metonymy” constitutes an implicit yet powerful argument about the causal relations between terms such as Islam and terrorism, meaning that,

> *Utterances like 'this is not a war against Islam' coexist with descriptions such as 'Islamic terrorists' which work to restick the words together and constitute their coincidence as more than simply temporal… (2004: 76)*

3.1.2 The 'right type' of Islam

Discussions of the 7/7 attacks have been dominated by 'culture talk', that is, "the notion that culture is the most reliable clue to people's politics" (Mamdani 2005b:148)[46]. This can be seen in the context of Prevent both in reference to discussions on religious doctrine and practice, as well as the conflation of suicide bombing, violent extremism and radicalism with so-called 'cultural practices', such as forced marriage and honour related violence (which I analyse in the second half of this chapter.) In this section I focus on the wider question of values and the way in which religion is incorporated into this.

The Prevent agenda is founded on the idea that, "…while a security response is vital, it will not, on its own, be enough…winning hearts and minds…is also crucial." (DCLG 2007: 4). Tony Blair (2007) explains how "we could have chosen security as the battleground but we did not. We chose values". He went on to say that "you cannot defeat a fanatical ideology just by imprisoning or killing its leaders; you have to defeat its ideas." Although clearly "imprisoning" and "killing" are not off the agenda, he suggests that the priority is a far more righteous endeavour, the battle for values, the battle for hearts and minds.

Within the PVE agenda, not only is religion seen as the primary marker of identity descriptively, it is, more crucially, regarded as *explanatory*. This is illustrated by the fact that one of the clear objectives of the Prevent agenda was to "promote a stronger understanding of faith, culture and history":

> *We need to develop a stronger understanding of Islam and Islamic culture, society and history across all communities, breaking down the suspicion and misunderstanding that can result from ignorance (HMG 2008:16)*

[46] Mamdani uses the term only in relation to 9/11

Suggestions were made to do this through using opportunities in the school curriculum, and in colleges, universities and elsewhere, to convey a deeper understanding of faith, history and culture. Considered in isolation, the above statement might imply that "the suspicion and misunderstanding that can result from ignorance" relates to non-Muslims' responses towards Muslims following the 7/7 bombings. As such it would be consistent with the multicultural myth that the more you know about someone's 'culture' the less likely you are to be hostile towards them. Interpreting this statement in the context of other policy literature suggests, however, that the focus is not in fact on educating non-Muslims about Islam, but rather on educating Muslims themselves.

There is a clear emphasis on working "particularly with the Muslim community to help strengthen religious understanding among young people and in particular support an understanding of citizenship in an Islamic context" (HMG 2008:18). There are calls to broaden the provision of citizenship education in supplementary schools and *madrassahs* which should be designed to demonstrate how Islamic values are entirely consistent with "core British values" (DCLG 2007: 5). But the document also states that work needs to be focused more specifically on undermining the distortion of the Islamic faith by violent extremists" (ibid). The government wants to ensure the most effective use of the education system in promoting faith understanding and that, in order to confound those who seek to exploit a lack of understanding of Islam, they need to provide access to "trusted high quality learning about faith and Islam in Britain today". The clear goal of this is to work "particularly with Muslim communities to undermine the myths and half-truths being peddled by violent extremists and to equip communities with a counter narrative" (HMG 2008: 18) It is argued that these strands of work are important in undermining the ideology of division and conflict. These statements

suggest that Muslims need to be educated about ideas of citizenship in an Islamic context and that alternative versions of Islam need to be supported. [47]

Frequent references to 'equipping communities with a counter narrative' constitute anti-Muslim rhetoric in that they imply that a 'distorted' view of theology is of itself a necessary and sufficient condition for acts of terrorist violence. Although the Prevent Strategy refers to a figure of potentially 2000 radicalised individuals (HMG 2008:5) the strategy itself includes no explicit explanation of what that means. Whilst it might be possible to argue that revealing any more details of the nature of this radicalisation would be a security risk, equally, this silence is also convenient since it relies on common sense understandings of Islamic terrorism, that Islam is an inherently and uniquely violent religion. Furthermore, radical views are automatically associated with a terrorist threat. By contrast in Christianity, the fact that there are right-wing Christians who are homophobic or anti-abortion, or who are against the ordination of women or gay marriage and civil partnerships, is not seen as an indication of 'radicalism' and potential terrorist activity. Similarly, when Christians engage in acts of violence in support of these views (for example bombing abortion clinics in the US) this is not homogenised to the global 'Christian community'.

By extrapolation, therefore, promoting the right type of Islam ensures that you can prevent acts of violence committed in its name. The presumption is that Muslims potentially lack the right sort of (shared British) values or follow the wrong sort of Islam and therefore, as a result, are at risk of radicalisation. This de-contextualises extremist violence from any political motivations. Such a view ignores that there are a range of other factors which may equally be necessary to instigate such violence (Butler 2004). In addition, it removes any analysis of the causes of radicalisation from material and structural factors. Instead the language

[47] Vron Ware at The New Muslims conference on 8 March 2013 at The University of Manchester explained how the British Army's imam had issued statements making clear that nationalism and patriotism were compatible with Islamic beliefs.

perpetuates the idea of a homogenous but wayward community that needs to be brought back into the fold.

There is also an attempt to codify and fix a particular interpretation of Islam. As such, there are parallels with policies in colonial India which attempted to understand two of the main religions (Islam and Hinduism) in an effort to ensure that 'native sensibilities' were not upset and which set the foundations for policies of divide and rule. Such policies were often connected to uprisings that had taken place, for example, the 1857 rebellion or 'mutiny'. Similarly, colonial efforts to codify religion in India relied on narrow interpretations of only small sections of the community and in fact curtailed indigenous syncretism, leaving entrenched fault lines between different religious groups, sects and regions (Misra 2007).

In contrast to the situation in France, where the debate has been about the place of Islam in relation to the ideal secular republic, the debate in the UK is more about promulgating the right type of non-radical or progressive Islam. As a result therefore, religion remains the prism through which the Prevent agenda and violent extremism is understood. Notably, this logic is not applied to perpetrators of other forms of terrorism and extremism which the government has attempted to draw parallels with. This logic was not applied in the case of Anders Breivik, for example. In fact, the opposite has occurred, and there has been detailed in depth analysis of Breivik's motivations which focus on him as a 'Lone Wolf'.[48] There is little discussion of the ideology which underlies these other forms of terrorism and straight, white, nominally Christian men are not seen as potentially susceptible to the same type of extremism.

3.1.3 Creating a community

At its most basic level, therefore, the Prevent agenda is premised on a 'them and us' paradigm. This is done through making the 'Muslim community' principally responsible for solving terrorism. Estimates of those at risk of radicalisation, even

[48] See Kellner (2012)

according to Prevent literature, refer to small numbers in relation to the total figure for the Muslim population. In 2007, the Director General of the Security Service publicly referred to "2000 individuals who the Security Service believed posed a direct threat to national security and public safety because of their support for terrorism" (HMG 2008: 5) The references to the security services, however, suggest that these threats are being considered in terms of the counter terrorism agenda proper, as opposed to the 'soft option' of Prevent. These miniscule figures must be considered in the context of Britain's Muslim population, which at the time was estimated as being between 1-2 million.

The term 'hearts and minds' is an emotive expression with a long and contested history. Dixon (2009) describes how the term has been used historically in relation to Vietnam and how its use has varied in the US and UK contexts (Vietnam and what was formerly known as Malay). In general, the term has been used in relation to counterrevolutionary or counterinsurgency measures rather than counter terrorism. The distinction is that the former are required where there is substantial popular support (Dixon 2009). The inclusion of the term 'hearts and minds', therefore, suggests that the Prevent agenda is less about counter terrorism, and more about counter insurgency. The split is between security (counter terrorism) and values (counter insurgency). The various references to 'hearts and minds' further supports the idea that, despite the frequent references to radicalisation only referring to a small minority, the entire Muslim community is in fact considered to be a suspect community.

The logic of the discourse suggests that both the problem and the solution lies within the Muslim population. It is incumbent upon 'good Muslims' to assist the state in dealing with 'bad Muslims' (Mamdani 2005). The solution is to focus on Muslim communities collectively. But this logic is reliant on the presumption of a pathologised Muslim community which needs to 'get its house in order'. This is evidenced in the following statement,

> Many individuals and organisations have a role to play in defeating terrorism – but voices from within the Muslim communities and the actions of Muslim organisations can be more powerful than most. (DCLG 2007: 9)

These "voices from within the Muslim communities" which might be considered "more powerful" are the voices of young people and women. The reasons why this may be the case are not explicitly discussed only inferred. It is possibly that young people are themselves most at risk; that they are in the process of being radicalised or may know people who are. (This is gendered in that it is young men rather than women who are presumed to be most 'at risk' although this is not explicitly acknowledged.) Equally, the emphasis on young people may also be a result of the enduring stereotype of Asian youths caught up in a 'culture clash', and in particular that young men are rebelling against being represented by 'elders' who are out of touch with their reality of unemployment and racism. (Burlet and Reid 1998: 275).

By contrast the logic of why women need to be involved is different. Simplistically, the fact that the perpetrators of 7/7 were men, and that women are not considered to be potential terrorists, means that they are automatically presumed to be moderate or mainstream. Women are seen to be incorruptible and, moreover, whilst youth are potentially corruptible, they can be 'saved' as a result of the greater influence of women who will enable greater state surveillance. This logic is flawed in that, even though it suggests women and young people are potentially more powerful, it stresses that they also need the support of the Government to be heard. They cannot be both more powerful and need the state's assistance to exert that power (see below).

The idea of 'them and us' is further emphasised in the PVE policy literature when comparisons are drawn between Islamic extremism and other types of extremism. This juxtaposition of far-right extremism and Islamic terrorism supports the idea of the West vs. Islam. Far-right extremism is positioned as 'our' problem; Al Qaida extremism is 'theirs'. Far-right extremism has allegedly been successfully "isolated". This success is attributable to the armaments of 'the battle for hearts and minds' which are: promoting shared values; supporting local solutions, building civic

capacity and leadership; and strengthening the role of faith institutions and leaders (DCLG 2007: 5). The logic suggests that as these mechanisms have successfully been used to help 'us' deal with 'our' extremism, 'we' are going to help you with yours.

What is also interesting about the claim that far right extremism has been isolated is that two years after the Prevent agenda was introduced, in 2009, it was in fact expanded to incorporate domestic terrorism from far left, far right and animal extremists. The impetus for this widening was in response to criticism of the Muslim-centric emphasis of Prevent. The inclusion of far right extremism suggests that either far right extremism was not in fact 'isolated' as previously suggested, or that the alleged success in isolating it had not worked sufficiently to prevent it remerging. More problematically, this effort to widen the agenda in fact served to further highlight the differences in the way far right and Islamic extremism are perceived. Although recognising the presence of other types of extremism might have reduced the focus on Muslims I argue instead that it achieves the opposite.

The juxtaposition in fact draws attention to the difference in approaches to handling these two different types of extremism. This can be seen in the way that far right extremism is not predicated on the idea of a problematic community. If far right extremism and Al Qaida inspired extremism were seen as equivalent, 'moderate' racists would have been recruited to assist in its eradication, and women and young people would have been targeted or assisted to develop a stronger voice to counter it. These differences in approach in fact serve to further emphasise the collective culpability of the Muslim community as a whole. It reiterates the idea that Muslims are responsible for Islamic extremism; it too, therefore, is non-performative.

The logic of Prevent is only intelligible through a wider policy discourse in which an imagined Muslim community is pathologised as part of a locally inflected 'clash of civilisations'. Seen in the context of wider debates on Britishness these debates are clearly racialised. Furthermore, as Yuval Davis and Anthias (1989) make clear, given the gendered nature of racialised national boundaries, the threat represented by

Muslim women and men are different. Whilst Muslim men are presented as dangerous for their radical ideologies and their potential for political violence arising from disaffection, the Muslim woman, by contrast, has come to symbolise the dangerous consequences of 'too much multiculturalism'.

3.2 The Funeral Pyre of Multiculturalism

Having considered the way in which the wider PVE policy agenda was situated within debates on Britishness, I turn to the way that the issue of gender features in this process of Othering. Explicit discussion of gender as a variable is absent from the UK's counter terrorism agenda (Brown 2011). Women are barely mentioned unless in relation to specific women only initiatives. Elsewhere, gender neutral text implicitly refers to men. Yet, as I discussed in the introductory chapter, the war on terror *is* gendered. Furthermore, the demonization of Muslims discourse is gendered. It is men who are primarily demonised and one of the ways this is done is through generalising patriarchy to Muslim communities. The way in which the idea of the Muslim woman has been constructed firstly shows the patriarchy of Muslim men, and secondly, the pathology of the wider Muslim community as a whole. The picture is, however, more complex and ambivalent as I will explore. Women are characterised within the debate as symptoms of what is wrong with the Muslim community, both as victims of a generalised misogynist pathology as well as vivid symbols of the separateness or self-segregation of the Muslim community.

3.2.1. Saving Muslim women

As I argued in the introduction, the association between empowerment and Muslim women has a common sense appeal because of two factors: the perceived status of women in Islam and, secondly, that the majority of Muslims in the UK are of South Asian origin, building on earlier constructions of the 'submissive Asian woman'. These powerful discourses support the idea that Muslims constitute a

problematic community and that part of their danger comes from being 'backward'. One expression of this backwardness is the perceived generalised status of women as oppressed or marginalised within Muslim communities. As Edley and Wetherell point out "this 'progressive' view of history is a common frame of reference in which society is seen as moving from a state of relative ignorance, barbarism and injustice towards increased enlightenment and civilisation" (2001:450). The status of women within Muslim communities alone, rather than their status in wider society (by virtue of their ethnicity, class, geographic location, citizenship status) is considered responsible for their position in society. And once we widen the discussion to consider the incidence of "barbaric cultural practices" in these communities, the process of pathologisation is complete.

In his 2006 speech on integration, Tony Blair refers to "their [Muslim women's] frustration at being debarred even from entering certain mosques." He then goes on to say: "those that exclude the voice of women need to look again at their practices". The emphasis on Muslim women's engagement here is narrowly defined in that it is focused on women's attendance at mosques. "Mosques are community hubs. The Government's dialogue with Muslim women has shown that access to Mosque life is vital for them to engage effectively in the community.[49] (DCLG 2007: 10). There have been women led campaigns about access to mosques (Brown 2008) but this approach puts the emphasis on religious practice and within that, engagement of a particular kind through the mosque. As a result it is Muslim women who attend the mosque who are the Muslim women that the government feel should be engaged with and who can and should have a say in community matters. It therefore perpetuates, reifies or ossifies a particular community structure rather than widening the basis, scope or criteria for seeking Muslim women's engagement. The discourse emulates or reinforces particular characterisations of Muslim women.

[49] Given the way in which the majority of mosques have developed in the UK this could also be connected to lack of space and funding to expand rather than the explicit bar that Blair's comments suggest.

I have shown that the social policy discourse on the Prevent agenda is characterised by the conflation of what are conceptually distinctive policy concerns (immigration, forced marriage and terrorism) but which only have in common their association with Others more broadly and Muslims specifically. The securitisation of the policy landscape means that any and all issues which fall within the social policy cluster relating to Muslims can then be targeted. Such policy conflations allow policy solutions directed at one to be extrapolated to other policy areas. In relation to women, these conflations are striking.

A cursory analysis of policy literature on preventing violent extremism shows the frequency of references to what are referred to as 'cultural practices'. The press release accompanying the launch of NMWAG, in explaining its role, for example, stated that:

> *They will discuss issues and concerns that affect Muslim women, for example education, employment, access for women to mosques and their management committees and* ***cultural barriers*** *including issues around forced marriages. (my emphasis)*

In this statement, the only issue which applies exclusively to Muslim women is the point about access to mosques (which as I have already discussed only applies to those who want to go to mosques). Education and employment issues clearly affect many men and women irrespective of race and religion, but arguably in this context of under representation of Muslim women, it makes sense to include them. By contrast, referring to forced marriage as a 'cultural barrier' particularises forced marriage to Muslims. Moreover, it is not clear how talking about forced marriage is connected to terrorism, other than if we accept that both are indicators of a 'failed community'.

Similarly, Tony Blair's 'duty to integrate speech' included reference to 'cultural practices' such as forced marriage which he claimed contradicted the British belief in standing "emphatically at all times for equality of respect and treatment for all citizens". Blair (2006) note "that in many religions the treatment of women differs from that of men", yet he omits to mention that gender differences and imbalances

are normalised in wider, secular society too and that many secular organisations do not reflect women's voices as a proportion of the population (the House of Commons being a prime example). And, during a talk about Preventing Violent Extremism, entitled "Many Voices; understanding the debate about preventing violent extremism", Hazel Blears also included numerous references to forced marriage, female genital mutilation and homophobia, and made various references to "respect for women" and "violence against women" (LSE 2009).

This conflation can also be seen in the slippage between other different policy discourses. A 2005 House of Lords debate on honour killings, as well as racialising such crimes exclusively to Muslims, makes links with both immigration and terrorism. Lord Russell-Johnston stated that whilst he may be "soft on those seeking asylum from persecution...[he was] not soft on the importation of barbarism"(column 1421). During the same debate Lord Parekh uses the expression "domestic terrorism" to discuss a "man who has disposed of his daughter" and suggests that "he does not see himself as a criminal; nor does his community see him as a criminal – he is a martyr". Lord Parekh then goes so far as to compare the situation as "like that of a suicide bomber" concluding that "if a man does not fear death or pain, the law has no sanctions to impose on him". By contrast the word terror is not used to refer to acts of atrocities committed by US and British forces in Afghanistan or Iraq, yet when the perpetrator of a crime of domestic violence is Muslim, such terminology can be readily invoked.

The slippage between different policy discourses can also be seen in the way in which the issue of forced marriage has been instrumentalised in order to enact immigration laws which limit citizenship rights. In 2007, for example, as part of an announcement on crime, security and justice, the previous government proposed to raise the minimum age at which foreign nationals can receive marriage visas to enter Britain. It was raised from 18 to 21 in an effort "to crack down" on forced marriages.[50] The rationale for this move is to "allow the young people involved to have completed their education as well as allowing them to gain in maturity and

[50]This follows in the footsteps of Denmark where the age has been raised to 24 for overseas spouses.

possess adequate life skills"[51]. Yet in the UK it is possible to get married at 16 with parental consent, a fact which illustrates the racist assumptions underlying the policy. The state is now "using the demand for women's rights in minority communities to impose immigration controls and justify a racist agenda" even though there is little evidence that such changes have benefitted abused women (Siddiqui 2005:273). For example, changes in immigration law only protect British women, whereas conversely foreign national brides who experience problems are at risk of being deported (Anitha 2008).

Just as "it is necessary to analyse the social processes through which gender differences have been constructed and reproduced against the background of colonialism and imperialism" (Brah 1992: 68), it is equally imperative that we do so in a contemporary geopolitical context. The scope of this research is, on one level, narrow as it is focused on a marginal element of the wider Prevent agenda. At the same time, however, it is situated in a wider European context. Such conflations occur elsewhere in Europe and represent a response to the imagined Islamification of Europe. For example, in Switzerland, the successful direct democracy campaign against minarets in 2009 capitalised on the association of Islam with the oppression of Muslim women. The imagery utilised these direct associations and many Swiss feminists and Left wing secularists were in favour of the prohibition.

3.2.1 "Veiled threats"?

In the EMW literature there is only one reference to the veil in Blears' ministerial foreword to EMW: Case Studies (a sentiment which is echoed by the research participants). She writes,

> *We pay too much attention to Muslim women's appearance – with perennial debate about headscarves and veils – and too little to what they say and do (DCLG 2008:2)*

[51] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6501451.stm

While this statement is in itself uncontroversial, it draws attention to the issue of the veil (and in fact the majority of the photos in the EMW brochure are of hijab-wearing Muslim women). No other garment of clothing has sparked so much debate. In the UK, there have been no initiatives to ban the burqa or prohibit schoolgirls from wearing the hijab as there have been in France, Belgium and Italy. Jack Straw, however, notoriously triggered a national debate by writing about the subject in his weekly column in a local paper in his constituency in October 2006. In this column he described his feelings about niqab- wearing women who came to see him in his Lancashire constituency. He explained that although the particular encounter which provoked these thoughts was "polite and respectful", it apparently made him uncomfortable that he could not see what he described as the "lady" who was exercising her democratic right to come and see her Member for Parliament. He argued that the conversation would have been of greater value if the woman had taken the covering from her face. He then explained how he always asked niqab-ed women to remove their veils, even claiming, despite any apparent supporting evidence, that "most…seem relieved" that he did so and that in one case "the veil came off almost as soon as…[he]…opened…[his]…mouth". (Lancashire Telegraph October 2006)

This is despite the fact that even Jack Straw admits they appeared to be wearing the niqab from personal choice rather than at the behest of fathers, brothers or husbands, thus differing considerably from the French analysis where this is often assumed to be the case . An alternative interpretation might be that these were articulate, assertive women who had come to seek advice or assistance from him, a well-known politician, on a constituency matter, and that they felt obliged to remove their veils given his vociferousness on the matter. In that encounter, Jack Straw clearly had power to help or not help, listen or not listen to his constituents. Despite the furore, with a wide range of politicians and media commentators wading into the debate, there is tellingly little sign of the voices of the women at the centre of this debate themselves; how did *they* experience being asked by their representative in Parliament to remove their niqabs? They may well have been

relieved as Jack Straw suggests, or alternatively, they may have felt humiliated or exploited. If I am not in a position to tell, however, neither is Jack Straw.

Media responses to Straw's intervention illustrate how Muslim difference is conceptualised according to accounts of i) Britishness and national identity, ii) citizenship and social cohesion, and iii) matters of gender and violence (Meer, Dyer and Modood, 2010). In his 'duty to integrate' speech, Blair also mentions the veil, lending support to Jack Straw's inopportune interventions[52]. Interestingly, he caveats his comments by saying that he knows

> *...it is not sensible to conduct this debate as if the only issue is this very hot and sensitive one of the veil. For one thing, the extremism we face is usually from men not women.*

This implies that if women *did* represent a threat, then their clothing would be an indicator of possible extremism. In contrast to debates going on in Europe and elsewhere (Turkey, Tunisia and Malaysia, as Blair is keen to highlight[53]) where the emphasis has been on the veil as a symbol of the oppression of women, political discourse on the veil in the UK has been more nuanced. While the theme of the 'oppressed Muslim woman' permeates the discourse, its relevance is also accounted for by its role as a very visible marker of difference and self-segregation. The veil, therefore, has an ambivalent position in UK political discourse; on one level it signifies self-segregation, yet on another level it symbolises a certain kind of militancy and empowerment through religion for Muslim women. For example, there have been a number of high profile cases[54] where women have fought for the

[52] The timing of Blair's speech was not long after Jack Straw's remarks for which the latter has since apologised in a politically opportunistic moment prior to the 2010 general election.

[53] By which he simultaneously invokes solidarity with these other countries but also conveniently ignores that these are Muslim majority countries in which the timbre of the debates are distinctly different.

[54] See Dustin and Phillips (2008).

right to wear the veil and been accused of both militancy or succumbing to patriarchal wishes.[55]

The themes of ghettoisation resonate with the UK discourse on the veil; the veil implies a wilful and militant self-segregation. In January 2008, Nazir Ali, Bishop of Rochester, claimed that parts of Britain were becoming 'no go' areas. In 2009, a New Labour politician made some interventions, drawing on the theme of women, segregation and extremism. Jim Fitzpatrick was MP for Poplar and Canning Town at the time (and since 2010, MP for Poplar and Limehouse) and made a high profile intervention in this area when he declined to stay at a wedding which had been segregated by the couple who had invited him to attend "out of respect for the elders attending". He said that he did not want to sit separately from his wife and explained that he had left the wedding so as not to cause offence. Later, however, in an interview for the BBC, Fitzpatrick claimed he was concerned that this was an indication of the increasing influence of the IFE (Islamic Forum in Europe) in Tower Hamlets (although in the same interview he claims this is only the second time in ten years he has observed a segregated wedding.) [56] Segregation in itself was assumed to imply extremism. It should be noted that segregation does exist in wider society; sometimes out of choice, and sometimes it is largely uncontroversial. For example, men-only and women only ponds exist at Hampstead, single sex bathroom facilities and changing rooms, and de facto hen nights and lap dancing clubs. Equally it also arouses controversy in certain contexts, for example gentlemen's clubs, which bar women, but this is not articulated as extremism. Rather it is regarded as old fashioned, antiquated or anachronistic. In the case of segregated weddings, however, given that it is something that some Muslims do, it becomes associated with extremism.

[55] Afshar (2012) discussing a more European wide fascination with the veil associates it directly to a fear of terrorism.

[56] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/8201461.stm

3.2.3 Empowering Muslim women to combat terrorism

Within the wider policy landscape 'the Muslim community' emerges as a uniquely problematic group, particularly in relation to the role of Muslim women. I now narrow my attention to the role of women within the EMW initiatives specifically. In the policy literature, Muslim women and youth are positioned as being uniquely placed to combat terrorism. The justifications in relation to women draw on a wider framework in reflecting the slippage between global and national circumstances which position women in very different situations as sharing a common experience (of war, invasion, military occupation). In the introduction to a report "Women's Role in Peaceful Coexistence Tackling Violent Extremism and Promoting Community Cohesion Faith",[57] Meg Munn highlights the way that "Women suffer disproportionately as victims of violent extremism unleashed by conflict, especially in countries where rape has been used as a weapon of war". In the report, women with experiences from Ghana, Bosnia Herzegovina and the UK (including Northern Ireland) are brought together. This is consistent with long standing feminist critiques of militarism and references the potentials for cross border solidarities between women. On another level, however, comparing the experience of civilian women in the UK with women from Bosnia Herzegovina who have experienced ethnic cleansing almost trivialises the experience of the latter. In addition there are no references to women who might be affected by wars in which the UK has long been embroiled.

The most explicit explanation of any possible direct association between empowering Muslim women and preventing violent extremism is put forward by Sadiq Khan (Labour MP for Tooting, assistant government whip at the time, and the Minister for Communities & Local Government). Khan writes:

> *"But it (women's rights) also has serious* **consequences** *for preventing extremism, given that the majority of the extremist and radical ideologies that lead young men to turn themselves into human bombs are also deeply*

[57] Women's Role in Peaceful Coexistence Tackling Violent Extremism and Promoting Community Cohesion Faith Regen Foundation Conference Report 2008 (16-18 June 2008)

misogynist. The Taliban and their barbaric laws towards the women are a good example of this misogyny." Sadiq Khan MP (2008) (my emphasis)

Although Khan states that women's rights have consequences for preventing extremism, he does not identify an explicit *causal* relationship between misogyny and radical/terrorist political activity. It appears to be enough, seemingly, to refer to both in the same sentence and a meaning can be inferred, suggesting that by dealing with one, you make inroads into the other.

An initial cursory reading of Sadiq Khan's statement suggests that, beyond the coincidence of misogyny and terrorism, Muslim women were somehow responsible for misogyny, or at least collude in it. His statement intimates that if only Muslim women were empowered, then Islamic radicals would not be misogynists, and if they were not misogynists, then they would not become terrorists. Although a rather cynical interpretation, it appears to be vindicated by a later speech by Khan (January 2009) which he gave to a group of Muslim women and in which he implied that women have almost brought patriarchy on to themselves:

"Misogyny is an integral part of their (extremists') ideology….By being the best you can be – as professionals, as citizens, as proud Brits and Muslims, as hope-givers – British Muslim women can prove the hate mongers wrong and weak in the face of strength."

In these interpretations, whilst ostensibly framed in feminist terms, the possibility that Muslim women might have the potential to be politicised or express their grievances in similar ways to those anticipated from young men was not even entertained.[58] There are no references to women and girls having the potential to

[58] Stephen Timms' MP was attacked by Roshonara Choudhary, a 21year old hijab-wearing Bangladeshi heritage woman, during a constituency surgery in east London. The way the attack was originally reported was interesting . Some blogs and discussion boards have noted the reluctance of some of the media to refer to her ethnicity, faith or background as part of a diatribe against PC, but I interpreted it as a discomfort about representing a Muslim woman who had done something unusual and unexpected; I cannot help thinking about how the incident might have been portrayed if the perpetrator had been male. Later reports which came out after her trial suggest that Roshonara Choudhry carried out the stabbing because she held Timms personally accountable for voting in favour of the Iraq war. Her concern over the war drove her to seek out a website such as

be radicalised despite research which suggest that women's emancipation may *increase* the number of women terrorists (Oliverio and Lauderdale 2005).[59]

At the level of public life, women are seen to be powerless and in need of state assistance. Conversely they are deemed to have power in the narrow environment of the home. The main way in which women are engaged with is therefore through their role in the family, or as at 'the heart of the community', and in their relationship to young people. For example,

> *"these individuals and groups should reflect the diversity of Muslim communities, including Muslim women and young people. Women can be a particularly effective voice as they are at the heart not only of their communities but also of their families…It is important to reach beyond would-be gatekeepers to the community when seeking strong community voices." (HMG 2008 : 17)*

This statement highlights the paradox of the logic of empowering 'strong community voices'; clearly, if they require external assistance to be heard they are not so strong if they cannot be heard over "would be gatekeepers to the community". As Brown (2011) argues, the frequent references to women and young people together is infantilising. In addition it resonates with discourses around protecting "womenandchildren". (Enloe).[60]

Just as in development discourses, it is women who are presumed to hold the key to the successful economic development, Muslim women are presumed to be moderate and 'good Muslims'. What is implied is that if women have a stronger voice and are able to "influence members of the community more widely" then it will necessarily be for the good of 'the community'. The implicit presumption is that

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RevolutionMuslim and to subsequently download Anwar al-Awlaki lectures which allegedly 'radicalised' her. See *'Radicalisation via YouTube'? It's not so simple* by Jonathan Githens-Mazer in The Guardian (4.11.2010).

[59] The Prevent agenda discourse focuses on 'radicalisation' and 'violent extremism' and 'empowerment' (rather than 'terrorism' and 'emancipation' which Oliverio and Lauderdale (2005) refer to.

[60] In Chapter 5, I explore in greater detail how many of the references to Muslim women are as 'mothers and grandmothers'.

women are never at risk of becoming radicalised and that they would never be supportive of or sympathetic to, expressions of violent extremist ideology or terrorist acts.

In the Prevent literature a number of documents were published which sought to highlight existing good practice. The aim of these was to inspire and guide those third sector organisations who intended to seek local authority Prevent funding. Very few of these original 'Pathfinder' projects were specifically focused on women, however. The Pathfinder projects specifically related to women are included in a section about "Building the resilience of communities to resist violent extremism" (DCLG : 2009: 4) Resilience as such is never explicitly defined, however, and the closest definition is:

> *"…help them (communities and community groups) actively reject and condemn violent extremism."*

It suggests that resilience is almost akin to immunity; that women's empowerment represents a vaccine for the community against violent extremism and radicalism and that women are the carriers of that immunity.

Only one case study was solely focused on Muslim women. It was an E safety awareness course in Harrow (DCLG 2009: 14- 17) and was offered to Muslim women who had children or worked with young people. According to the brochure, "the training encompassed the potential issues that can arise from use and misuse of available digital technologies." Having said that, the literature is clear in its message that the aim of the project was to consider *all* aspects of 'e-safeguarding' (such as in relation to cyber bullying, chat rooms, pornography, grooming etc. as well as radicalising materials from groups promoting violent extremism and user website aimed at different audiences not just Muslims (ibid: 14). The project worked with local mosques and community groups, especially women's organisations, to promote and encourage key target groups to participate. Muslim women were the clear targets or focus of the project, yet the themes were much more broadly applicable to a wider audience, not just women or Muslims, but parents and anybody working with young children more generally. And nor was

there a single focus on preventing violent extremism; the e-safety referred to a wide range of e-threats many of which are more probable risks than terrorism or were more likely to respond to the training. Harrow Central Mosque Ladies Committee helped to promote the event, encouraging women to participate. The project "…reinforced key messages of safeguarding and mainstreamed Prevent into another initiatives for safeguarding young people". One of the stated outcomes was

> *"By receiving e-safety training, mothers and teachers understand how and why young people can become susceptible to* ***radicalisation and other dangers*** *through information available online and via other digital media if their usage of these information sources were to remain unmonitored." (my emphasis) (DCLG 2009:* 15).

Given that the only project which is overtly focused on women concerns e-safeguarding validates criticisms of Prevent which suggest that it was fundamentally about spying and surveillance. (This was certainly a criticism which initiatives primarily focused on young people attracted (Kundnani 2009). It could be argued that Prevent was about teaching mothers and sisters to spy on their sons and brothers. If this is read in the context of John Reid's speech (made in East London), the message that mothers should spy on their children is even more transparent. In that address he is quoted as saying that:

> *"There is no nice way of saying this," he said. "These fanatics are looking to groom and brainwash children, including your children, for suicide bombings. Grooming them to kill themselves in order to murder others.*
>
> *"Look for the tell-tale signs now and talk to them before their hatred grows and you risk losing them forever. In protecting our families, we are protecting our community." John Reid (Guardian 20 September 2006)* [61]

[61] http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/sep/20/terrorism.immigrationpolicy

Conclusion

This chapter analyses the social policy discourse associated with the EMW initiatives. Based on policy documentation around the subject of Empowering Muslim Women and the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda, it looks at the articulation of gender within nationalist discourses in the UK by addressing the way in which the 'Muslim woman' is constructed in social policy discourses in the post 7/7 era. It situates the EMW initiatives and the wider Prevent agenda in the context of contemporary racialised nationalist discourses in the UK, specifically about Britishness, community cohesion, immigration and multiculturalism. These are situated within wider global discussions about the 'Clash of Civilisations'.

Despite the rhetoric that the war on terror is not about Islam, I have argued that Islam is blamed and the fault is collectivised to Muslims who are Othered. I have shown how these discourses are gendered and argued that the intelligibility of the EMW initiatives relies partially on constructing as problematic the position of women within a homogeneous 'Muslim community'; policy literature is imbued with these discourses either explicitly or implicitly.

In the introduction I set out the five key strands of Prevent (set out in the Prevent Strategy (HMG 2008: 6). I revisit these objectives having now considered the wider policy discourse in order to suggest how we are to understand them.[62] I argue that "*Challenging* the violent extremist ideology and supporting mainstream voices" assumes that terrorism (and misogyny) is principally the outcome of incorrect interpretations of Islam. There is a presumption that mainstream voices, implicitly from 'within the Muslim community', have the power to effect change. It strongly rests on the idea that there is a 'them' and 'us' and that mainstream voices require external support. *We,* i.e. the government will help *them* to 'get their house in order', partly through supporting a reformation of Islam or a re-codification of Islam which is consistent with British values, including liberal feminism.

[62] I only consider those relevant to the policy discourse initiatives which are the subject of this thesis

The second objective of the Prevent agenda "*Disrupting* those who promote violent extremism and supporting the institutions where they are active" does not relate directly to the scope of EMW; it is more in the work of MINAB in reforming madrassahs for example. Since Muslim women are presumed to be peacemakers and at no risk of radicalisation, however, they too may be recruited into assisting in this endeavour of disrupting those who promote violent extremism. Taken together with the objective of "*Supporting* individuals who are being targeted and recruited to the cause of violent extremism", I argue that these are euphemisms for encouraging surveillance. The objective of "*Increasing* the resilience of communities to violent extremism" suggests that the Prevent agenda is akin to an immunisation programme. Once the backward and barbaric practices are treated and the community modernised, partially through the empowerment of women, then it will be resilient from the disease of radicalism. Finally, "*Addressing* the grievances that ideologues are exploiting", suggests that dealing with inequalities and discrimination is only important in so far as it removes a potential grievance to be exploited, rather than addressing inequalities and discrimination as a route to securing social justice. Such inequalities are not considered as something that should be addressed because those suffering inequalities are citizens who are the responsibility of the state. It builds on the idea that radicalism is a feature of incorrect interpretations of Islam. It does not necessarily imply that discrimination and inequality are equally risk factors, only that they can be exploited. It does not necessarily suggest that those who commit such acts are disadvantaged themselves, only that they are politically motivated by the presence of these inequalities. What is conspicuous in its absence, however, is the failure to mention foreign policy as a grievance that might need to be addressed, even though clearly it too is frequently 'exploited' by extremists. As Butler writes, "Our own acts of violence do not receive graphic coverage in the press, and so they remain acts that are justified in the name of self defense, but by a noble cause… the rooting out of terrorism" (2004: 6)

This chapter has analysed the policy discourse of the war on terror as it relates to Muslim women in the UK. This wider discourse of 'them and us', a failed community, the wrong type of Islam and the role of women paves the way for the

securitisation agenda, the dehumanising, and the end of tolerance (Kundnani 2007). On its own, the EMW agenda does not do this. It works in tandem within the context of a wider policy landscape. My argument is that the EMW is an overt expression of the way in which Muslim women are viewed solely in relation to their communities. The themes raised in this chapter will be revisited in subsequent chapters as I trace the way in which these ideas permeate, circulate or mutate in the context of policy in practice. The very fact that the objectives of Prevent are untestable could arguably lend credence to the idea that it is, at best, presentational (that the government is at least being seen to be doing something), and at worst, that it is tantamount to anti-Muslim racist propaganda.

Chapter 4: Tales of the City: Diversity in diversity, working between and within local differences

> *"…on a micro and macro level, you are needed. Muslim women are needed to fulfil your own fullest potential for your own individual benefit, for the benefit of your family, for the benefit of your local community, for your* region *or* city. *Of course, our country (and it is our country) needs all of us to maximise our potential and especially some of the untapped talent of British Muslim women. And frankly our planet needs you."*

Sadiq Khan MP, 10 Jan 2009[63]

Introduction

In the opening quote, Sadiq Khan, highlights the various different levels of society at which Muslim women might be engaged. He makes clear reference to 'region' and 'city' and there is seemingly some recognition of the different levels at which individuals operate. Later, he also exhorts Muslim women to "be good neighbours, good citizens – both local and global". The members of NMWAG were described as "…ambassadors for the grass roots, speaking direct to the heart of government" (NMWAG launch press release DCLG).] The policy literature therefore clearly refers to 'region' and 'city'. Practically speaking too, there is the fact that local authorities, who were granted Prevent funding, were able to allocate funding according to particular local circumstances. A central argument of my thesis, however, is that the EMW initiatives prioritise religious affiliation, identity and heritage at the

[63] "Muslim women pioneering Change in 21st Century Britain", speech given at launch of EMW initiative.

expense of other salient aspects of 'identity'. In this chapter I argue that differences that might exist between Muslim women's experiences because of where they are located geographically are not taken into account in any meaningful way and I look at the ways in which 'the local' matters in practice and the relationship between the national and the local.

As my research took me to a number of different places I was regularly reminded of the variety of ways in which quite a small initiative varied in different sites of research. Using predominantly interview data (as well as some ethnographic observation) compiled in different urban contexts, I highlight the importance of acknowledging diversity *within* diversity and drawing attention to local specificities in policy delivery and reception. In focusing on geographical diversity I consider how UK-wide social policy initiatives to 'empower Muslim women' varied in practice, both *between* and *within* different localities. I explore how other axes of identity emerged in my interviews and fieldwork, and how these varied from place to place. In doing so I (re)emphasise the point that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands and consist instead of complex, varied and variable effects when multiple axes of differentiation intersect in historically specific contexts (Brah and Phoenix 2004:76).

It could be argued that the urban unrest in 2001 in the northern mill towns instigated changes (or at least accelerated changes) in the policy landscape in relation to multiculturalism. The trigger points in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford may well have been different. The official policy story, however, suggested that the underlying causes of the unrest stemmed from allegedly 'self-segregated communities', living parallel lives, at the heart of which lay the cultural incommensurability between different communities. The emphasis of the policy responses was, therefore, on the perpetrators themselves and not on the conditions within which the disturbances occurred; people rather than problem centric. Yet as Khan (2006) argues, "policy responses to issues affecting young

Muslims [and presumably any other 'group'] should be based on the detail of their lives rather than on political imperatives reacting to events" (cited in Khan 2010).

As well as the causes of the 2001 riots being over determined by 'culturalist' explanations, it is also worth explicitly noting that the policy responses to these disturbances, which were based in three specific places, have been rolled out *across the whole of the UK*, irrespective of local variations. Whilst the suggestion that Bradford was "bicultural" rather than multicultural (Webster 2003) is problematic, since this supports the idea of bounded internally homogeneous ethnicities (Modood 1992), it at least draws attention to the idea that not all 'diverse' places are 'diverse' in the same way. There is diversity in diversity.

My research also reveals the importance of acknowledging this diversity within diversity. Following the initiatives themselves my data is drawn from areas with substantive populations of Muslims. All are medium to large conurbations with 'diverse' populations, yet the extent and composition of these diverse populations necessarily varies. Specifically, research was conducted in three different boroughs in London (Ealing, Brent and Newham) as well as in Manchester, Cardiff, Bradford and Bristol. However, despite superficial parallels as a result of having 'diverse communities' (including Muslim populations), they are of course very different. Within these places, for example, there were areas which had long established predominantly South Asian migrant heritage communities, such as cities like Bradford in West Yorkshire. On the other hand, there were areas in London which might be described as 'hyper diverse', areas such as Brent and Ealing which historically have had a varied population encompassing both long established 'ethnic minority' communities, as well as newer migrants from A8 countries and varied (and internally diverse) refugee populations.

In this chapter I analyse the theme of 'the national to the local' in two ways. This is partly determined by the initiatives themselves which operated at both national and local levels. Firstly, the Empowering Muslim Women initiatives were inspired

by a nationally devised Prevent strategy, driven by a central government department, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and overseen by the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG). Even though both DCLG and NMWAG had national remits, the national initiatives were of course locally delivered. One of the projects, funded by DCLG and delivered by NMWAG was a role models road show which visited six different cities in England and Wales.

Secondly, at a local level, Local Authorities had been encouraged to use Prevent funding to empower Muslim women locally. The Prevent agenda has been instituted almost in place of the community cohesion agenda in areas with substantive Muslim populations.[64] It was implemented wherever there were Muslim populations, irrespective of their circumstances and internal diversity, or any analysis of susceptibility to radicalism or 'violent extremism' (even assuming that this was something that could be determined); to have a substantive Muslim population was sufficient qualification. Here, therefore, there was scope for local variety in how this played out. The research, through interviews with policy actors spread throughout the country, necessarily encountered a cross section of projects funded via Prevent in different parts of the country. Although, local variations were not originally a key concern of the research, as I embarked on the interviews, they emerged as an ever present salient theme.

The Prevent agenda is a paradoxical development following the community cohesion agenda (Husband and Alam 2011). This is because the latter is at least nominally focused on 'bringing communities together', whereas the former is predicated explicitly on a particular problematic community. Given this contradiction it is important to consider the way in which the Prevent agenda has impacted on intra-community relations. This is a thread which runs through this

[64] It was only in December 2009 that Prevent was extended to refer to any kind of extremism including far-right or far-left or animal rights' extremists. It had been restricted to "AQ related threats" (Al Qaeda) as opposed to DT (domestic terrorism).

chapter. As well as arousing criticism from those concerned at the impact on 'Muslim communities' (Kundnani 2009), the Prevent strategy was also critiqued by those for whom such funding represented "too few rewards for good behaviour and too little punishment for bad behaviour" (Maher and Frampton 2009; Briggs and Birdwell 2009). In this chapter, therefore, I also consider other communities' responses to Prevent. As Flint and Robinson point out, local areas have been given "considerable autonomy to define their own 'community cohesion' problems (or lack of them) and implement local solutions" (2008: 5). It is not surprising, therefore, that responses to the community cohesion and Prevent agendas have varied accordingly. I suggest that these responses must necessarily vary from place to place depending not only on the composition of the population, but also the local circumstances, histories and trajectories of migration and local politics.

The community cohesion agenda is a racialised discourse in which social cohesion is prioritised at the expense of dealing with underlying deeper structural issues. As Flint and Robinson note, this agenda has enabled prioritisation of certain types of cohesion in order to problematize particular groups. For example, racial and religious 'cohesion' are privileged over gender and class as the focus of policy initiatives (2008: 5). Further, they argue that, although the community cohesion agenda built on the work of Kearns and Forrest (2000) it did so with important omissions. In lieu of a recognition of the importance of reducing wealth inequalities, a hollow concept of 'equality of opportunity' is referred to which indicates a "reticence of the community cohesion agenda to acknowledge and address structural inequalities rooted in economic processes" (Flint and Robinson 2008: 4-5). Furthermore, I would add, such structural inequalities are regionally inflected.

I look at how the Prevent agenda worked in areas with populations comprising Muslims and non-Muslims, coming as it did in the wake of the community cohesion agenda. Much has been written about how multiculturalism or multiculturalist policies have led to a "white backlash", observable in a variety of contexts, and the

way this has fed into support for the BNP (Hewitt 2005, Garner et al (2009) Rhodes 2010). Comparatively less has been written about the effect on other BME communities or intercommunity relations. In the second half of the chapter I explore this theme and try and contextualise the discussion in terms of geographical diversity in the composition of Muslim and non-Muslim BME communities in the different sites of research (both in terms of ethno-national categories as well as socio-economic diversity). Given the variety of places I researched, I took into account the significance of spatial location, geographical concentration, BME (ethno-religious) diversity and local politics.

This chapter will look at the way in which these national and local projects varied between and within different places. Rather than consider local particularities as inconvenient 'white noise', I explore the variations arising from local events and contexts which means that even cities with similar demographic structures can develop different types of political interaction (Stroschein 2007). The next section in this chapter explores in detail the idea of the national to the local in the context of the nationally devised, yet locally implemented role models road shows.

4.1. Local inflections in delivering a national initiative

The role models road show, *Our Choices*, was one of three initiatives overseen by NMWAG and took place in early 2010. *Our Choices* went to six places: London, Manchester, Cardiff, Dudley, Rotherham and Middlesbrough. I attended three of the road shows. The issue of local variation was immediately apparent in the way the road shows were organised, received and experienced and so the focus of my analysis turned to the way in which the delivery of a national initiative was locally inflected. I begin this section by reflecting on the three road shows. I then set out how the initiative was locally inflected in terms of its rationale, its composition and its reception. I look at how and why the six sites were chosen, how the organisers tried to ensure that each of the road shows was locally pertinent and also some of the problems encountered in different places. In doing so, I highlight differences

between and *within* the different road shows by also reflecting on other cleavages of difference between and amongst the attendees and participants.

4.1.1. A Tale of Three Cities

I attended the road shows in London, Manchester and Cardiff. Despite all being large conurbations the road shows in each of these cities were very different. The London event, in particular, had a very different ambience to the others. Although it was the road show for the capital, it was in fact the most intimate event of the three I attended, centred as it was on just one school. It took place at Little Ilford School in the London Borough of Newham and was targeted solely at pupils attending that school. As such, it was very much a Little Ilford School event, and had a 'community' feel to it; everyone, staff and students, seemed to know one another. In contrast to the other events and possibly because it took place in a school, it was held outside of school time on a Saturday morning. Although the event was principally directed at Muslim girls attending the school, there were a number of non-Muslim girls present, as well as some boys and a number of the girls' parents. The latter had been specifically encouraged to attend and those that did were mainly mothers (see Chapter 6).

By contrast, the other two road shows I attended, in Cardiff and Manchester, were on a far larger scale, with a more corporate feel to them. These events, as with the other non-London workshops, had girls from more than one school in attendance (although all had been invited, haphazardly or otherwise). The Manchester event was a plush and slightly controversial one, characterised by 'politics'. Helen Wollaston, Director of Equal to the Occasion, the organisation recruited to deliver the road shows, explained that there were "political; political with a small 'p', concerns that it wasn't a strategy that the local authority as a whole" necessarily supported. Also in particular, one of the schools that attended was an independent (i.e. fee-paying) Islamic girls' school so "it was a bit of an issue for somebody to say, why has the Council sponsored something when half the audience are from a private girls' school" The policy for selecting schools to attend the road shows was

quite arbitrary. In this case, the independent school in question had been selected because one of the local role models had attended that school.

As well as municipal politics in Manchester there were issues around party politics too. One of the local role models, who had been invited specifically to attend the Manchester event to make it more 'local', was the Labour candidate at the time for Bury North, Maryam Khan.[65] Her presence and presentation caused a minor controversy. In trying to inspire the girls to become politically empowered, she suggested they come and help her in her electioneering work, stuffing envelopes and canvassing, for example. Unsurprisingly, since she was effectively encouraging them to volunteer for the Labour Party, this was not well received by some of the Council attendees, even if the girls themselves appeared largely oblivious to this.

The Cardiff event was well supported by the National Assembly and I was struck by how committed the Assembly representatives were to the project.[66] This event was the most mixed in terms of ethnic background and for me, rather than 'politics', the event was characterised by celebrity. The girls were clearly delighted and impressed that one of the national role models, Almeena Ahmed, a Cardiff girl herself, who, as a journalist/newsreader regularly appears on the BBC, had come to speak to them. Most of the closing session questions were directed at her, for example. The lure of celebrity at the Cardiff event was most apparent, however, in an incident which occurred at the tail end of the day.

During a break out session, I was sat at a conference table along with a couple of role models and around ten girls from Year 10. One of the role models was a West London based GP (also originally a Cardiff girl). She was asked, given that she was based in London, whether she had any famous patients. She revealed that Marvin

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[65] Described by the Daily Mail as "a doe-eyed brunette who would not look out of place fronting an ad campaign for mascara".

[66] Chaney (2001; 2004) has discussed how devolution and the creation of the Welsh Assembly and its duty to promote equality has impacted positively on the "meaningful participation" of minority groups in the policy process (2001:22).

from JLS (a boy band that were runners up in an X Factor competition a number of years previously) was one of her patients. The response was astounding. There were shrieks of excitement from around the table and I gradually realised the ripple was spreading throughout the entire auditorium as friends at other tables were messaged. There was such hysteria it was almost as though Marvin had turned up to the road show himself. The organisers, unaware of the JLS-mania, appealed for calm from the main stage. Eventually as some semblance of calm was restored, one of the girls passed a billet-doux to the doctor for her to pass on to Marvin when he next popped into the surgery. I had not expected hijab wearing school girls to turn into shrieking teenage wrecks at the mention of Marvin from JLS, but it served as a vivid reminder that 'Muslim teenage girls' are after all teenage girls who are Muslim.[67]

I now contextualise these reflections in terms of the logistics of delivering a national road show and highlight how 'the local' was taken into account in practice. I look at how the different sites and role models were selected.

4.1.2 (not) The Usual Suspects

The role models initiative was established by NMWAG in association with civil servants at DCLG. Although it was suggested that this event was predetermined; Shaista Gohir implied that the road show was 'a done deal' (see Chapter 5). As far as implementation went, four members of NMWAG formed a Steering Group to manage delivery of the road shows. This was not uncontroversial since many of the members of NMWAG had told me separately that they expected to be primarily involved in an influencing and advisory capacity, rather than directly involved in project delivery (see Chapter 5). The Steering Group recruited a consultancy agency, Equal to the Occasion[68], to deliver the road shows nationally. The agency worked with local authorities, schools and other stakeholders at a local level to design and run the events at each of the six different locations.

[67] Just as a Muslim woman is a woman – to paraphrase Max Gluckman (cited in Baumann 1996:1).

[68] http://www.ettoltd.co.uk

The road show evaluation report, produced by Equal to the Occasion for NMWAG and DCLG, outlined how for each road show the relevant local authority was involved in establishing a planning group of local partners. In Middlesbrough it was principally the Council whereas in Rotherham, it was the Police and Youth Service; in Dudley, the local Muslim forum; in Cardiff, the National Assembly Government and Race Equality First. Manchester City Council provided funding via a grant to Inspired Sisters who organised the event, and Newham Council paid towards Little Ilford School's costs in holding the event. The issue of place was therefore built into delivery of the road show initiative and there was an explicit recognition that circumstances in different places were different. This recognition, however, did not go so far as to undermine the assumed homogeneity of 'Muslim women' and girls and what they needed, underlying the entire initiative.

This had not, however, been the original plan. Shaista told me that initially the plan had been to hold a "London-centric two-day event" aimed at Muslim women rather than girls. She told me that she had objected strongly to this idea, and thought that,

> *you want to inspire girls at school, right? …A better project would be that we do a road show in schools; that way you cover more areas, you go into schools which means you reach the right target audience and you have a variety of professions… (Shaista)*

She maintained that it was the result of her vociferous objections to the original idea that led to the eventual format of the road show. In the end, the project enlisted twelve women as role models for the overall (national) campaign. These included a scientist, a rugby player, a journalist, a nurse, a union rep, and an artist. A glossy brochure was produced detailing their personal stories and a website was set up to further broaden the audience base.

The budget allocated by DCLG allowed for six road shows to take place. The six sites clearly needed to have a significant Muslim population to warrant hosting a road show. These six sites, however, included a number of less obvious places, not

automatically associated with Muslim communities in the public and policy imaginary. According to the evaluation report of the project (ETTO 2010) these choices stemmed from a strategic decision by NMWAG to include local authority areas with smaller Muslim communities. Rotherham, Dudley and Middlesbrough had been chosen specifically because they were not the obvious choices. Adeeba, who was a member of the Steering Group, told me:

> *..For Yorkshire, we decided to go for Rotherham because everybody thinks, "come to Bradford or Leeds". But I was very keen to look at areas that, well if you looked at the 6 areas, some were obvious and some were not that obvious; I think it's important to get that mix. Because, why should it be the obvious ones that get it all the time? (Adeeba)*

Helen Wollaston, Director of Equal to the Occasion, felt that those less obvious places were chosen because they were:

> *…where people would have had fewer opportunities to see role models which was a good decision … I think you know it was really appreciated particularly in those areas which I would say were Middlesbrough and Rotherham, Dudley where the communities are a bit smaller and are not used to having things for Muslim women and they were really appreciative (Helen)*

This was supported by Adeeba:

> *And, you know if you just look at Rotherham for example, the first one, there was an excellent turnout, you know we had a number of mothers there as well, the children had turned up, the teachers had turned up, community people, employers had turned up, you know we had a good, over a hundred and twenty people there. For Rotherham, it's pretty good going… (Adeeba)*

This greater appreciation in the less obvious places was, however, matched by

disappointment from some of the more obvious places which had expected to be involved. Adeeba acknowledged that this strategy was always "going to upset people" but told me that what all the authorities which were eventually involved had in common was a commitment to the road shows because,

> *…the concept was to get the local authority to get very much involved, because the NMWAG can't do that, so in terms of getting the ownership, in terms of it being embedded to some extent into what the local authorities were already doing, it was very important that we had local authorities that were supporting us. And we did, right across the board… (Adeeba)*

This was also reflected in the role models who were invited to attend particular road show events. A decision was made that a couple of the national role models would attend each road show and this would be supplemented by local role models recommended by the local partners. As Helen explained, both she and NMWAG had learned from the experience,

> *…that you have to work with the local context, you know…You can't impose a national project on local areas when you rely on that local engagement so it takes time. It probably took longer than I envisaged to build those relationships (Helen)*

Not all of the local authorities were unequivocal in their support and this was in part connected to how other (minority) communities might perceive the events or be affected. In this way, the reception to the road show was contingent on pre-existing histories of tension or competition for resources. The evaluation report, for example, refers generically to initial reluctance on the part of some local authorities to participate in the initiative, given tensions between the road show project and local strategies around community cohesion, educational achievement or employability. Muslim girls and women were not necessarily regarded as a strategic priority at a local level for increased attention; there were other categories of (young) people whose needs were deemed to be more pressing. As a

result, local authorities expressed concern about targeting Muslim girls specifically for special attention. Helen told me that at least one authority (Kirklees) had not got involved for that reason because "they wanted to target *all* people not just Muslim girls".

Furthermore, even where the local authority was comfortable with the remit and ethos of the Our Choices road show, some of the schools which were involved or were invited to get involved were not. Helen explained how in Rotherham, for example, the schools were worried about a backlash if they were to send only girls to the road show. She explained that this reticence arose partly as a result of earlier experiences doing projects with the police which had been for girls only (not just Muslim ones). Additionally she explained that Rotherham:

> *…was an area where the Muslim population is concentrated in two or three wards so there's quite a lot of mono-cultural wards, there's a white working class…there's definitely far right quite active so all those things are there and therefore the schools and the colleges were worried about a backlash, both on gender with it being only women, from boys and men and on the Muslim/ethnicity, 'what about the white boys and about the white working class?' you know those kind of issues...(Helen)*

At the same time there was clearly feedback from attendees, pupils and parents who appreciated being targeted and attended the events because they were targeted at them. As such it reflects respondents' beliefs, discussed in Chapter 6, that mainstream services fail to provide services to Muslim girls and women ('institutional Islamophobia'[69]); or that there is a general failure of careers services for pupils from the wrong class, gender, ethnicity or religion. I consider the impact of such initiatives on other non-Muslim communities or 'intercommunity relations' in more detail in the second half of this chapter.

[69] This term gained some currency in 2004 when it was used in a report by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia set up by the Runnymede Trust.

At the Our Choices road shows I attended I wondered how the girls would perceive the role models. At the London event, held in Newham, which was the first road show I attended, I recall feeling quite conscious of the potential (social) distance between the role models and the girls in the audience. Although the school itself is doing well (according to OFSTED reports), it is in a very deprived part of Newham according to a range of social indicators. As I watched a sleekly bobbed, suited and stiletto-heeled corporate lawyer take to the stage, I had wondered to what extent the pupils, predominantly of Bangladeshi heritage and wearing hijabs, would relate to her. This had clearly been a concern of the road show organisers who tried to 'localise' the events by including local as well as national role models. Shaista told me that "the idea of picking local ones was to pick *real* women they could relate to."

The feedback the girls gave following the road shows gave some indication of whether they 'related to' the role models. Even though there was no negative feedback about specific role models, there was markedly positive feedback for particular role models. At the Newham event, for example, in addition to the corporate lawyer, one of the local road show role models was a British Bangladeshi writer, Kia Abdullah[70]. She had grown up in Stepney, and was very well received by the girls in East London as "a proper East London Bengali".[71] She was someone who had grown up in the same kind of area as them, come from the same kind of family they had, and had experienced (or at least was familiar with) some of the deprivation/marginalisation they had grown up with. She also seemed genuinely delighted at being in a position to give back to 'her community'.

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[70] Kia's first novel was called "Life, Love and Assimilation"; she has since written an 'erotic thriller' and occasionally writes in The Guardian.

[71] Kia provided an accessible narrative of her own story. As a journalist and published writer she fit the road show requirements of having a non-traditional career. It is also worth remembering that these professions can be difficult to enter, are dominated by people with connections and those willing and in a financial position to work for free doing internships etc. It is not necessarily a rational decision for parents from deprived backgrounds, of any background, to encourage their daughters (or sons for that matter) to aspire to such professions.

Similarly, in the context of Cardiff, Almeena, who was also one of the twelve national role models, was very well received as a local girl and because of her celebrity status, as I mentioned earlier. And, in the case of Almeena, who I was also able to interview, the appreciation was reciprocal. Her eventual decision to get involved was because one of the road shows was going to be held in Cardiff. Almeena explained that she had initially been reluctant to participate because of the project's association with Prevent. She told me that as a journalist she had been well aware of the controversies associated with the Prevent strategy. She claims that for her, as a "Cardiff girl" it was the lure of coming to Cardiff which was the "deciding factor" in getting involved. Local role models mattered to the girls and being local mattered to the role models.

4.1.3 All for one and one for all

As well as recognising the importance of the local differences between the different events, there is the issue of difference within the individual road shows in terms of for example, the different role models and their respective experiences. How effective was the exercise of 'local-ising' the role models when there were clear differences between the role models themselves in terms of their own class positioning? When I told Shaista about my perceptions of the London event, and queried whether the target audience could necessarily relate to the role models, she told me,

> *… in the Dudley one I think we did alright because we had a nurse there from up north and she was from a working class background. She said you know my dad didn't want me to be a nurse and whatever… and the other one was a firefighter…she comes from a working class background errm so that was ok... I think the rest that were featured in the Dudley role model road show I think we had the grassroots people there…*

The fact that other cleavages of difference distinguished the different role models struck me most starkly in Cardiff. Despite her local connection and clear attachment to Cardiff and the objectives of the role model road show, Almeena

herself had not experienced any of the issues the road show was designed to address. She explained that her parents had always been incredibly supportive of her and her early ambition to go into journalism. She had done well academically and studied at Cambridge. It was through her mother that she had first got a summer job at BBC Wales, which kick started her career. I was, therefore, interested to know what had inspired her to get involved with the role model road show since, clearly, that had not been her own personal experience. Her immediate family had not shown any reticence or hostility to her academic success or to her pursuing a 'non-traditional' career. She told me that she was motivated to get involved and felt qualified to do so because she had done "a lot of mentoring in Tower Hamlets and Poplar and I know what the issues are".

During my conversation with Almeena I was struck by the fact that there was apparently no self-awareness of the distance between her own experiences and those of the girls for whom she was a role model (either in East London or in Cardiff). She had not needed a role model to achieve her ambitions; her own account suggested that she had always wanted to do something in the media. Fortuitous and judicious use of social networks and cultural capital on the part of her mother had facilitated her entry into the profession, a notoriously difficult sector to get into without such connections (Granovetter 1974; Franzen and Hangartner 2006). Her local affiliation was paramount for her involvement and seemingly sufficient qualification for her to be involved.[72]

By contrast, Zainab, one of the specifically local role models in Cardiff made what seemed to me to be quite pointed remarks in her address to the girls about how she might be 'just a teacher', but that she had struggled to get where she had. If the rationale for the road shows was to assist girls who were being held back or were unsupported by their parents, (see Chapter 6) she probably gave one of the

[72] Gillies discusses how middle class parents can draw on their own knowledge, cultural values, social contacts and financial resources, whereas working class parents are more reliant on teachers (2007:127). But see Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera (2010) in which the authors discuss intra communal cultural capital amongst Pakistani Muslims in Bradford.

most inspiring presentations. Her parents had not been supportive of her academic endeavours; she had struggled to get the opportunity to be educated beyond the age of sixteen. Zainab told a story of negotiation, persuasion and her own agency in spite of all the odds (deprived community, intractable parents), which she used to eventually get her A levels, a degree and then to do a PGCE. If there were others girls in the audience who were experiencing similar issues, her story would have been most useful in terms of practical help. They could be inspired to do the same as her even if they might not necessarily have had useful contacts through their family. Helen, told me that Shahien Taj, the Cardiff NMWAG contact, had specifically wanted Zainab because she;

> *… came from a very traditional background, had been kept home in early adulthood and had then gone on and persuaded and brought the family with her and she felt, Shahien, knowing the community and the culture in Cardiff, that there would be a lot of girls who can identify with that situation, more so than they would if she'd been to Oxford and in a way that Cardiff one was unusual because the two role models who spoke nationally were very high achievers… (Helen)*

Although Helen refers to "*the* community and culture" in Cardiff in the singular, the experiences of these two role models Almeena and Zainab, both from Cardiff, illustrate how much internal diversity there is within the imagined 'Muslim community in Cardiff'; the contrast between the two role models could not have been greater. This highlights the diversity in class and cultural capital between and amongst 'Muslim women' and hints at a tension between high flying national role models and those who have overcome everyday struggles to do, 'traditional' or 'mundane' everyday jobs, but who might have more in common with some of the girls who such projects were ostensibly directed at.

This section has focused on the way in which a national initiative was locally inflected. The road show project worked both across and within local differences. There was an overarching initiative which had been devised in Whitehall by

members of NMWAG and civil servants. The experience of the road show illustrates the importance of local factors in influencing how each of the events was delivered in practice. Local contacts were instrumental at an operational and administrative level and local networks were important in delivering the road shows. In addition, the presence of local role models was also significant. How the different road shows were received and their impact was felt differently in different places. This depended on local histories and experiences, as well as the composition and diversity of Muslim populations in these different areas. In addition to differences between the different road shows there were differences within them. This was most clearly shown in the variety of experiences amongst the role models; the issues of class and cultural, social and economic capital clearly impacted.

The second half of this chapter, therefore, explores the theme of 'between and within' through looking at how Prevent funding at the level of local authority funding was received, and particularly in relation to the EMW initiatives and NMWAG. It discusses how different local contexts affected how Prevent operated, focusing on diversity *between* different areas, as well as diversity *within* particular locations, and looks at the relationship between 'the Muslim community' and others, in particular non-Muslim BME groups.

4.2 Local Contradictions and Useful Fictions

> *"The very process of competing for resources encouraged a language of homogeneous and opposing identities…Furthermore, even when factions united around..[an]..ideological divide they shared the same concerns – racial discrimination, housing, education, unemployment – and pursued similar strategies by using the local political arena and seeking to influence the powerful decision-makers."* (Eade and Garbin 2002:147)

Pragna, one of the Directors of Southall Black Sisters (SBS), explained how, in 2008, SBS had their funding by Ealing Council withdrawn, allegedly in the interests of community cohesion. Ealing Council originally argued that funding a separate black

women's organisation went against the aims of its community cohesion policy.[73] Ealing Council's reaction was consistent with the logic of the community cohesion to the extent that, according to such objectives, the Council should not support initiatives which promoted difference or segregation. By contrast, as SBS was being threatened with having its funding withdrawn, Ealing Council, according to Pragna, were simultaneously being encouraged to fund Muslim women's groups specifically as part of their Prevent agenda.

The irony of this was not lost on Pragna. She alleged that in Southall, Muslim women's organisations were in effect being set up principally in order to achieve Prevent funding. I was quite surprised at her comment; I had already interviewed representatives of long established Muslim women's organisations elsewhere and saw no immediate reason why this might not have been the case in Ealing. On reflection, however, this initial discomfort was the impetus for my attempts to reconcile her comments with the variety of experiences I encountered in the research. In order to address the effects on other communities I needed to contextualise EMW in terms of local factors, such as historical and contemporary geographical concentrations of different populations, as well as the composition of ethnic minority populations in particular areas. [74] Later in this chapter I examine whether Pragna's characterisation of the impact of Prevent in Ealing applies elsewhere.

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[73] R (Kaur & Shah) v London Borough of Ealing (2008). The Council wanted to stop funding SBS and replace it with an all-women service. It was found guilty of not undertaking a race equality impact assessment as it was required to do under the Race Relations Act (2000). In addition it was found to have misunderstood s.35 of the RRA by suggesting that funding an organisation like SBS would be unlawful; the provisions of the RRA in fact allow for services to be supplied to particular groups only. Lord Justice Moses, the presiding judge said: 'There is no dichotomy between funding specialist services and cohesion; equality is necessary for cohesion to be achieved.' (http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/savesbs.htm)

[74] This of course reflects that third sector and voluntary organisations are constantly in competition with one another for resources and patronage. Both longer established and newer ('invented' or otherwise) organisations would have been competing for the same scarce funds.

I begin, however, by theorising the possible impact of diversity on diversity through analysing the impact of the Prevent agenda in Bradford and Bristol by taking into account the composition of the Muslim population in these two areas. I choose these two places as exemplars of two ends of the spectrum of *diversity within diversity*. Bradford's BME population is largely Muslim and of South Asian origin. By contrast, Bristol's Muslim population, although proportionately smaller than that of Bradford, is relatively more diverse and this is reflected in intra-community hostilities. I suggest the impact of Prevent and EMW is different in these places as a result, but that both are problematic because religious identity is privileged at the expense of addressing materially differential experiences and building potential solidarities with other disadvantaged groups. I then focus on specific examples of how different organisations have been established and how this might have been influenced by regional variations.

4.2.1. What's in a place?

It is not uncommon and for research conducted in a specific place to be generalised more widely (see Chapter 2). The following is indicative of the type of claims which are often made about research. Dhaliwal et al writing about Metroborough in a hyper diverse part of London suggest that "some of the findings are likely to be echoed in other boroughs" and that,

> *…concerns raised within this report are an indication of what* could be *taking place on a wider scale and on a more regular basis in other boroughs and regions within England, particularly those characterised by stronger racial segregation and strong religious leadership (*2006: 83- 84).

Whilst in some contexts such extrapolations are useful and pragmatic, they can also be problematic. Hopkins (2008)'s analysis of Pakistanis in Scotland tries to pinpoint the "crucial discontinuities and disjunctures" between the Scottish and UK contexts referring to the "…diversity, distribution and structure of minority ethnic groups" as

well as the particularities of Scottish politics and associated constructions of national identities (2008:122).[75]

Bradford: "the quintessential expression of the problematic presence of Islam in Britain"

Some of the respondents (Humera and Adeeba) complained about the way in which research conducted in a particular part of the UK became emblematic of 'the Muslim community'. Bradford, for one had become synonymous with problematic Muslim communities in the UK. Whether remembering the Rushdie affair or the riots of 2001, Bradford conjures up images of all that is regarded as wrong with multiculturalism in Britain. It has probably been over-researched as a result, and that research is often almost unquestioningly seamlessly extrapolated to the UK's other Muslim communities. As noted by Husband and Alam, Bradford represents a "simplistic iconographic representation of Islam in Britain, being used in news, film and television drama as the quintessential expression of the problematic presence of Islam in Britain" (2011: 6-7).

In Bradford I had interviewed Adeeba. She had sat in an advisory capacity on a number of boards across a range of policy areas working with different government departments. On one level her comments echoed Pragna's:

> *I'm not saying that there aren't groups out there who are not doing good work 'cos there are, but… is it being (Prevent) funding led or is it actually*

[75] Hopkins suggests that the Pakistani population in Scotland is more middle class than elsewhere in the UK and that this is attributable to different patterns of migration (although he does not sufficiently explore the differentiation within the Pakistani population in Scotland). As a result he argues poverty is less salient (31% of BME in Scotland compared with 16% in UK as a whole) and that Pakistanis tend to live in more middle class neighbourhoods than in the rest of the UK and goes so far as to say that "related to the issue of class, there was also a sense that differences in the composition of the population influenced the likelihood of periods of urban unrest" (2008: 118).

being led because the people do realise that there is an issue here [that needs funding]? (Adeeba)

She was very clear that, as far as she was concerned, in Bradford specifically, there had not been demands from Muslims as Muslims. I asked her whether, given that her organisation QED was focused on education, training and employment, there was any value in talking about it serving 'a Muslim community' specifically.

I think there is now…I don't think it was that the group [Muslims] asked for it, I think it just happened to them unfortunately because of everything that happened... I don't think they were set out to, 'oh, you know, we are the Muslim community and this is what's happening'. (Adeeba)

I would argue that this stems from the composition of Bradford's BME community. Bradford currently has a Muslim population of around 17% and Bradford's Muslims are predominantly of South Asian origin. Bradford's BME community consists principally of Pakistani origin communities, as well as small numbers of Bangladeshis and Indians.[76] Without disputing diversity within Bradford's Muslim population in terms of ethnicity, class, region, migrant status and gender, Bradford's BME population, which is principally Muslim, is *relatively* homogeneous compared to some of the other areas where I conducted research. As such, any multiculturalist/anti-racist policies, from the 1980s onwards, would have been directed principally at Bradford's Muslim population. It did not have to compete with other BME groups that may have had class advantages or experienced different trajectories of migration. Although, of course, *within* Bradford there would have been class, language and gender differences which would have been reflected in internal struggles for local funding.

[76] South Asian migration to Bradford (as well a number of other northern mill towns) began in the 1950s and 60s as people came to fill labour shortages in the textile mills in the area. Even then, the textile industry was already in decline and by the 1980s, the industry had almost completely disappeared altogether.

Adeeba told me that she thought 'the Muslim problem' in Bradford was "mainly about Pakistanis" and that Bradford's Indian Muslim and Bangladeshi communities were "just quietly getting on with what they get on with". She even suggested that there was some resentment from Indian Muslims, in particular, at the negative attention focused on Bradford's Muslims. Her emphasis was therefore on Bradford's Pakistanis rather than Muslims per se, and to some extent her comments about Bradford's Pakistanis aligned with the emblematic status of Bradford's Pakistani Muslims in academic and policy discourse.

Despite this, however, Adeeba's reasoning remained nuanced, attending to the particular circumstances of inner-city Bradford in which economic conditions and socio economic indicators show the concentration of relative poverty amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations in those areas (Webster 2003). She referred, for example to the high geographic concentration of (some) Pakistanis in some of the more deprived wards of the city which led to very tight knit, closed communities where the kids "are very isolated in their communities". But she also contextualised this by referring to Bradford's position in the UK more generally, suggesting that it would be interesting to research the factors which "advance" the Pakistani community in London, for example, and compare them with the factors in Bradford and see how they differed.

Furthermore, Adeeba also recognised that many of the issues which affected the lives of inner city Pakistanis equally affected those from non-Muslim communities in those areas, particularly when compared to London. For example, when we discussed the effects of the Prevent agenda on the 'white working class' she acknowledged that it was important to recognise "whether it's white working class people or Pakistanis (whichever group it is) it's about what is it that's been put up in front of them that's not made them feel part of the community" which needs to be taken into account. In their detailed exploration of the Bradford 2001 riots, Bujra and Pearce (2011) contextualise the immediate triggers in terms of a collective failure, both locally and nationally, to deal with structural inequality and

marginalisation against a backdrop of long term economic decline. Speaking about the region more widely, Webster argues that long term economic decline of the textile industry was responsible for "generating a community discourse of nostalgia and cultural decline" (2003:96), adding that fear, risk and insecurity are geographically concentrated.

Given the *relatively* homogeneous composition of Bradford's Muslim community, BME organisations in Bradford were de facto 'Muslim' ones. As a result, in Bradford at least, the policy shifts from multiculturalism to community cohesion to Prevent will not have provided any incentives for strategic opportunism or pragmatism to emphasise Muslimness as Pragna suggested had occurred in Ealing. Furthermore, although there were clearly effects and repercussions in terms of relations with the 'white working class community,' there is no reason why this was any worse than that which had existed previously prior to the arrival of Prevent. By contrast, Bristol offers an interesting case of a very different scenario. With its greater diversity and dynamic demographics the impact of Prevent and EMW has necessarily been different.

Bristol – "similar [to London] but on a small scale"

Bristol is a very different proposition from Bradford. According to the Bristol council website 2% of Bristol's population is Muslim compared to Bradford's 17% (with 0.2 % Sikh and 0.3% Hindu). Bristol is also historically more associated with African-Caribbean populations (Pryce 1979) and areas such as St Paul's are infamous for urban unrest in the 1980s, as well as more recently in 2011.[77] In Bristol I interviewed Kalsoom, a member of NMWAG who was also a community cohesion officer and later a Prevent officer in Bristol Council. I asked Kalsoom about

[77] Although see Richmond (1973) for an early study of migration and 'race relations' in Bristol. The city is also renowned for a bus boycott in the early 1960s in response to the local bus company's refusal to employ 'coloured' drivers (Richmond 1973).

the demographic makeup of Bristol's Muslim population. She described how much Bristol had changed even in the time that she had been there:

> *Well, over the last fifteen years it's changed quite considerably, when I came to Bristol just over twenty years ago, your main community would have been Pakistani or Bangladeshi, obviously Afro Caribbean but in terms of the Muslim community it was Pakistani and Bangladeshi…But, very gradually now the Somali community has become the largest Muslim community so the demographics of Bristol have changed quite a lot….(Kalsoom)*

During our interview, we discussed the particularities of 'the Muslim community' in Bristol. As in London and many other cities, the situation was complex and constantly changing. The demographics and the relations between different groups were constantly in flux. Clearly the Prevent agenda had brought all Muslims together under one banner despite their very different experiences and positions. We discussed the various antagonisms and hostilities, both within the Muslim community as well as with other BME communities. She told me that the increase in hijab and niqab wearing was attributed to the arrival of other non-South Asian Muslims.

> *Well, there are a lot of hijab wearing women and I think again that particularly started with the Somali community as well and we have had more international students and workers here that come from Arab countries where wearing hijab is very much a cultural part of faith and perhaps the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis didn't wear it but they've been told it's unIslamic, …and there's definitely that sort of resentment here that you know it's been imposed like that, so there's a very judgemental attitude Erm…so that exists between the different communities, if you like (Kalsoom)*

In Bristol I also spoke to three police officers (all of whom were white English) involved in delivering the Prevent agenda. They reflected on the fact that Bristol had similarities to London regarding its diversity, with Sarah describing it as "similar but on a smaller scale". They too all mentioned that there was a "very big Somali

community" in Bristol which was also "the newest". They suggested, that it was more segregated than London which was "very multicultural wherever you go" telling me that,

> *…. Easton which is across the road from where we are this….area is predominantly Muslim whereas in some other, certain areas would you agree? that are predominantly white… I've not got any figures or anything (Sarah)*

They explained that this was the community with which they had the most engagement in terms of Prevent. This was not always easy and in fact in Bristol the name was changed from Prevent to 'Building the Bridge'. For example, they told me that there had been quite a few complaints "from Somali people travelling through Bristol airport and saying that they were getting stopped and searched under the Terrorism Act". Luke explained that this stemmed from those being searched thinking they were being stopped under the Terrorism Act when in fact it was for drug related offences. Luke, who had himself been involved in stop and search operations, understood why there had been fears that Somalis were being targeted. This echoes the way in which Sara Ahmed has described how "fear sticks to these bodies" (2004:79) and the figure of the international terrorist has been mobilised in close proximity to the figure of the asylum seeker. But Luke also thought this was to do with the spatial concentration of communities. He told me that having these powers could be difficult and that he knew,

> *…you need to use it proportionately and wisely but if you're working in a certain area as my colleague Rebecca explained earlier… whereas in London if a Police officer went out and stopped 10 people in central London the ethnicities and cultural backgrounds would be totally random…whereas if you do it in Easton it's not going to be ..... it's educated guess work, isn't it? now if that happened half a dozen times in a day in one area it may be all one ethnicity or one cultural background do it in another area and it'll be different so there is a disproportionate percentage when you look at*

population versus stop check it's acknowledged that it looks a little bit abnormal but all I can say in ten years of being a Police officer it's not... I've never been with a Police officer who has stopped somebody because of the colour of their skin (Luke)

They also explained how as a force they learned from other forces around England "in areas that have got denser populations" of Muslims, suggesting that such forces were "at a more advanced stage now". Although Luke told me he thought "Bristol is reasonably well up when it comes to these things", by contrast the West Midlands, the Met and Manchester will have encountered "these problems earlier than us" and so they could learn from them through mechanisms for sharing good practice (placements in other police forces).

Although the police officers used the term 'Muslims,' in the context of our discussion, it was also clear that they were often talking principally about Somalis. This raises the issue of the relationship between different Muslim communities within Bristol. Kalsoom spoke to me about the way that wider media discourses around immigration affected the relationship between more established Muslim communities and more recent Muslim migrants. She suggested that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Bristol felt insecure because their own position was made precarious by the arrival of newer migrants. Often members of these communities adopted the same stereotypes promulgated by the media. She told me about a social event she attended with very middle class Pakistani women where she heard what she described as "blatant racism and prejudice about the Somali community". When I probed further she told me:

This was exactly the Daily Mail, 'they're taking our housing', 'they're claiming the benefits', 'they haven't got their husbands', 'their husbands come over and impregnate them every year'– those were the sorts of comments that were being made...you could have been on a white working class estate actually and the comments would have pretty much been the same (Kalsoom)

In addition, regarding the impact of Prevent and EMW initiatives on inter-community relations, I asked Kalsoom what response there had been from Bristol's other BME communities.

> *…I mean definitely I think, you know I had a lot of antagonism towards this funding from members of the city's Sikh community, that said 'actually, you know, before we used to work together as Asian women, now it's very much Muslim women's groups and we think this funding should be to bring us together' (Kalsoom)*

She suggested that the current policy framework focused on Muslims fostered a certain type of pragmatism on the part of third sector Muslim community organisations in order to secure funding for projects. Although such pragmatism is understandable, it also illustrates how previous alliances have been disrupted and potential solidarities displaced as a consequence.

Moreover, even within different 'ethnic groups', there were sometimes further 'cultural differences' to contend with. Kalsoom, for example, told me about two Somali women who refused to work together because of what they described as 'clan' issues. This potentially de-historicises and thereby essentialises such differences ignoring the possibility that their particular geo-political trajectories (including migration to Europe and the UK) may have influenced their relationship[78]. Such a focus obscures other axes of identity which might hold the potential for more far reaching solidarities, with both other Muslims and non-Muslims.

[78] Or in fact that they just did not get on but found it easier to blame 'clan' issues.

4.2.2. Muslim women's organisations; grass roots or pragmatic opportunism?

In this section I consider Pragna's assertion in relation to a number of organisations with which the research participants were associated. I examine the suggestion that Muslim women's organisations were effectively created to secure Prevent/EMW funding is a valid one which applies outside Ealing (the borough within which Southall is situated). Southall, as with many places holds a particular place in the post war postcolonial ethnicised imaginary tied to its own stories of South Asian (mixed) migration, settlement and employment patterns (Baumann 1996; Brah 1999). Similarly, it has become iconic of a particular juncture in the history of anti-racist political mobilisations in the UK (Shukra 1998).

Just as Southall has a particular history and context, so too does Brent and that has influenced the way in which An-Nisa was established. Khalida and Humera are two sisters who founded and continue to run the An-Nisa Society. As their website describes, "An-Nisa Society was established in May 1985 by a group of young British Muslim women, in response to the needs of Muslim women and their families." I discussed with Khalida in detail what had provided the rationale for An-Nisa. Khalida told me that despite working in a multicultural London borough where the authority was committed to anti-racism, "Muslim groups were coming out worse off in everything." She expanded,

> *"…because I was working on the race relations unit, I saw that actually the anti-racist things that were being done, you know, all the initiatives that were being done, were actually bypassing Muslims and actually we'd see Muslim families in great distress in my work …I saw all these appalling things happening and there was nothing being provided and it wasn't just me, and it was like a few of the others because we were like, most of us, the core group, were working in the system and we thought: wow, what's going on with Muslims is terrible (Khalida)*

She explained that this was,

> *…because they weren't looking at faith they were looking at ethnicities, they were bypassing Muslims. So for example, everything I went to, I never saw Muslims anywhere, never saw Muslims accessing funding; Muslims, you know, weren't getting resources. The Hindu community, the East African Asians that came in the 70s and 80s, they had been much better (Khalida)*

Khalida herself confuses faith and 'ethnicities' by disregarding that some of the 'East African Asians' she refers to were not all Hindu and might have been Muslim[79]. Nonetheless she says this was the impetus for establishing their organisation, focused on Muslim women specifically, as well as a long standing justification to lobby central government against religious discrimination. Khalida and Humera's experience of working in 'race relations' in Brent in the 1980s clearly affected their decision to establish An-Nisa even though the whole faith agenda had not yet emerged as an influential force in the UK social policy landscape. They also explained that they had experienced difficulties securing funding for anything that was faith based. For example, one of the first things they wanted funding for was a Muslim nursery where Muslim children,

> *would be taught…'Bismillah' when you eat, going to the toilet that you wash, and eat with your right hand and that sort of thing…appropriate for Muslim children (Khalida)*

She told me that they were "astonished at the hostility" that they received "from all sections of the community" saying it was,

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[79] Saggar suggests that the structural advantages the Indian presence among the highly participative sections of the electorate is "accentuated" by the East African Asian component because of strong civic culture in post war societies of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania as well as the fact that the English language was the lingua franca of public life in several East African societies. (2000: 228)

…like you know, we weren't fitting ... we were supposed to be Asian, they kept saying 'You're Asian, you're Asian... and Asian this and so why do you want another Asian group?' (Humera)

Clearly for organisations like An-Nisa, the impetus for their formation arose from dissatisfaction with the existing framework and the way multiculturalist policies operated at that particular historical moment in the context of Brent. Arguably there was nothing strategic or opportunistic about establishing An-Nisa at that moment, although it could be argued that the emerging faith agenda was a response to such initiatives and that subsequently the faith agenda (and later the Prevent agenda) has helped facilitate other similar initiatives in other localities. This is in stark contrast to Adeeba's experiences in Bradford where she argues that demands for assistance had not been made by Muslims *as* Muslims.

The previous chapter argued that forced marriage and honour related violence have become particularised to 'Muslim communities'. Whilst the role of discourse in that process is clearly important, I would also argue that the institutional framework and funding arrangements have helped to facilitate this in practice. As local authorities have been encouraged to fund projects that 'empower Muslim women' it is clearly in the interests of women's organisations to emphasise their Muslimness in applying for funding, even if they themselves are fully aware that these issues transcend religious affiliation. In Cardiff, I asked Shahien why the Henna Foundation, of which she was Director, and which offers support to those at risk of forced marriage or 'honour-related violence', was predominantly focused on Muslims. She had acknowledged that these crimes were not exclusive to Muslims. She explained that the organisation had not originally been focused on Muslims but told me that there were a number of reasons why she decided to "have clear terms of reference". The change took place in 2007 which coincides with the rolling out of Prevent.

Superficially this story is consistent with this idea of 'strategic pragmatism' but it is only partly the case since it was not the only reason she gave. Shahien told me that although she respected the work of SBS ("credit where credit's due") she felt that it was important "to get the men on side". Initially her organisation started out as a drop in centre/one stop shop which handled case work around families and as such, necessarily dealt with forced marriage and honour related violence. To some extent she had learned from the problems that pioneer organisations like SBS had encountered (as had Fajer in Manchester and Khalida in Brent) by framing these as *family* issues rather than *women's* issues particularly. This tactical decision, coupled with the fact that "Sikh men had stopped the Sikh women working with" her and the basic fact of demographics (90% of her clients are Muslim), led to the organisation's explicit focus on supporting Muslim women.

Shahien's experience highlights the impact of events such as 9/11 and 7/7 and the ensuing Prevent agenda on 'inter-community relations', by which I mean relations between different BME groups. Although clearly there is an element of pragmatism in emphasising 'Muslimness' strategically at a particular moment, it also intimates possible responses by non-Muslim BME groups to a hitherto predominantly, although not exclusively, Muslim organisation in this same moment, post 7/7.[80]

The case of An-Nisa and the Henna Foundation show two different paths to establishing Muslim women's organisations. Although the timing is almost twenty years apart, I suggest that these trajectories are also a feature of the diversity and the composition of Brent and Cardiff in these instances. And this argument extends further, since these factors are not static and vary over time with economic

[80] For more on Sikh-Muslim relations in contemporary UK see Sian (2010; 2013) which looks at how historical constructions by Sikhs of Muslims, the Other, have been reshaped in postcolonial Britain and how these have impacted on inter-community relations. There are also clearly continuities with work on communalism, historical and contemporary, in South Asia and the importance of place, space, proximity and interaction. See also Kundnani (2000b).

and demographic changes. So, SBS was established at a particular political, historical moment and endured over time. It was a response to racism and patriarchy and particular conditions, yet clearly its survival is partly due to the local specificities of Southall as well as the dynamism and tenacity of those involved in it; Pragna told me that other Black Sisters organisations set up at the same time had not survived.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the importance of taking into account local differences in delivering a national initiative. I argue that both the delivery of the role model road show, as well the way in which Prevent played out locally in different places, was contingent on local circumstances. With regard to both I have explored differences *between* and *within* different geographical locations. I have also considered how the responses to these initiatives as well as the outcomes have varied in different places, both in terms of the recipients as well as other communities.

In relation to the role model project I described how the idea of local difference was built into the project in that some less obvious choices were chosen in which to hold the road shows. There was thus an implicit recognition that there were differences arising in different geographical contexts. Not only were there differences between different places, however, there were differences between the role models attending the road shows. Despite local connections, they were differentiated by social class and cultural capital. These differences between the role models highlighted the multifarious, yet at times nebulous, objectives of the road show. The primary goals were to inspire Muslim girls into exploring a diversity of careers, suggesting that the reason for economic inactivity was a lack of inspiration and knowledge, rather than discrimination or structural inequalities at the point of entry into the labour market (if not the education system itself). As organisers and NMWAG members made clear, some of the reasons for Muslim

girls' 'underperformance' might in fact be as a result of failures in mainstream careers services. Moreover, although one of the objectives of the road show was to combat stereotypes of Muslim women which might have challenged discrimination, the scope and scale of the road show was not sufficient to achieve this other than on a very superficial level.

In the second half of the chapter, I discussed how Prevent funding of Muslim women's organisations in different local contexts was experienced. In particular I looked at the impact of diversity in diversity and how stories of migration, settlement and multicultural politics affected how such organisations were received and structured. I suggested that in hyper diverse areas, such as Brent and Southall, there were particular trajectories in the development of BME women's organisations influenced by their different class positions, and experiences of migration and engagement with local politics. Furthermore, in relation to Bristol and Cardiff, I discussed how changing patterns of migration had influenced the composition and diversity of Muslim populations and necessitated a strategic pragmatism in relation to securing funding. By contrast, areas such as Bradford with a relatively homogenous BME/Muslim population, no such pragmatism was required.

A key theme of this thesis is that policy focused on 'Muslim women' collates together all women who are Muslim, a disparate and multiply-differentiated group and de facto attributes any problematic issues to religious affiliation. As well as perpetuating anti-Muslim racist stereotypes, such policy discourses, focused on religious affiliation alone, also obscure continuities with earlier racisms, as well as other axes of social division in society, such as class and regional inequalities which also affect non-Muslims. In this chapter I have shown the specific ways in which geographical differences in diversity are not taken into account in practice.

I argue that the effect of the Prevent agenda, as part of a wider focus on Muslims in contrast to other ethnicised groups, has had particular effects. In areas with long established minority communities which were predominantly of Muslim origin (e.g.

Kashmiri Pakistanis in Bradford), many of the minority third sector organisations were de facto 'Muslim' ones, even where they were not expressly couched in religious terms. As Adeeba expressed it, she assisted "women who were Muslim" not necessarily "Muslim women". By contrast, organisations in areas with more diverse, transient and newer ethnic minority populations, being Muslim may not have emerged as a way of organising politically until relatively recently, and may undoubtedly have been facilitated by the Prevent agenda itself. Moreover, Muslim populations in these places are more clearly heterogeneous and are experiencing greater flux. The possibilities of inter-community tension were greater as were the incentives to engage in strategic pragmatism.

Chapter 5: Giving the silent majority a stronger voice?

"If it's not men within the Muslim community limiting Muslim women then it's people from outside…these attempts to empower us, are actually taking away our space for action" (Yasmin)

"what constitutes the position of the subaltern is precisely the impossibility of being heard (Spivak 1996:289). In other words, the question becomes not so much 'who speaks?' but 'who hears?'" (Ahmed 2000:61)

Introduction

One of the overarching themes of Prevent, and in particular those initiatives directed at women and young people, was to give the 'silent majority a stronger voice'. This was based on the presumption that 'the Muslim community' was best placed to tackle religious extremism. It could be facilitated by the government through its support of the so called silent majority, presumed to be moderate and in a position to determine who was susceptible to violent extremism; and more importantly, to influence would-be-terrorists or report them to the relevant authorities. Women (as well as young people) were identified as part of that majority. The underlying rationale presupposes that women were previously silent and that government initiatives to empower Muslim women would give them a

stronger voice. As Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government stated[81] in light of the:

> *"inequalities they [Muslim women] face, and the challenges they experience as they seek to take further steps to participate more fully in their communities, and to tackle extremism…we [in government] must do more to ensure that they find their voice more easily."*

This chapter examines these assertions in the light of respondents' experiences. It begins by examining whether Muslim women could be described as a silent majority and looks at the extent to which Muslim women's assumed silence arose from "their own communities" as opposed to from those outside. I show that, amongst research participants, there were complex and nuanced explanations for Muslim women's apparent lack of visibility in the political and policy sphere. In the second section I analyse the wider political landscape during the New Labour era, specifically in relation to women's political participation, which forms the backdrop to the establishment of NMWAG. The third section of this chapter examines the experiences of this increased emphasis on Muslim women in political life and how this stated exercise in 'giving the silent majority a stronger voice' worked in practice. A specific initiative was improving the civic participation of Muslim women. Although such an initiative had the potential to be the most far reaching in terms of giving the silent majority a stronger voice, it was the least successful of NMWAG's three projects and as such I do not discuss it in any detail. Instead, I focus on the establishment and achievements of NMWAG. I analyse the relationship between the members of NMWAG and the women they were supposed to be representing and consider the extent to which NMWAG was successful in providing a stronger voice and to whom. I argue that only certain voices were permitted in particular contexts and that the way this was done was externally prescribed.

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[81] In the Foreward to *Engaging Muslim Women* (DCLG 2006: 5)

5.1 The Silent Majority?

In the foreword to *Engaging Muslim Women*, Ruth Kelly wrote, "Muslim women...have told us that they often feel excluded, sometimes by their own communities and sometimes by those outside it" (DCLG 2006: 5). Many of the respondents agreed that, despite the long and fractious history of state engagement with the Muslim community, Muslim women were very often absent from this process. They themselves had long been critical of the government for always engaging with the same self-appointed, self-styled 'community leaders', who were invariably men. Social policy discourses would suggest that this absence reflected the endemic inferior status of women in Muslim communities.[82] Just as Muslim women are 'barred' from mosques, so they are 'barred' from engaging in civic society. On further questioning, however, a more complex picture emerged which, whilst recognising some male-dominated groups' objections to women's involvement in politics, drew attention to the state's complicity in and occasional facilitation of this process. A variety of reasons for the absence of women was offered which were more complicated than the idea that women were being held back (solely) by community patriarchy.

5.1.1 "..by their own communities"

Although some respondents' explanations do partially conform to the policy discourse which attributes the position of Muslim women principally to 'patriarchal Muslim men', the picture they provided was more nuanced. Rather than a prohibition on women, often it was the type of work that women were involved with which influenced responses to them. Faz Hakim, who had worked at number 10's Strategy Unit. Tony Blair told me that she "thought there was a genuine feeling that traditionally women had been ignored or left out *by* Muslim men..." (my emphasis). Khalida Khan of the An-Nisa society recalled a dismissive response from

[82] It also reflects the presumption that Muslim women do not speak English.

"one very prominent Muslim leader" when she presented data to him showing how deprived the Muslim population in Brent was in the late 80s. She told me he:

> *…just disregarded it all. You know, they just didn't take it seriously; they just…fobbed us off and one religious leader said to us… 'oh yeah, we need sisters to run bazaars and stalls' and basically that's all we were good for… (Khalida)*

Khalida added, however, that "there were a few individuals, some Muslim men - our own husbands…who were quite supportive." She also referred to individual men, for example, the Imam at the Central Mosque in Regents' Park at the time, who was "really supportive" in providing food and the venue free of charge when An-Nisa ran training workshops for teachers. Although the An-Nisa Society might not have received universal support, Khalida's account does not suggest that they experienced any direct objections from people necessarily because they were a women's organisation.

By contrast those involved in women's organisations offering support to victims of domestic violence had very different experiences. Pragna Patel of Southall Black Sisters (SBS) and Shahien Taj of the Henna Foundation (formerly Saheli) both work in (secular) organisations focused on offering support to BME women experiencing domestic violence, and both reported hostility from men from the wider BME community (although significantly not just from Muslim men as I discuss shortly). Clearly, as a result of their line of work, these women and their organisations have attracted the ire of some BME men, and they, or their families, have been victims of harassment. Shahien, for example, referred to people who she had reported to the police or other authorities "coming after her" after she had "grassed on" them for engaging in criminal activity. She also told me how her father's car had been vandalised, acknowledging that the attack had been meant for her and conceded that "it does happen on occasion depending on what is going on". She was very stoic about these incidents, telling me:

> *So that will happen. Because there will be people in the community who want to take revenge against you even though you've done something good, even though you know Islamically and human rights[wise] it was the right thing to do but when somebody's evil if they wanna come after you, they'll come after you and do you harm (Shahien)*

The hostility exemplified in these incidents is, however, directly associated with the type of work she does and such 'revenge' attacks are unfortunately a corollary of the sensitive nature of her work. She did not, however, suggest that any hostility was necessarily because she was a woman or a Muslim *per se*.

Shahien and Pragna both work in organisations focused specifically on dealing with domestic violence. Other organisations, such as An-Nisa, deal with cases involving domestic violence but did not mention any hostility as a result. Notably, An-Nisa Society is framed very much in religious terms. Its mission, as outlined on its website, "is to nurture a positive British Muslim identity and develop a dynamic, empowered and healthy Muslim community by promoting societal change and personal growth. This includes pressing for policies, services and initiatives that are sensitive to the Muslim perspective." It may, therefore, be that (secular) organisations focused principally on domestic violence could be seen as more problematic by certain elements of 'the community' than an avowedly Muslim woman's organisation that deals with a variety of 'family' issues, which might include domestic violence.

Although there has been some (academic and policy) attention on the effects of multicultural and community cohesion policies on the 'white working class' (Hewitt 2005; Garner et al 2009), there has been little, if any, attention given to the effect of community cohesion policies on other BME communities.[83] In discussions with Muslim and BME women's organisations, however, unsurprisingly these themes emerged. Shahien told me how, as well as experiencing hostility from "people in

[83] Although see Kundnani (2002b) for a discussion of communalism in the context of the UK.

the community" (by which she meant the Muslim community in Cardiff), she had also experienced hostility from non-Muslim BME men to the work of her organisation. When I asked her why the organisation was predominantly focused on Muslims she explained that this had not originally been the case but told me that:

> *....Sikh men stopped the Sikh women working with me. They just did not want this to happen and I wasn't going to go into encouraging another woman from another community, even if she is a friend of mine, 'cos at the end of the day I'll go home, she has to live in that community, she has to go to the Gurdwara you understand? I'm not going to cause her problems and I've always said to them if you wanna come back anytime we're more than happy to…(Shahien)*

As a result of incidents like that, and the fact that 90% of her clients are Muslim (because of the demographics of the area in Cardiff in which her organisation is based), Shahien decided to focus explicitly on supporting Muslim women in order to "have clear terms of reference" in 2007. This decision highlights the impact of events such as 9/11 and 7/7 and the ensuing Prevent agenda on 'inter-community relations' which I discussed in Chapter 4.

These examples show that Muslim women's organisations have experienced a range of responses from Muslim men, ranging from disinterest to outright hostility and harassment. This is, however, a partial story. The 'Muslim men holding women back' is a convenient common sense way of conceptualising Muslim women's absence in civic society. I have also shown that hostility has also come from other non-BME men. Without underestimating the difficulties faced and overcome by some of the women, these are not the only reasons for Muslim women's absence in the political domain. There was an acknowledgment that the absence of women was a necessary corollary of how community politics had developed historically. Furthermore, as many of my respondents argued, the way in which local and

central government politics functioned, contributed to Muslim women's invisibility in community politics. I discuss these in the following section.

5.1.2…by those outside it

> *when they say we don't exist, we do exist actually, the government just doesn't want to see us (Nazneen)*

Black feminist critiques of multiculturalism cite the way in which multiculturalist policies have encouraged an informal contract between government and the more conservative leaders of minority communities (Gupta 2003). Wilson (2006) has described how the state's interventions in South Asian women's lives have worked to strengthen South Asian patriarchal relations, arguing that, under pressure from women's groups to provide protection from violence, the state's response has been to try and manage and control, rather than weaken South Asian patriarchy. Khalida's understanding supports this when she explains how local politicians would:

> *…engage with the mosques, because they want votes; so they'd see the mosque on Friday with loads of people, hundreds of people, thousands of people so ... votes so there's a lot of, you know, like history of mosques with the Labour Party and whatever… (Khalida)*

She added that "…it's not only our men that are sexist, it's the government or local authority" and that this was evidenced in their replicating and perpetuating stereotypes about Muslim women. She argued that they saw "that the power is with the men" and because of "the stereotyped image that women [...] don't have any say in the Muslim community", Muslim women continued to be ignored.[84] Solomos and Back, for example, cite an interview with a (white) woman from the Labour Party in the early 1990s in which she acknowledges that "we are doing

[84] Local situations and circumstances make a profound difference to the way in which local politics functions. The An-Nisa Society is based in Brent and Khalida's account must be understood as specific to the politics in Brent (see Chapter 4).

nothing particularly to change the situation that Muslim women find themselves in" (1995: 99).

Shaista claimed the Government ignored her contributions despite her extensive research and links with the Muslim community (Birmingham Post 26 March 2008) telling me that "when government were engaging with communities [it] tended to be mainly men; the voices of women and youth were missing". This is supported by Faz's comments when she said, "I don't think Government were interested in speaking to Muslim women before, they didn't care, no one asked ever to speak to women". The explanation she offered was as follows:

> *…it's just how things work. I think the whole issue of women not being sort of spoken to is a mixture of how it's kind of come on … it's also because people in politics....they wanted to speak to one person – you represent Muslims, you represent Hindus, you represent Sikhs. For a long time communities were happy with that. And again those tended to be initially people who'd come up through the ranks of the mosque, men anyway.*

The absence of Muslim women in the political process meant that interviewees thought that women's interests, needs, concerns (Childs et al 2010) were not considered high priority by male community representatives. Khalida explained that the mosques were not aware of what was happening because of all the:

> *politicking going on, there'd be one group and then they'd fight and then they'd split and make another group in another mosque…they were so involved in who wants to be the president or the chair, they weren't seeing that the fire was burning in their own back garden, back home at their families; families were having enormous problems…(Khalida)*

Instead, she suggested that the men "just wanted to be councillors". As a result she argues, "because they [councillors] didn't meet the needs of the Muslims, they weren't meeting our needs," that is, the needs of women and the wider

community.[85] Women therefore faced dual resistance from the state on the one hand, and male members of their community on the other (Burlet & Reid 1998:283-84). As Yasmin stated,

> *if it's not men within the Muslim community limiting Muslim women then it's people from outside…these…attempts to empower us, are actually taking away our space for action. (Yasmin)*

Furthermore, it is possible that the absence of women's groups is due to the fact that third sector and voluntary organisations are constantly in competition with one another for resources and patronage. As McGhee argues effective engagement between communities rarely occurs in the context of competition for scarce resources and services (2005). Both longer established and newer organisations would have been competing for scarce funds, suggesting that any objections might not necessarily conform to the 'Muslim men holding back Muslim women' logic alone. Against a backdrop of scarcity, the experience of Khalida and others may not (only) have stemmed from objections to the idea of women being involved *per se*. Hostility could potentially be seen as unease at another organisation being established that would compete with existing organisations for funding, both public and charitable. This is of course a much wider issue than just within the Muslim community sector, but must necessarily affect relationships between different BME (women's) groups. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Southall Black Sisters had their funding by Ealing Council withdrawn in the interests of community cohesion, whereas local authorities were simultaneously being encouraged to fund specifically Muslim women's groups dealing with the same issues.

Back et al note "studies of Islamic political participation need to be contextualised carefully without recourse to grand generalities about culture and faith" (2009:2). The last section has shown that the ways in which Muslim women were absented were much more subtle, and the reasons proffered, more complex and variegated.

[85] Eade and Garbin (2010) show the ways in which debates and events occurring beyond the national frontier influence local politics in the context of East London.

Accounts of hostility were often connected to the type of work the organisations did. Those that dealt with domestic violence cases, for example had experienced hostility although this was not restricted to Muslim men. In addition, I have shown how the workings of local and central government politics may have worked to inadvertently side line women. The following section looks at how the political landscape changed when New Labour was elected to power.

5.2 Finding a Voice

Dustin & Phillips suggest that there was "a refiguring of public discourse in 1997" (2008:407), with the election of a Labour government and a doubling in the number of woman parliamentarians.[86] As a result, they argued, there were "more MPs willing to speak out against abuses of women, and a substantial rise in the parliamentary time devoted to matters such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation". Dustin and Phillips note that these issues appeared on the mainstream political agenda at that particular moment irrespective of the fact that BME women's groups had been lobbying on these issues decades before. It is also symbolic of wider discourses in which feminism is disarticulated, as something that is only necessary in relation to the Other, and specifically Muslim women (Scharff 2011).

Rubina told me that she thought the seeds of NMWAG were sown as early as 1997 when New Labour came to power. Faz suggested this process of increasing the civic participation of women was "a natural progression" that with time there is change. Early on she had been quite clear in expressing the idea that Muslim women had been excluded *by* Muslim men. Later though she contextualised this gender imbalance in relation to how ethnic minority community groups had emerged

[86] This is in contrast to the some of the Left's response to the suffragettes in the early 20th century. Anne Phillips notes that some of the UK's most obdurate opponents of the UK suffragettes were within the ranks of socialist men who thought that the obsession with women's equality was a dangerously middle-class diversion from the more pressing concerns of class (1995:42). Beatrix Campbell (1984) reflects on the day to day sexism of the Labour movement in the early 1980s.

historically in the political sphere, in the context of both local and central government engagement. She admitted that "it's very popular now to attack" male community leaders and say "they don't speak for anybody or that 'they're unrepresentative'". She made clear that we should remember "that they grew up for a reason" which was that:

> *"…there was a time when there was* no *representation for Muslims* at all *and there were some people coming forward and saying, 'hang on, listen to us'. These people turned into community leaders." (Faz)*

She added that this situation changed because

> *"Maybe because more Muslim women are in the second generation, with better education, they started coming up from the ranks saying 'hang on, listen to* us'*... again I think it's kind of natural. Yeah, I don't think you can just blame the community…it's pretty much in the round you know."*[87] *(Faz)*

Shaista, by contrast, firmly associated a greater interest in the potential of Muslim women with a 'regime change' both in the Labour party and (consequently) at DCLG, i.e. "… when Tony Blair left and Gordon Brown took over in June 2007 and Hazel Blears was appointed as the new CLG minister." Given that the post had previously been occupied by Ruth Kelly, this suggests it was not necessarily the presence of women parliamentarians *per se* which changed things as suggested by Dustin & Phillips (2008). Ruth Kelly experienced considerable controversy during her time in office for a variety of reasons. Perhaps, what mattered more was *which* women were in *which* position in government and their relationship to Blair, and later Brown, rather than there simply being a greater female presence across Whitehall. Further, such developments are inflected by local particularities.[88] Vociferous Labour politicians such as Anne Cryer in strategic constituencies, such as

[87] It may also reflect gendered and staggered patterns of migration.

[88] Burlet & Reid (1998), for example, examine the way that women's political participation in Bradford was prompted by the Bradford riots of 1995

Keighley, with significant Muslim populations gained prominence through raising the issues of forced marriage[89]. By contrast, however, politicians such as Harriet Harman and Clare Short who have raised more mainstream feminist concerns (around issues such as Page 3 girls) have been derided for doing so.

The discussion of timing is important because it introduces the idea of what constitutes participation, and questions the validity of the presumption of silence. In spite of barriers, whether from 'the community' (overt hostility or indifference), or in the relations of engagement between local government and 'community leaders', it is clear that Muslim women have, in common with many women's groups (minority or otherwise), been organising and working for their communities and 'women's issues' for many years prior to the EMW initiative. Many of the interviewees were high powered, OBE-holding, women who had established professional or activist careers well before the advent of Prevent and the EMW initiatives. Furthermore, as Back et al (2009) note, we need to think carefully about what social actions constitute participation in the democratic process; mobilization around faith communities can be a form of political participation.

The An-Nisa Society, for example, was "established in May 1985 by a group of young British Muslim women, in response to the needs of Muslim women and their families." When I asked Khalida how they dealt with the lack of support from (some) male colleagues and potential allies, she told me "we had already set it up, we just… no longer looked to the men to help us with everything." She, and her peers were, therefore, able to use their own expertise and resources to set up an organisation which is still going strong over twenty five years later. They used their agency and resources in order to provide and develop services which they felt were absent from both mainstream local authority services, as well as those offered by male-dominated mosque based 'community groups'.

[89] To the extent that the journalist Yasmin Alibhai Brown of The Independent said: "Anne Cryer has put her life and career on the line to defend Asian women who are forced into marriages."

In addition, although some respondents' accounts correspond to the idea that women were absent (for whatever reason), it is also interesting to note that many clearly had achieved a level of power and influence prior to the launch of the EMW initiatives. A salient example of this can be seen in the case of a meeting Faz attended in Bradford, where she was representing the New Labour Government, which she used to illustrate that "Muslim women tend to get ignored". She described that:

> *There was a time when I was at Downing Street and I was going to meetings …and it was all men and I had to tell them to go and get some women…I said I'm not going to sit and talk just in front of you, just to men, that's ridiculous, I don't feel comfortable for a start... I want to talk to some women, you know... so they went and dragged all their wives in… (Faz)*

In this instance, these Muslim men took orders from a Muslim woman working in Downing Street, and seemingly did not object to her request to "go and get some women". As I outlined earlier, she acknowledged that community politics overall are not necessarily representative "in a civic sense" (and as I will discuss shortly, how this issue is not addressed just by "dragging the wives in"). Nonetheless, this encounter illustrates Faz's power in this particular scenario; she describes how she took control of a situation in which she felt uncomfortable and also the fact that her request was seemingly met with little resistance.

Many of the women had been very active prior to their involvement in NWMAG. I interviewed Shaista in 2010 soon after she had resigned from NMWAG after becoming disillusioned with the EMW initiative. Prior to being invited to join NMWAG, and in response to being ignored by government (according to her[90]), she set up Muslim Voice UK in April 2005 which was the UK's first Muslim on-line opinion polling organisation. She has also been involved with the Muslim Women's Network since 2005 which she describes as "a national network of individual

[90] Birmingham Post, 26 March 2008

Muslim women and organisations that ensures their voices reach government and provides a platform for sharing knowledge and experiences." Moreover, since her high profile resignation she has continued her work setting up a website 'Big Sister', her answer to NMWAG's 'Our Choices' role models project.

Shaista had been informally involved in government through various networks and suggested that it was in fact Muslim women, such as herself, who highlighted the absence of women to government Ministers, rather than Ministers or civil servants identifying a problem. She argues that "she had been complaining for a while" and as a result of her persistence she, "eventually actually got onto one of these round table meetings".

> *…in my very first meeting…I raised it very quickly and said "where are the voices of women?", you need to empower women, you need to get more voices of women, of Muslim women round the table because I think actually they can be quite erm you know, in terms of preventing violent extremism you know, they could play a role basically (Shaista)*

Shaista's use of the term empowerment raises a number of possibilities. Firstly, it could represent an uncritical reiteration of the discourse, or equally it could suggest that she herself was instrumental in the term being adopted. She also uncritically uses the idea of voice; that just by 'having more voices around the table' that Muslim women would be listened to. In considering issues of silence or invisibility, it is possible that the existence of Muslim women's groups was not recognised simply through a lack of knowledge or awareness. Much of the machinations of community engagement are *ad hoc* and informal, and so Muslim women's apparent silence and invisibility is possibly a consequence of this, rather than an explicit prohibition on women (see Chapter 4). In addition, perhaps not all of these groups comprised the type of Muslim women the government was interested in seeing. An-Nisa say they were pushing for anti-religious discrimination, based on their experiences of working in Brent, from as early as the late 1980s and claim credit for contributing to finally putting the issue on the government's agenda. In

addition, they were vehemently against the Prevent agenda and very vocally contested it. By contrast, organisations focused more specifically on issues like domestic violence and honour related violence often received vocal political support from the likes of imperial feminists such as Anne Cryer, even if this was not always matched financially.

Having questioned the presumption that Muslim women were indeed silent or absent from the political arena, I now analyse the effects and impact of government interventions to redress this alleged silence in the context of Prevent and in particular through the establishment of NMWAG.

5.3 (Re)presenting 'the Muslim woman'

> *…as far as all Muslim women are concerned, we can't say that we represent all of you, it's such a diverse group of people but… you need to feel confident that you are being representative in some shape or form rather than nothing at all (*Hadiyeh)

On the 22nd of February 2010 I attended one of NMWAG's quarterly meetings. Not all the members were present, a mixture of apologies and no-shows; the snowy weather had affected national transport links. The meeting began with NMWAG members feeding back to the others on progress on the different initiatives they were involved in (role models, civic participation and theological interpretation). This was followed by a discussion on body scanners which, at that that time, were being considered for introduction to all UK airports[91]. There was a range of opinions amongst the women. There was vehement opposition from those wanting women to have the opportunity to opt for a 'pat down' in private. At the other extreme, there was unequivocal support for body scanners on the basis that women would be happier with a body scan carried out by another woman secreted away who they would never see. In my research diary I noted it was "encouraging

[91] Although since then plans were dropped due to concerns about exposure to radiation.

to hear the diversity of opinion" amongst the group. In addition, however, I also reflected on the *ad hoc* way different NMWAG members had consulted 'Muslim women'; one said she had spoken to burka-wearing family members, as though they were the only (Muslim) women, or indeed people, who might have an opinion on the matter.[92] Others appeared to have utilised slightly more formal channels to consult. This diversity of opinion and the evidence of unevenly *ad hoc* consultative processes highlights the broader question of political representation. This section, therefore, examines the extent to which NMWAG could be seen to be representative of Muslim women.

I have suggested that the construction of homogenous communities in the multiculturalist policy paradigm has reinforced a particular male- and conservative-dominated ordering of gender relations within social and political spaces (Burlet & Reid 1998:283, Yuval-Davis 2011:56). As such community leaders have long been criticised for being unelected, unrepresentative, and for not reflecting the diversity of views and contestations in the community. In this section I argue that parallel criticisms could be levelled at NMWAG.

Recruitment to NMWAG was not open and transparent; the original members were invited to join. As a result, the group consisted of those women who were already known to government through their involvement in particular policy areas and who were invited to apply. Shaista thought that she "… was one of the people that was invited because I was probably sitting there round the table". Similarly, Shahien told me:

> *I was on the Home Office working group...and that came to an end but erm I was known to government, and I was still ongoing-ly involved, I'd be asked to go to meetings, consultations, give my views on different things and out*

[92] In addition it is also conceivable that men may have an issue with body scanners or that people would have concerns about children being body scanned irrespective of religious belief. The fact that this question was asked of Muslim women conforms to the association of Muslim women, dress and modesty.

of the blue I got this email to say that this is what's happened and we'd like to invite you on the group and that's all I can tell you and that's it. (Shahien)

Further, they were then asked to nominate others in a snow ball effect (or, according to CLG's Muslim Women's Engagement Officer, NMWAG's membership was guided by the "principle of recruiting people of renown and then getting recommendations from them".) Not only was this process not open, it was skewed in favour of those individuals already known to government officials because they were working on policy areas which were already the target of government attention, such as forced marriage. As well as setting the agenda (in terms of narrowing the issues which were apparently relevant to Muslim women), the routes to engagement were heavily prescribed by government.

The second round of recruitment was ostensibly designed to be more transparent since there was an open application process. According to the CLG's Muslim Women's Engagement Officer, central government had publicised membership through the regional Government Offices and Local Authorities who had much better knowledge of local communities. This was the route through which Kalsoom was recruited. She told me, "I was asked to apply, I think I had an invitation from a local government officer saying that this was something you might find interesting, so I applied and I was told I was selected because of my experience at grassroots." Shaista, already a member of NMWAG by then, told me, however, that she also contacted a number of people and encouraged them to apply. She claimed that of the seven who were recruited to join NMWAG in the second round (out of forty applications in total), four were candidates that she had suggested apply. They may also have been invited to apply by Government Offices or Local Authorities, but this reflects the narrow pool of suitable candidates. The final decision regarding the women who were recruited was made by officials working in Prevent and DCFS, rather than Ministers.

Political representation is the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives "present" in the public policy making processes. Hanna Pitkin (1972) has described 'to represent' as simply to "make present again"[93]. To some extent it is generally accepted that "marginalized groups must rely on surrogate representatives" (Mansbridge 2002: 61). Although Dovi makes clear that democratic representation should be understood more broadly as "an activity of political advocates" (2007: 54) and that informal representatives can be democratic, the crucial point is that NMWAG was devised and hand selected by government; it was not a grassroots organically formed group.

One of reasons for the second recruitment was that the initial composition was not seen to be sufficiently descriptively representative (Pitkin 1967) of the ethnic diversity of the UK's Muslim community.[94] Research participants were clear that ethnic representativeness should be achieved. This significance of ethnicised differences was reflected in the recruitment of NMWAG. The launch press release referred to the different "communities, professions and traditions" represented by its members. The emphasis, however, was on ethnic and cultural differences as opposed to differences which might materially affect women's lives. I was told by the DCLG civil servant ("Women's Engagement Officer") that the original line up of NWMAG had been criticised for its narrow ethnic composition. This was corroborated by one of the NMWAG members as something she had been concerned about,

[93] Strictly speaking, however, it is about incorporating new people to the polity rather than making them present again.

[94] Descriptive representation refers to the extent to which a representative resembles those being represented (i.e. look like, have common interests with or shares certain experiences with the represented). NMWAG members descriptively represent Muslim women since all self-identify as Muslim and share religious affiliation with their constituency, irrespective of whether they practice or are perceived to be Muslim, in terms of dress, for example.

there wasn't a single black Muslim woman on the group…there was no Arab representation, the Middle East…I didn't think there was enough Bangladeshi representation so actually I said that this was very Pakistani dominated we need more diversity…(Shaista)

This issue was considered important enough to warrant a second recruitment exercise to invite another six women to the Group. I argue that this superficial concern with ensuring that different ethnicities were represented arises from a broader 'culturalist' framework which centres on ethnicised groups. It relies on essentialist understandings of identity. As Melissa Williams states, "such assertions do violence to empirical facts of diversity as well as to the agency of individuals to define the meaning of their social…traits" (1998:6). Such an approach perpetuates the idea that it is these women's ethnicity which differentiates them rather than, for example, their differential social positioning as, say third or fourth generation working class Muslim women in the economically deprived North of the UK, or Muslim refugee women living in hyper diverse outer London boroughs. I argue that this detracts from deeper structural and material factors impinging on different Muslim women's lives which they share with other women and Muslim and other men. The way in which Muslim women were engaged with was predicated on their belonging to a particular ethnic group

It could be argued that the emphasis on ensuring ethnicised representativeness is a response to the fact that NMWAG members were unelected and, therefore, being seen to be representative at even the most superficial level could compensate for the absence of any formalised channels of accountability. The historical policy landscape of multiculturalist lobbying encourages such a view.

That said, NMWAG members did not feel personally representative of a particular ethnic group. Adeeba, for example, felt particularly strongly about this telling me that she never "thought that the woman from Morocco was representing the women of Morocco" or that "the woman who was sat there from a Somali

background was representing Somali women...” In relation to herself, she was adamant that she had “never claimed to represent any group, do you understand? And I don’t think any of us should…”

Rather, NMWAG respondents thought instead that they provided substantive representation (Pitkin 1972). That is, whereby representatives’ activity consists of actions taken on behalf of, in the interest of, as an agent of, and as a substitute for the represented. Adeeba told me that NMWAG members “should be there because of [their] experience and…knowledge” and that it was important “to make sure this diverse knowledge and experience of different things is on the table…” Hadiyeh reiterated this view, saying that:

> *When issues come up, all the members have expertise in all various issues to do with violence, arranged marriage, forced marriage all these things, you know? Even myself with extremism, obviously, I have an expertise there. We all have various expertise in our respective fields which can be drawn on.*

Through Adeeba’s and Hadiyeh’s conceptualisations, those they are supposed to be representing are effectively constructed, constituted, framed and created by the representatives themselves. (Saward 2006 cited in Childs et al 2010)

Closely associated with, if not inseparable from, this idea of representation is that of accountability. According to Mansbridge (2009), there are two models of accountability, the sanctions and the selection model. The sanctions model presumes that there will be differences between what the represented and representatives want. The former will reward the latter for good behaviour through repeat votes. Clearly this is not relevant without a direct constituency i.e. there were no electoral routes through which to appoint NMWAG members (although clearly such a view may be applicable in discussions of the ‘Black vote’ or the ‘Muslim’ vote,). By contrast, the selection model of accountability presumes that representatives have self-motivated and exogenous reasons for carrying out the

wishes of the represented. The question for NMWAG members, therefore, becomes one of knowledge of Muslim women's concerns and the paths via which they come to know these.

Furthermore, although Adeeba was clear about who she was *not* speaking on behalf of *(*i.e. not Pakistanis, or women in Bradford or Yorkshire), she was less clear about who she was in fact speaking for. During the course of our interview she said she was "there to talk about what [she] felt as a Muslim woman" but she also variously claimed to be "talking about Muslim women as a whole" and, "the Muslim woman" or also just "women who were Muslim".

All the NMWAG members were quite high profile in their respective fields. Nonetheless, they had varying degrees of contact with the potential targets of the EMW initiative. This raises an alternative cleavage of difference between NMWAG members which is more relevant than superficial ethnicised differences when considering representation and accountability. This is the extent to which NMWAG members were connected to the 'grassroots'. This theme came up frequently and created a hierarchy within NMWAG members deemed most entitled to speak for or on behalf of 'Muslim women'. NMWAG members could be distinguished on the basis of their direct involvement in grassroots organisations: firstly, those such as Adeeba in Bradford and Shahien in Cardiff directly involved in and heading up grassroots organisations (QED and Henna Foundation respectively); umbrella organisations headed up by Shaista and Kalsoom (Muslim Women's Network and the Bristol Muslim Women's network); and thirdly, successful Muslim women who have some relevant knowledge and experience who can act as articulate advocates (e.g. Sabina Lakha who had legal expertise of both English and Sharia legal systems, or Fareena Alam, editor of Q-News). These cleavages of difference potentially reflected class differences between NMWAG members too. An example of divergent views and emphases between those more directly involved in grassroots and those recruited in a more advisory capacity can be seen in the differing views regarding the inclusion of Amina Wudud in the theological interpretation project

(see Chapter 7). The latter thought it was right that she was involved, whereas the former were more concerned about the controversy surrounding her and about how she would be received at the grassroots level.

There is also the possibility that there was a degree of intra-group silencing and that certain voices carried more weight. Sabl has argued, in relation to Martin Luther King's strategy of using Christian spirituality to inform his campaign on non-violence, that,

> *moral activists, lacking tangible resources with which to exert pressure, paradoxically are often perceived as having more power to effect change, since they lack the burden of connection to selfish interests" (2002:203).*

In the context of NMWAG this tendency works to entrench particular stereotypes; those women with most gravitas within NMWAG were those working and campaigning against forced marriage and honour related violence thus replicating the idea that the defining characteristic for engaging with Muslim women is via the rescue paradigm.[95] By contrast, those Muslim women working with more prosaic examples of discrimination in unemployment did not have as high a profile. The relationship between the women NMWAG represent and who they are allegedly speaking on behalf of is complicated and problematic. Pragna (SBS) distinguished between:

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[95] Charlotte Rachael Proudman (The Independent 18 January 2012) wrote about the New Muslim Suffragettes "increasing number of Muslim women activists are receiving death threats, fatwas and even hate mail…their crime: rescuing fellow Muslim women from violent and life threatening situations"; "they stand alone in their communities and apart from other prominent Muslim organisations…The NMS provide refuge, advocacy and access to the British legal and welfare system for women whose daily lives consist of beatings, imprisonment, torture and even marital rape, as well as the mental health ramifications that unfold over time…These organisations have emerged post 9/11 as a response to misogynist and extremist views which are contaminating the Muslim community…"

> *Middle class women who can shift in and out of whatever identity they choose and when something gets a bit too stifling they move out and shift gear, do something else for a bit and they move back in…(Pragna)*

and the alternative, that is "women who really are boxed…[into]…that kind of rigid identification along faith lines". Rebecca, one of the Bristol police officers involved in Prevent, observed that the women she met through police outreach work included "housewives" who just want "their coffee morning". In addition, however, she told me there are "other ladies that go to the group who are really keen to empower women and are keen to get more Muslim women involved in different projects". But she also highlighted a disjuncture here. Reflecting on the Bristol Muslim Women's Network established by Kalsoom, she commented:

> *they're more the women who will try and encourage other women in Bristol but…I don't know whether you'll agree with me* [addressing her two colleagues] *but generally a lot of the women in Bristol are still sort of [pause] not behind, but they're not... their voices are not heard as much as the women on the Muslim Network Panel (Rebecca)*

The emphasis on ensuring the ethnic diversity of the Muslim community was represented by NMWAG was not because they (Government and NMWAG members themselves) thought it would make a material difference. Arguably, it was because they thought it would grant the Group some nominal representativeness to compensate for their not being elected and, at least initially, not appointed through a fair and open recruitment process. Many NMWAG members were concerned at having to justify their position telling me "it would have been nice if there was an application process". The key considerations are not, however, those of representativeness, representation or accountability. These are overshadowed by considerations of the ability of NMWAG members to effect changes i.e. to wield power and to be empowered as political actors themselves. In

my reflections on the quarterly NMWAG meeting I attended, I noted that many of the women palpably desired to be seen to be making a difference.

5.4 Right on the Periphery

The process of "bringing people who are outside the decision–making process into it" can be seen as a form of empowerment (Rowlands 1995: 102). Phillips (1995) argues that the politics of presence changes the tenor of the debate; issues that would not be there otherwise are thought about. There was undoubtedly some optimism around the idea of NMWAG originally. Rubina told me that the "symbolic value" was immeasurable. Members appreciated having access to Ministers, civil servants and the corridors of power in Westminster. There was also recognition of the way that membership of a national advisory body and Prevent as a whole has had a positive effect on the ability to influence issues at a more local grassroots level. Kalsoom told me that as a result of her membership of NMWAG, she felt that the Bristol Muslim Women's Network in particular "as a voice… is out there… it's certainly established itself as a voice", adding that:

> *I know that people don't like the Prevent agenda but I think it's been fantastic. It came at a time when we really really needed it. And great steps have been made in Bristol certainly between the women's network sitting down with the Council of Bristol mosques and saying we need to work together; it would never have happened before (Kalsoom)*

This enthusiasm, however, was tempered by other respondents' misgivings about what they thought their role in NMWAG was meant to be, and how that worked out in reality. As an advisory body, the NMWAG members that I spoke to had anticipated that, ostensibly, their role was to advise. The reality was, however, somewhat different. Adeeba told me that she thought NMWAG was always meant to be "an influencing body rather than a delivery body". She told me that it "never worked out like that" and she did not think that "the women around the table

expected that either". She was clear that from her "experience of being on influencing bodies, you don't deliver."

This was reiterated by Shaista, who explained that she thought that as busy women, "successful in their own fields", they would get access to Ministers and could contribute to policy development. She told me that she too was there to influence policy; rather than oversee projects and "determine who gets the contracts, to determine if it's meeting all its objectives". She thought this was

> *something that the civil servants should be doing. In fact I felt it was cheap labour because we're then being asked to do something for free and I haven't got the time to spare. When there are tons of other projects that they're overseeing, why couldn't they oversee these three? (Shaista)*

In addition, this disappointment was compounded by the fact that the initiatives which they were asked to oversee were thought to have been predetermined. Shaista who eventually resigned from NMWAG suggested that the work streams NMWAG was asked to oversee:

> *were predetermined… they made us believe we were having a discussion, that they were our projects… [but]… I clearly remember being told you don't need to discuss role models and civic participation in depth initially because we're going to do those projects anyway, which kind of left theology … so I felt in a way all three were predetermined although we ended up saying the third project should be theology but the whole way it was done it was probably obvious that it was going to be that. (Shaista)*

When asked what other work streams NMWAG members would have liked included in their remit, Shaista said that research into the extent of discrimination against Muslim women in employment would have been useful in order to consider ways of tackling such issues. In addition, she and others also raised issues of

multiple discrimination, poverty and disparities in health care, as well as shortcomings on the provision of ESL teaching. NMWAG respondents had hoped that their "involvement would have a long term impact on the lives of women", and their empowerment. They did not anticipate that it would be "just a quick tick box, one-off thing that actually has no long term effect." This concern was also shared by Almeena, one of the role models, who told me that,

> *these initiatives are all well and good while they've got the funding and it's a year-long thing so what happens afterwards, you know, what's the point of starting something? (Almeena)*

Some respondents told me that the Youth Muslim Advisory Group (YMAG) was given a higher profile than NMWAG. There was also a perception that the group was subject to the whims of whichever politician was in charge. Adeeba told me that changes in CLG personnel affected morale amongst the group.

> *I think Hazel Blears [96] took it very seriously the fact that she used to turn up at each of the meetings and chair them that's very good so she took it obviously very seriously…what did happen is that there was a change of Secretary of State and another one comes along and it might not be an important issue for them as it was for the previous one 'cos they've got their own areas of interest and I think it was then that it became quite difficult to keep the momentum going because at the end of the day women come around the table, you know they're inspired by the fact that they've got the Secretary of State sat there chairing the meeting who's going to listen to what they tell them (Adeeba)*

Not only were the subjects they were asked to oversee limited and seemingly predetermined, there was a sense that dissent would be frowned upon. A

[96] Originally Adeeba referred to Beverley Hughes but I am referring to Hazel Blears as that was who she later confirmed she was referring to.

recurrent theme in this policy arena has been having 'difficult conversations'. This is founded on the premise that multiculturalism has resulted in cultural relativism and moral blindness in relation to so-called cultural practices, such as forced marriages, honour killings and female circumcision. As a result, one of the positive corollaries of critiquing multiculturalism is the idea that these so-called cultural practices are out in the open and subject to societal scrutiny. No-one I interviewed, however, mentioned this openness as a positive outcome of EMW, other than in terms of there being more funding available for organisations already working in these fields. Instead it was suggested, that 'difficult conversations' instigated by NMWAG members or others were not encouraged.

Shaista admitted to being very vocal during her time at NMWAG and became, as she put it, quite "renowned". She explained that there was an e-group which NMWAG members could use to communicate and discuss issues. At the NMWAG meetings, she felt that the timetable was always too tight and that

> *…We were only discussing the agenda items that the government had put on the agenda; they were not our agenda items. As soon as the meetings were over then…there was no space within the meetings for me or anyone to raise concerns. (Shaista)*

She explained that it did not make sense for her to "pick up the phone and ring twenty women", so instead she would raise concerns in an e-group so that everyone could see her views and join in an online debate. She told me, however, that she felt her behaviour was not welcomed and that one of the more senior civil servants working with NMWAG suggested that she contact her directly rather than email NMWAG members directly. Although this might be justifiable in terms of managing or streamlining communications, Shaista interpreted this behaviour as obstructive, suggesting that it was to prevent debate and to prevent her influencing other NMWAG members. She interpreted the CLG official's intervention as a "veiled threat" that she should reconsider her position in the group, that it was a polite way of saying, "maybe you should keep quiet or step down". She said that

after that incident she was disheartened and contemplated leaving NMWAG. In addition, Shaista suggested that the perks of being on NMWAG preventing other women dissenting more regularly, which I return to later.

> *I suppose even power gets to women; it does get to women's heads I mean suddenly you've got access to ministers…you're invited to 10 Downing Street not only for the launch but when they've had receptions there, so you get invited there. There were a few trips abroad as well so you get selected on a free trip abroad. Who isn't gonna love that? I went to 10 Downing Street, I went on free trips but I still never forgot why I was there and I think a lot of women didn't want to rock the boat, didn't want to because it looks good on your CV…(Shaista)*

As well as possibly closing off debate within NMWAG, for those not directly involved in the group, there was a perception that it was an empty vehicle which could never address substantial material issues. Humera of An-Nisa Society told me that she did not think it was the job of the advisory group to "go and pacify the community". Such bodies needed to be there to be critical of the government. She added:

> *But CLG's …advisers, for some reason, don't believe we have a right to that part of democracy, right? … I argue with them. We have a right to dissent, we have a right to be critical, and that's what democracy is all about, that's what freedom of speech is all about. But…because we've been critical, we get pushed out so….you know I feel really offended by the whole CLG set-up. But that's the way that they work. As long as you go along, work with them without questioning anything, you're ok. But nobody's allowed to question them. At all." (Humera)*

In addition to disappointment with the remit and reach of NWMAG, many interviewees, both inside and outside of NMWAG, intimated that the experience of working in or with central government, specifically, was in itself marginalising. As Ien Ang has suggested, "othering can take place by acts of inclusion within

multicultural discourse" (cited in Ahmed 2000:97). This was potentially on two levels: firstly at the level of what was expected of Muslim women and secondly the exclusionary environment of the Civil Service itself.

Interviewees reflected that the spaces in which they were 'given voice' were narrowly defined. This might be partly explained by the fact that the women were recruited from particular policy areas which were already on the government agenda. One Muslim woman policy consultant told me that she avoided Muslim women's groups in government because they were "right on the periphery". She added that the:

> *…sexy issues are about imams and about you know the kind of theological side of things... the* real *counter terrorism side of things and the political side of things... it's almost as though "we'll put women in this group and they just talk about whatever they want to and then we'll talk about real stuff" so I …avoid them big time. (Faz)*

Further marginalisation occurs because the possibilities for engagement are predicated on a certain understanding of what it means to be a Muslim woman, which is to be a victim, to be oppressed. She added,

> *Trouble is, as soon as you start saying I don't need your help I want your politics I want you to treat me the same, they don't care, they don't want to talk to you anymore. They'll say, "Oh she doesn't really represent the community"… (Faz)*

Muslim women are only intelligible in the political arena if they fit certain norms. Yasmin told me how she always felt that the government did not see her as 'Muslim enough' to be seen as representative of 'a Muslim woman'. Moreover, she felt that Muslim women were only given a voice "as victims or survivors, who were prepared to disclose their personal stories". She explained, "whereas you can talk about the veil, …[but] if you want to discuss any other issues, you know I mean the

credit crunch, anything, then you're not allowed a voice because what could you possibly know?"[97] She explained,

> *you know you are limited to these very narrow subjects and I find it really difficult that given the positioning of the Muslim community as a whole, it diminishes the role of women and all the multiple roles that women have in communities generally as gatekeepers, as mothers, as sisters as whatever role you want to have as active economic participants and citizens to work with the men and to actually really engage in, not just the Prevent agenda, but in to the wider integration agenda (Yasmin)*

She added,

> *I actually think it's oppressive the way Muslim women are viewed, and the fact that the government will only speak to erm….certain Muslim women I'm like, I just sit there and go, "well who's speaking for me?", 'cause I don't see women who look like me, who sound like me..(Yasmin)*

This was also reiterated by Faz:

> *And part of the reason I get annoyed getting involved in some of these things …is because I've realised that the Liberal Left want me to go to them and say: 'I need your help please, can you give me your support and show me what to do. Give me some money. You know, 'help me to overcome this oppression from Muslim men...' and when you trust them like that they love*

[97] There is an assumption that minorities should always speak for the communities from which they came. Writing in the Guardian (16 July 2012) Nabila Ramdani criticises Najat Vallaud-Belkacem as someone who had overcome a "relatively deprived childhood" and prejudice to embark on "a glittering career" in French politics only to get involved in a pledge to see prostitution disappear whereas, according to Ramdani, she should have been involved in overturning the burqa ban and "…working to try to improve the lot of all women in society, including those in the same underprivileged Muslim communities from which she came."

you... and then they're like 'I've got this wonderful friend, she's so amazing she's speaking out against her own community... doing so much, so brave, you know amazing, amazing!' (Faz)

This was reiterated by Nazneen who framed this in terms of the government not wanting to empower Muslim women like her because they were more interested in empowering, "…women who can't speak English, have hijab on and fit the role model." She thought that in spite of the "rhetoric about Muslim women and empowering Muslim women", civil servants had no intention of empowering "a woman who's educated and who's got a mouth, they don't want you anywhere near… because then you become a threat". She added,

so you have your own community trying to keep you out, you have a structure in place…which says it promotes diversity, but it really doesn't and it does it piecemeal because there's no support around you so you're going to leave anyway, and they know it, there's a huge business to be made out of diversity and credibility every time I hear […] or somebody speak about it, it makes me sick (Nazneen)

Building on Fortier's work on the politics of pride, the effect of this way of engaging or interpellating the Muslim woman within this rhetoric is to separate ethnic (and religious) others into the subjects that must be hailed as figures of the tolerant multiracial Britain, which ultimately reconstitutes the privileges of whiteness (2005:568). Nazneen described the double bind of being black

Whereas in the public sector it's totally not about whether you're good at your job…no way! And I remember when I was there I just gave up I just thought ok, everyone thinks I got the job here because I'm black, so that's what my staff thought, my peers didn't like me because they thought well, you know a) she got the job because she's black and b) what the hell does she know about employment sort of thing so I was never made to feel welcome (Nazneen)

Dovi (2009) reflects that inclusion is not just about bringing people from marginalized groups into democratic politics; rather democratic representation can require limiting the influence of overrepresented privileged groups. Clearly, issues of social mobility and entrenched privilege are a much broader issue. Neither Yasmin, Faz nor Nazneen were directly involved in NMWAG but had worked in various capacities with central government. Faz, who had worked at quite a senior level in Tony Blair's government, told me how working with (white middle class) senior civil servants could occasionally be an alienating experience if you did not "bear the signs of 'cultural refinement'" (Puwar 2001) .

> *The biggest thing for me was the Oxbridge thing... they all had this accent which I didn't have and they all spoke in riddles and….lots of Latin, lots of very, very clever jokes, wordplay... and when they talked to you, and you know I'm talking senior civil servants here, I felt very intimidated because they just seemed to be from this different world and...you know I think that's changed…but at that time is was very rarefied you know and they made it clear that you weren't on their level, even though you'd been brought in by the Prime Minister himself, personally appointed... you had to fight for everything you got... you had to fight for information, to be on a distribution list, you had to fight to go to meetings.*

Nazneen, who had been one of the most senior civil servants under the New Labour government (and incidentally who had been invited to apply for her post) spoke extensively about her experiences of working in both the private and public sector. She told me how she was described by one Ministerial adviser as "scary" because she was an articulate Asian Muslim woman and someone who identified herself as politically Black. She felt that rhetoric "about Bangladeshi women" meant that people made assumptions about her,

> *'oh your husband must stop you', or 'your dad must stop you from doing this' or you know 'men are like this' or 'poor you, poor you,' and actually*

when you're an articulate Asian women they don't know what to do with you – they really don't know what to do with you…(Nazneen)

She also somewhat problematically suggested that she thought "white women have been the worst obstacles in my career development", suggesting that, "if you speak to a lot of ethnic minority women they will tell you exactly the same thing; all my black and Asian women friends say the same thing." She suggests this is because white women thought of her as a "threat", "whereas men, particularly older men" had been very supportive to her. This reflects wider patriarchy in the workplace which affects all women, not just Muslim women. Although Nazneen was clear that she did not fit the stereotype of the Bangladeshi woman, she saw no irony in telling me that the white men that had assisted here in her career "were ever so protective, they were really lovely" or that "white men of a certain age…think I'm a little novelty." Nazneen's comments make clear that she does not conform to the stereotype of the Muslim woman, yet they also position her as a woman having to bargain with patriarchy (Kandiyoti 1988)[98] and "sexualised and infantilised at a scale that is over and above white female bodies" (Puwar 2001). The responses she got from white women are consistent with Scharff's findings which suggest that (white) women's "self-representation as empowered is intertwined with the othering of Muslim women" (2011:120)

Occasionally respondents suggested that they too should be the ones being empowered through their appointment to NMWAG. Shaista criticised other NMWAG members for having secured a lot of contract work through NMWAG. Undeniably for some of the women there were perks associated with their position, such as foreign travel and obtaining a high profile (receiving honours etc). Following her resignation, Shaista claimed that the only two negative emails she received were from NMWAG members who she claimed said she had 'spoilt things'

[98] As Kandiyoti suggests "Women's strategies are always played out in the context of identifiable patriarchal bargains that act as implicit scripts that define, limit, and inflect their market and domestic options." (1988 :285)

for them. At the same time she herself expressed regret where she had not been successful in securing tenders. She told me that she was disappointed not to have got the contract to run the theological interpretation project and described this as "disempowering".

Conclusion

The rationale for giving the silent majority a stronger voice is based on a number of assertions and common sense assumptions. Firstly, it implies that the reasons for this silence or absence stem from both within 'the community' and outside. Respondents' accounts suggest that any silencing largely came from without and where hostility was explicitly referred to, it was connected to the type of work they were involved in. Secondly, this rationale for giving women as the silent majority a stronger voice is premised on their having been silent. As I have shown, many of the women had been active long before the establishment of NMWAG. Thirdly, it is premised on the understanding that government interventions to "ensure that they [Muslim women] find their voice more easily" (DCLG 2006) achieved that.

As within the multiculturalist policy paradigm, Prevent and the EMW initiatives involve 'group making' and have facilitated processes of reification by "ethno political entrepreneurs" (Brubaker 2004). Historically men have undoubtedly dominated informal consultations with Muslim communities. NMWAG could, therefore, be seen as an admirable attempt to redress this gender imbalance. It is, however, unclear that the Muslim women involved in NMWAG were any more eligible to represent Muslim communities. The issue of representation is not necessarily rectified "just by dragging the wives in". This is particularly resonant when considering the civic participation initiative which could potentially have been a more far reaching project, the civic participation but was not implemented widely. That is not to deny, however, that many NMWAG members had relevant expertise or knowledge of particular issues, as well as grassroots experience, which qualified them to at least informally represent Muslim women.

In practice, however, NMWAG respondents reflected that, within the Department for Communities and Local Government, they were side lined relative to YMAG which, I was told, was given more resources and publicity. Furthermore, there was the feeling that the work streams overseen by NMWAG were predetermined, that dissent was discouraged and that the very experience of working with Whitehall was marginalising. NMWAG respondents I spoke to felt that they were very well qualified to advise, but that ultimately all they were asked to do was deliver predetermined work streams. In addition they were not well regarded externally; Humera told me rather disparagingly, "these women are not tackling anything institutional".

What then did NMWAG achieve? Quite clearly it had symbolic value. Given, however, that this was a project driven by Whitehall, I argue that this symbolic value was directed at increasing mainstream government's legitimacy by tapping into a prevalent discourse about Muslim women. In doing so it was able to counter accusations that Prevent led to unholy alliances with extremists; women, even ex-Hizbut Tahrir members, could never be accused of representing a radical or extremist threat. It is not clear, however, to what extent this crude attempt to increase the polity's de facto legitimacy could ever be successful. Just as the presence of a black President does not mean that we are post-race; or a woman Prime Minister, that we are post feminism; equally a consultative body of Muslim women advising senior civil servants and Ministers does not mean that women who are Muslim do not continue to be marginalised. The experience of NMWAG reflects Ann Snitow's comment that, "…in a cruel irony that is one mark of women's oppression, when women speak as women they run a special risk of not being heard because the female voice is by our culture's definition, that-voice- you-can-ignore."[99]

[99] Cited in Forcey (1994)

The legitimacy of the EMW initiatives, and therefore NMWAG, is undermined by the following: firstly, that the inception of these initiatives was directly and explicitly connected to the counterterrorism agenda; and, secondly, that Muslim women are not the only underrepresented group that might benefit from being brought into or represented better in political and civic life. Associated with this latter point is the fact that both women and minorities are underrepresented and were these imbalances to be addressed more broadly, then it might follow that more Muslim women may automatically enter the political sphere. In relation to the question of voice, analysing the operation of NMWAG shows that within 'Muslim women' certain voices were louder (or heard more) than others; this was often connected to their particular areas of expertise or that some were uncritical of the Prevent agenda. Overall, however, for NMWAG members, the very process of being brought into the fold is itself premised on their otherness. As Fortier remarks, "the embodied multicultural subject achieves unmarked status through the injunction to speak his and her allegiance. One must be *seen* and *heard* to declare her pride in Britishness in order to *achieve* unmarked status. An 'achievement' that is endlessly deferred, as the non-white skin is never fully peeled off, in a continuous process of de/re/racialization" (2005: 573-4).

Although many NMWAG respondents were pleased, at least initially, by government efforts to involve Muslim women, it was as mothers and as guardians of the next generation that they were brought into politics. In this way political engagement with Muslim women perpetuates the image of Muslim women as in need of rescue and empowerment, yet stultifies a more radical liberatory, transformative engagement. The next chapter examines this theme of motherhood.

Chapter 6: "As a mother and a Muslim": Maternalism and Neoliberal Empowerment

> *Muslim women's groups – people have been trying to set those up for a long time. I worked from the kind of view that Muslim women are really important because they're mothers… there's no real other reason for them to be a group of their own (Faz)*

> *"That women mother in a variety of societies is not as significant as the value attached to mothering in these societies"* (Mohanty 1988: 26)

Introduction

The empowering Muslim women initiative comprised three main work streams. The first was around 'building faith capacity' in order to ensure that women could provide a counter narrative to extremist ideology and contribute more in the community at a theological level. Secondly, civic participation was to be improved by encouraging women to become school governors and magistrates in the wider non-Muslim community. The third project, was the role models project, whereby Muslim women in non-traditional careers formed part of a road show, travelling around England and Wales and visiting Muslim school girls. These three projects, therefore, envisaged 'empowerment' in a number of ways: empowerment through 'modernising' religious discourse; through encouraging increased civic participation and through raising the aspirations of Muslim girls.

Implicit in the three work streams are particular understandings of what disempowerment means when speaking about Muslim women, the target of these initiatives. In the following two chapters I examine how empowerment is

articulated through a discussion of two of the EMW initiatives (role models and theological interpretation). In addition, I consider the way in which the term empowerment was invoked and understood by the interviewees.[100] In the following two chapters I argue that empowerment is articulated in apparently contradictory ways; it is both individualised and collectivised. On one level, empowerment, particularly as envisaged in the context of the role models road show, is seen as part of an individualistic, aspirational, neo-liberal project in which education and employment combine to provide access to consumer citizenship. On another level, however, it is collectivised; an imagined, essentialised Muslim community is pathologised and religion emerges as a tool of empowerment.

The title of this chapter originates from a speech given by Hazel Blears about Prevent at LSE (25 February 2009) in which she spoke of the "the passion and commitment in our communities" by referring to "one young woman" who told her: "I am ready to go anywhere, to any audience, at any time, in this country or abroad and say that I believe suicide bombing is wrong – as a mother and a Muslim." I show how this discourse of empowerment rests heavily on "...that old trope – that women's citizenship and social status emerge from reproductive relations" (Bhattacharyya 2008: 51). I look at the importance placed on parenting and mothering specifically as part of neoliberalism's new sexual contract (McRobbie 2009). I also consider the theme of communal mothering and how mothers emerge as the targets of policy.

The discourse of individual empowerment stresses the importance of mothering and families. It has its roots in New Right ideologies in which the individual is exalted, but with an emphasis on 'traditional' family values. It also reflects the social investment approach of New Labour's third way, orientated towards children and developing social capital to deal with social risks of post-industrial society (Daly 2011). I draw out commonalities between the discourse on Muslim mothers and

[100] I do not discuss the work stream related to civic participation but Chapter 5 discusses the themes of representation and political participation

understandings of working class mothering. In the neoliberal regime, individual mothers and families are the source of both problems and solutions. As Val Gillies argues, however, "although individualistic values structure contemporary society, they obscure the more relational experiences of the disadvantaged and marginalised. Working class mothers and their children are denied the recognition and resources to construct themselves as worthy subjects" (2007: 92). In the EMW initiatives, mothers are seen differently in relation to their sons and daughters. With regard to sons, mothers are represented as being in need of empowerment to 'build resilience' against extremism, either through countering extremist views, or being confident enough to report any suspicious behaviour which might indicate radical extremist tendencies to the police or relevant authorities.

In relation to daughters, however, it is mothers' support for education which is seen as their primary purpose. This support is seen as pivotal and is an integral part of increasing (the allegedly low) aspirations amongst Muslim girls. The role models road show is based on two mutually exclusive premises. The first is that Muslim girls underachieve because they (or their parents) under-aspire, do not value education sufficiently, or are fundamentally opposed to it. The second premise is that Muslim parents encourage their daughters in a narrow range of careers. I examine the role of mothers in the context of the role model road show. I suggest that this forms part of a wider discourse around parenting, and working class parenting in particular (as identified by Gillies 2007), which are further inflected by race and religion.

I begin by discussing the importance placed on parenting, and particular mothering, looking at the way in which it conforms to a simplistic neoliberal logic of aspiration, self-improvement and consumer citizenship. As Dwyer has argued metaphors of home are particularly gendered (2000) and whilst there is an explicit focus on mothers and daughters in EMW, I also analyse what is implied about mothering sons and the relationship between fathers and daughters and fathers and sons before going on to look at the idea of communal mothering.

6.1 As a mother: individualising empowerment

At an Equality and Human Rights Commission event in Birmingham in March 2009, I met a high profile Muslim activist and during a brief conversation over lunch, I asked her how she saw the link between EMW and terrorism. She was slightly taken aback by what seemed to me to be a fairly obvious question. After some reflection she replied that it was all about parenting. As I illustrate in this section, however, 'parenting' is in fact a gender neutral way of referring to mothering; fathers are absent in the EMW social policy literature and in the PVE discourse more widely. A DCLG report entitled *Engaging with Muslim Women: A Report from the Prime Minister's Event 10 May 2006* refers to engaging with "Muslim mothers and grandmothers" (DCLG 2006). In her foreword explaining the impetus for the PM's event, Ruth Kelly writes of meeting "forty Muslim mothers and grandmothers" to talk to them about the issues their communities face. In addition, there are references to women being at "the heart of the family" and statements such as the following:

> *"Muslim women…like all mothers…want the very best for their children and families"*

and

> *"We see Muslim women as key to helping with this so we want to hear from you today…how Muslim mothers would like to play an active role…"*

Whilst later policy literature makes fewer explicit references, the themes of mothering, as opposed to parenting, percolate in the practice of policy. Respondents largely concurred with this emphasis on parenting and mothering. Faz agreed that the impetus for EMW and NMWAG was founded on the idea that child rearing is women's work,

> *...they want women involved and that's good, and part of it is this whole 'Muslim women have a special role in terms of nurturing the next*

generation'… and there again I kind of agree, 'cos mothers do play an important role in terms of how they bring their children up… (Faz)

Kalsoom had originally trained as a teacher, but over twenty years her role had developed into a 'community liaison post'. She explained how "parents, particularly Muslim parents just didn't have the skills or the tools or the knowledge to be able to appreciate that they were partners with the school and their children's education". She added that the mothers "just really lacked the parenting skills" and this led to her becoming a home-school liaison officer, developing parenting courses for mothers. This reflects a broader trend in which parenting has been re-framed as a job requiring particular skills and expertise, which must be taught by formally qualified professionals. This undoubtedly builds on prevalent discourses in wider society about women, femininity and motherhood, and is consistent with a broader discourse in which parenting and child rearing practices have increasingly come to be held accountable for crime, deprivation and inequality. In particular, there has been an overt focus on working class parenting (Gillies 2007) since the late 19th century with the advent of increasing social welfare (Davin 1978).[101]

For Muslim families in the contemporary era, this story is haunted by the ghosts of Britain's imperial past and post war constructions of pathologised 'Othered' families. The bastard offspring of South Asian 'melodrama' and Arab 'despotism', pathological Muslim families are stereotypically characterised (virulently so in the media) by inter-generational conflict between fathers and sons (Lewis 2007) and over protected daughters constrained by honour, ever at the risk of suicide (Brah & Minhas 1985; Brah 1996; Puwar 2003). And there, in the background, is the submissive, oppressed Muslim mother (Parmar 1982). At worst, an active facilitator, but at the very least, complicit in her silence. Accordingly, the way mothering is articulated varies between sons and daughters. In relation to their

[101] In fact these ideas are constitutive of the very foundations of the Welfare State. The Beveridge Report includes the following "in the next thirty years housewives as mothers have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and the British ideals in the world" (1942:53) cited in Pascall (1997:12)

daughters, the emphasis is on the role of mothers in their daughter's education and subsequent employment aspirations. This is apparent in the rationale for the role model road show in which this relationship is explicitly built into the programme. Whilst this is not surprising given that the initiatives are about empowering women, there were no parallel initiatives relating to boys or fathers specifically elsewhere in the Prevent agenda[102]. In relation to boys, the theme of mothering is less overtly discussed. Rather, it is inferred. Since it is only boys that are deemed to be at risk of radicalisation (see Chapter 3), "empowering women to combat terrorism" refers to women stopping men from being drawn into extremism, or at least having the wherewithal to report them to the relevant authorities if they are unable to.

6.1.1 Mothers and daughters: The role models road show

Although there is an implicit collectivism in targeting 'Muslim women' as a group, the role model road show arises from an individualistic interpretation of empowerment. Broadly speaking, this conceptualisation of 'empowerment' is consistent with broader sociological arguments about individualization (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991). It forms part of a liberal, atomistic privatized form of citizenship (Honig 1999), inseparable from consumerism (Rowlands 1997). Specifically, it is expressed through the meritocratic ideals of (individualised) social mobility in respect of education and employment opportunities. This individualised approach to social mobility sits firmly within the framework of New Labour's (Tony Blair's) mantra of 'education, education, education', which attributes success to individual effort and aspiration in an illusory meritocracy. As such, it averts the need for countering entrenched structural class and regional differences. As Butler and Hamnett argue, "education is both the means for sorting the population to fit the social positions available in society and the means for individuals to transform their

[102] Although it could be argued that YMAG was implicitly focused on boys since 'youth' tends to refer to males unless specified otherwise.

life chances" (2011: 243). And specifically in relation to education, "'hopeful' or innovative approaches based on the widespread belief that raising aspirations…will result in improved educational outcomes for children from low-income households" signifies a policy shift "away from a sole reliance on an 'improvement through teaching' approach towards a broad range of other types of provision…" (JRF April 2012:3). As I explore later, even if the rationales for the road show were internally consistent, the supporting evidence is limited.

In relation to young women in particular, McRobbie (2009) suggests that there is a new sexual contract whereby:

> *The young woman is offered a notional form of equality concretised in education and employment, and through participation in consumer culture and civil society, in place of what a reinvented feminist politics might have to offer"* (McRobbie 2009:2)[103]

Although McRobbie suggests that 'Black and Asian' women have been recruited into this new sexual contract, I suggest that such Other, ethnicised women, such as young Muslim women, occupy a different position in relation to this contract, reflecting different criss-crossing of axes of power and racialised subjectivities. Within this discourse this contract is also offered as an opportunity to be modernised.

The stated aim of the road shows was to address the low levels of economic activity amongst Muslim women. The evaluation report "Our Choices" (Equal to the

[103] The trope of the Muslim woman does not fit easily into this argument. This postfeminist analysis is predicated on a particular middle classed whiteness. The asexual, repressed sexuality of Muslim women is in sharp contrast to these postfeminist hegemonies. Muslim feminists are regarded as acceptable because of the virulence of patriarchy in their religion. Muslim women can afford to be defeminised because of their religiosity. McRobbie's critique illustrates the (white) empowered postfeminist woman as characterised by aggressive individualism and hedonistic female phallicism in the field of sexuality. By contrast Muslim women's position as individuals in the neoliberal framework is different. Motherhood is glorified and reflects the culturally essentialised position of woman as always mothers and peace makers.

Occasion), for example, refers to less than one in three Muslim women in the UK having a job, compared to two in three non-Muslim women. The result of this, according to the evaluation report is that "the girls miss out on the diversity of opportunities available and employers miss out on the contribution of an increasingly well-educated section of the population who has much to offer" (2010: 7). Khattab (2009) incorporates religious dimensions into an analysis of the ethnic penalty and finds that skin colour and culture (religion) are to a greater extent (than ethnicity alone) the main mechanisms that operate to reinforce disadvantage among some groups, irrespective of their level of education and qualifications.

The two-fold premise for the road show was, therefore, both a lack of parental aspiration for their daughters, as well as over emphasis on a narrow range of careers, and thus conforms to post-feminist neo liberal ideals. The idea of the road show was to present a diverse range of role models from 'non-traditional' careers to encourage higher aspirations to continue on to higher education and also to consider a wider spread of possible careers. In addition to the supposed transformative effects of contact with such role models, parental support was seen as vital. The role of mothers in 'empowering' their daughters was specifically highlighted, reflecting the most basic level at which the idea of mothering operates throughout the EMW initiatives. As a result parenting was explicitly incorporated into the initiative and the workshops. The Equal to the Occasion report states:

> *Family support was a critical factor for all of the 12 national role models, so we were very keen that parents should get a chance to meet them, hear their stories and be able to ask questions. (2010:13)*[104]

The role models I spoke to corroborated this. Almeena (BBC Wales journalist and presenter and national role model at Cardiff road show) told me that her work

[104] As well as inviting parents directly via the letters sent out by the schools, local community organisations were invited to bring parents along to the event. The road shows were open to men as well as women, to enable male relatives to attend if they wished to do so. (ETTO 2010:13)

experience came via her mother. She told me that she had been "totally free" to choose what she wanted to do and that she had got relevant work experience through family contacts. She emphasised that her parents did not just accept what she wanted to do, but provided ongoing "support and encouragement". Almeena's parents were clearly in a position to assist her in ways that might not have been possible for all the road show attendees' parents (see Chapter 4).

At least two of my interviewees had been involved in the Mosaic project, based in Tower Hamlets, which focuses on mentoring Muslim girls *and* their mothers. Almeena told me that her involvement in "mentoring…the mums" as part of the Mosaic project, made her "realise just how important parents…but mums in particular, [are] with their daughter's education." Hadiyeh (member of NMWAG and Three Faiths Forum and former Hizb-ut-Tahrir member) was also involved in this mentoring project. She told me how mothers and their daughters attended workshops and discussed a variety of issues relating to aspirations, overcoming barriers to success, and 'how to encourage your children to study'. Then, according to Hadiyeh, the mothers "also went to visit a university and saw how it was, going to the big wide world". This last comment alludes to the isolated seclusion or 'purdah' within which Muslim mothers are presumed to live.

The role of daughters' mothers was explicitly built into some of the role models road shows. Dr Farah Bhatti (a scientist working on climate change policy at Westminster and national role model at the London road show) was accompanied to the event by her mother. Farah's mother was involved in a session with the mothers who had attended the Newham road show. (A similar session had also taken place in the Dudley road show.) The London road show was held in Newham on a Saturday morning specifically to allow some of the girls' parents to attend (presupposing that they worked during the week and thus contradicting the view that Muslim women do not work). As well as plenary sessions, there were break-out sessions where the girls were able to interact more directly with role models, away from teachers and their parents. It was during one of these 'break-out'

sessions that it was decided that the mothers who had turned up could get together and discuss some of the themes prompted by the event. Around ten mothers attended and the discussion was chaired by the teacher who had organised the event at Little Ilford.

Although initially quite stilted, in time and with a little prompting from Farah's mother, the discussion flowed. Farrah's mother explained that she had married and had children young, but that she had wanted her daughter to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to her in the UK. Her willingness to be candid about her experiences prompted some of the other mothers to share their thoughts. While it was encouraging to see and hear these women supporting their daughters' educations, the format of this type of event is self-selective. Clearly parents who attended an event such as this were at least, in principle, supportive of their daughters' education or else why would they be there? Those that spoke all said they wanted to support their daughters, but pointed out that their fears stemmed from what the 'community' might think. I will explore this idea of 'community' and 'cultural barriers' in greater depth in the second half of the chapter.

Aside from one role model (Zainab), who talked openly about her parents' refusal to support her academic and career endeavours, I saw or heard very little about parents holding their children back. While this might be self-evident, it might also reflect an unwillingness to 'wash one's dirty linen in public'; or that girls who genuinely experienced such pressures would not have been present at the road show. Fauzia Ahmad's research on British Muslim women and academic achievement (albeit based on a small sample) reported that parents viewed "higher education and careers as an absolute necessity" (2001: 143).[105] Ahmad also noted that mothers with a variety of education levels wished to see their daughters achieve a position of choice and independence in their lifestyles, where they would

[105] And of course she only interviewed Muslim women already in HE rather than those who had not been able to attend.

not be solely dependent upon a future husband and in-laws. This is also supported by the work of Basit (1997 b) and Ijaz and Abbas (2010) which showed that South Asian Muslim families valued Muslim women in education (and in fact religion was often used as a support, albeit differently, across different generations, as is discussed later). Dale et al (2002) suggest that Asian youth value education and have high aspirations relative to their parents' educational and occupational levels and, post 16, relatively higher aspirations than other groups[106].

According to the aims and objectives set out in the role models evaluation report, not only is women's economic inactivity *per se* problematized, it is the lack of *variety* in their career opportunities and choices which is deemed deficient. To a certain extent, this was borne out by feedback on the road shows. Almeena, said that many of the girls she had spoken to talked "a lot about parents". For example,

> *'My parents they want me to become a doctor or a lawyer because that's where the jobs are, that's where the money is' (Almeena)*

Farrah reiterated this explaining that,

> *like many Asian parents, my mum and dad, who are both from Pakistan, would have loved it if I had become a doctor. I was always quite headstrong. I told them I didn't want loads of money and be a doctor, I would rather be a poor scientist because that was what interested me. They were very supportive. They were pleased that I was going to go on to do something in a professional field. (Our Choices booklet)*

This is consistent with the road show premise that there is a 'problem' of a narrow range of expectations amongst parents. Given the time it takes, however, to train

[106] This suggests that the phasing out of EMA will disproportionately affect BME students *NUS cuts briefing /10/05* which suggests that there will be major consequences for Black learners in FE and their ability to participate in and benefit from higher education.)

to be a doctor it certainly does not indicate a lack of support for educating daughters. The paradox is, therefore, that Muslim parents are effectively blamed for either not being supportive enough or being *too* supportive in relation to a narrow range of careers and professions.

It could be argued that these parental interventions reflect rational economic choices in response to fears about racism, discrimination, lack of opportunities or a quest for financial and career security. Dale et al, for example, suggest that "for young Asians, having a specific vocational qualification is likely to provide one means by which labour market barriers can be lowered, either at first entry or on subsequent re-entry following child bearing" (2000: 17). Further, Butler and Hamnett describe an emphasis on a narrow range of prestigious vocational careers as a "marked example of aspiration" (2011: 116). That is not to say, however, that this does not indicate that parents have a limited knowledge of available careers, particularly if they are not employed or have had limited careers opportunities themselves. In terms of the road show, however, the explanations for both a lack of support, or particular career preferences amongst parents, are seen through issues of parental control or pressure and the lens of intergenerational 'cultural conflict'. Whilst not denying the existence of parental pressure leading to particular subject choices, Dale et al (2000)[107] suggested that this pressure sometimes resulted in *continued* study by young people, since minority parents have much higher expectations of education than white English counterparts of similar socio economic positioning. Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera (2010) also challenge the discourse that fathers prevent their daughters from pursuing higher education.

If it is not a lack of parental support, then what are the causes of Muslim women's apparent or alleged lack of success in education and the labour market? Almeena told me that a lot of the girls she had spoken to at the road shows did not know what they wanted to do. She explained,

[107] Working paper 10

that's what seemed to come across. A lot of them didn't know, they're year 10s so they're 1st year of GCSEs, they're still trying to find out which subjects they're good at and which subjects they aren't you know? So I guess when they turn 16, they'll probably have more of an idea….(Almeena)

This is arguably not a problem per se; many teenagers are not sure of their career choices at such a young age. Further, it could be argued that this might be common across the board for youth of a particular class, whose parents may not be in regular salaried or professional employment. Yet, even if this is characterised as a problem, the family, 'community' or 'culture' cannot be held uniquely responsible. A Joseph Rowntree report of April 2012 *The Role of Aspirations, Attitudes and Behaviour in Closing the Educational Attainment Gap* stated that the real difficulty was knowing *how* to fulfil their ambitions and that "rather than raising aspirations in order to raise attainment there is a real need for children and parents to be offered support to learn more about educational and career options so they can make more informed decisions about their future" (JRF 2012:4).

Research participants' comments indicated a failure in the ability of mainstream services (whether at schools or careers services) to deliver appropriate knowledge and information (whether generally or specifically to minority or marginalised groups). Almeena suggested there was a general lack of knowledge in this regard and commented that "work experience in schools doesn't seem to be too joined up" and as a result, one of the girls she had spoken to who wanted to be a doctor, got work experience in a charity shop. Furthermore, there was an unfortunate "dislocation between what they want and how to actually translate that into reality".

This is consistent with what Fajer from Inspired Sisters, which offers a drop-in centre in Manchester, told me. She was surprised because she thought "all of these young people should be aware of their career choices", adding that "they seem like they don't know anything", and that she had expected them to have received one-to-one sessions with a careers adviser. She thought there were "real problems"

with mainstream services and wondered whether they were giving out advice properly. She added that this had knock on material effects on her own organisation, explaining that they spent a lot of time "just dealing with people's enquiries", even though that is not what their funding is for. She complained,

> *there are other organisations who are funded to do things and they're not doing them, that pisses me off to be honest because I think they need to do their job properly. Makes it easier for us and then we can do what we're supposed to do so, or just give* us *the money! (laughs) (Fajer)*

This emphasis on parenting skills and culturalist interpretations clearly detract from wider influences on academic performance which affect many groups, not just Muslims. As Yasmin told me, she did not think it "made any difference whether you're working class white British or from an ethnic minority…if you don't know the systems" you are disadvantaged and need support. In the rationale for the role model road show there is no recognition of the role of inequalities in education more generally, which in turn reflect inequalities in wider society, and how these might affect achievement for girls as well as boys. State education is increasingly part of the neoliberal agenda. Gillies (2007) argues that a family centric view, focused on working class mothering, wilfully ignores how these women fit into a hierarchy, in which material inequalities structure society in a variety of ways. This could be in terms of spatial effects regarding schools, as well as the way in which middle class values predominate. A refusal to acknowledge material or financial capital as significant resources in evening-out life chances is accompanied by an "…evangelical faith in the power of parenting to compensate for social disadvantage" (Gillies 2007: 150).

There is also a contradiction in the fact that this debate about aspirations happens at the same time that we have such emphasis on performance and league tables. The latter highlights the importance of schools in pupils' performance, yet at the same time the veneer of choice again situates the burden of responsibility on parents for securing the best possible school for their children. The reality,

however, is that choice is constrained. For example, Little Ilford School in Newham, where the London road show took place, was not one of the more popular schools in the borough with only 2.9 applications per place (Butler and Hamnett 2011: 178). Those from poorer socio economic backgrounds, or who live in social housing, cannot exercise the much vaunted 'choice' through mortgage and ensuring that that they live in the catchment areas of the best state schools. As Tomlinson (2005) has argued, despite the rhetoric of New Labour promoting social justice and equity,

> *…contradictory policies in education, particularly market policies which encourage parents and students to compete for good schools and educational resources, and allow for the further segregation of social and ethnic groups, do not ensure justice and equity"* (2005:167)[108]

This broader picture of inequality in education impacts on the lives of the Muslim girls (and children) in areas targeted by the role models road show, which are necessarily areas with high concentrations of Muslims and where there is likely to be ethnic or social segregation on spatial lines.

Significantly, in the EMW initiatives there is little recognition that the lives of "young British Muslim women are inscribed by gender relations and class structures" (Dwyer 2000: 476). For example, there is no consideration of discrimination, whether that is: in the way (Muslim) girls are taught at schools; how they may be stereotyped by their teachers (Basit 1997); or the type of career advice that is given to them; or finally at the point of entry to the labour market. As girls, in any case, they are subject to a gendered education. Whilst no longer solely educated for the purposes of domesticity, access to education alone is not sufficient; content is gendered and there is a bias away from science thus affecting

[108] Recently, through the creation of academies, some local authorities have forced the integration of schools with majority white and ethnic minority pupil cohorts in response to fears about self-segregation and insufficient community cohesion, following riots in northern towns in 2001 (Burnley, Blackburn, Leeds and Oldham). This has led to increased racial attacks and a 'white backlash' (Miah 2012).

labour market opportunities (Pascall 1996:130). [109][110] Equally, as Muslim girls of predominantly South Asian origin, there is the legacy of being regarded as the 'image of passivity'. This makes them 'ideal students' whilst simultaneously reflecting their supposed cultural subordination and, therefore, casts them as pupils on whom education is ultimately wasted (Cole 2009: 45). Furthermore they are classed subjects for whom their class positioning will affect their labour market successes. One respondent told me:

> *they don't want people from a working class background you know, I had a shit education in South London, you know a really shit education so I didn't go to the top universities… (Nazneen)*

Assuming a process of rational self-actualisation explicit in aspirational citizenship (Raco 2009), the presence of racism and discrimination would themselves lead to particular outcomes, which might be described as 'non-aspirational' aspirations. Dale et al in their extensive study conclude by saying that it is "of vital importance that the labour market provides these young women with job opportunities at a level commensurate with their abilities and qualifications." (2000: 28). Youth unemployment and a substantial gender pay gap still exist and, therefore, it is hardly surprising that as higher education becomes increasingly privatised, it makes less economic sense for certain people to go to university. Furthermore, as the 2007 EOC report *Moving on Up: Ethnic Minority Women at Work* showed, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women graduates are around five times more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts because of discrimination.[111] There is,

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[109] This could even suggest that parents' instrumentalism in encouraging girls to do a narrow range of subjects is progressive!

[110] This also leads to potential discussions about the value of single sex education. On one level it is widely accepted that single sex education is good for girls whereas where this occurs in religious schools the presumption is that this must be disadvantageous. Furthermore, equality in access to the labour market does not lead to equality of outcome in the labour market. Non-paid work gender imbalances affect many women's experiences.

[111] The report also concluded, in relation to Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black Caribbean women overall (not just graduates), that, "Those who want to work are finding it more difficult to get jobs, progress within them and are more likely to be segregated into certain types of work, despite

therefore, a strong case for undertaking further research into Muslim women's experience of discrimination (and ways of tackling such discrimination).

Indirectly, the road show was also in part about showcasing high profile Muslim women in order to combat stereotypes about Muslim women which might contribute to discrimination. Helen, who managed the road show, explained that the third target audience was the 'general public' and countering stereotypes underlying any discrimination. The CLG Women's Liaison Officer, Anita, explained that the project "started out as being about getting more positive images of Muslim women in the media", an effort to "showcase influential Muslim women". Whilst at a very localised micro level, it could be argued that this might have affected employers' perceptions of Muslim women, the scale and emphasis of the project meant that these effects on the 'general public' would necessarily be very limited.

The logic of the road show conforms to a convenient and prevalent discourse which relies on a presumption of parental objection, ignorance or lack of support for their daughters' education. It represents a 'feel-good' response on the part of the organisers that something is being seen to be done. Empowerment is being 'performed'. The road shows were perceived to be the most 'successful' aspect of the EMW initiatives; there were visible outputs such as the road show itself, an accompanying booklet and website, as well as positively filled in feedback forms from the attendees.

What is not clear, however, is the extent to which such events *make a difference*. To what extent can role models compensate for broader, more far reaching influences on academic achievement and entry into the labour market? Rather than tackle any structural discrimination which might occur because of class, 'race', ethnicity or religion, simply proffering a role model road show as a solution

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leaving school with the same career aspirations as white girls and similar or better qualifications than white boys."

presumes that any underachievement stems from an unwillingness or inability of girls or young women to engage with education, or enter the labour market. Role models are seen as a 'common sense' solution to this problem, but there is little empirical evidence to support this. It ignores the adverse effects of peer pressure, overt racism, low teacher expectation and stereotyping (D'Souza & Clarke 2005: 214).[112] Current evidence "offers only limited support for the impact of most interventions aiming to improve outcomes through AABs" (JRF April 2012:1). What it does highlight, however, as potentially influencing attainment are an improved home learning environment, the allocation of funding toward pupils from the poorest backgrounds and direct teaching support to children falling behind. Goodman and Gregg (cited in JRF 2012) further add that the links might not be so straightforward; what might appear to be low aspirations might be high aspirations that have been eroded by negative experience. Parental disengagement may be a result of high level of commitment to child's education not being matched by the capacity to provide effective support or by the ability of schools to work effectively with parents. [113]

6.1.2 Mothers and Sons

Having looked at the way in which mothering daughters features explicitly, I want to turn to the more implicit way in which the mothering of sons is perceived. As I discussed earlier, the corollary of the focus on Muslim women's status within their communities is that Muslim men are simultaneously demonised. They are perceived as uniquely violent and patriarchal. It is women's role as mothers to avert this.

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[112] Even D'Souza & Clarke (2005) the authors of a book dedicated to setting out the biographies of inspirational black and ethnic minority role models reluctantly recognise these external influences.

[113] Having listened to a number of the role models' presentations, the ones which aroused most attention were the more unusual and glamorous careers. Whilst possibly inspirational, they are by no means practical. If your parents do not know someone who works in BBC Wales, a law firm etc it is difficult to know how to get access to those positions.

The fact that the 7/7 bombers were 'home-grown' caused great consternation. Much of the ensuing debate was focused at a macro level, prompting much broader discussions about Britishness and integration. But aspects of these themes can also be seen at the micro level in the references to mothering and homemaking which I discuss below. Men do not need to change, women do. In Chapter 3, Sadiq Kahn MP suggested that if women were empowered they could prevent misogyny. By extension, so the logic implied, if they were empowered they could prevent terrorism too. This assumes that only men are singularly at risk of radicalisation. Although Hadiyeh (NMWAG), a former member of Hizbut Tahrir, acknowledged that "there are female suicide bombers" she felt that in Britain and Europe, the trend "seems to be [that] the men are put up to do the bombing and that is with the consent, support and encouragement of *their* women" (my emphasis). Women were therefore "just as much a part of that act as the men". She referred to various reports where it was suggested that:

> *...if it wasn't for their wives or the woman they wouldn't have gone out and done it and women who have that level of anger and that type of psyche of anti-western government and a feeling of wanting to attack - the jihadi mentality - will encourage their men to do that (Hadiyeh)*

This is consistent with Bhattacharyya's characterisation of the extremist mother in the discourse of the 'war on terror', in which terrorism "arises from a perversion of motherly love" (2008: 55). This might also be extended to include 'wifely' or 'uxorial love'.[114]

[114] This can be seen in the case of Bouchra El Hor, the Dutch wife of Yassin Nassari who was convicted of terrorism offences in July 2007. Headlines at the time included "Wife 'urged man to die a martyr'" (BBC News Online) and "Wife cleared of hiding husband's terror plans" (www.telegraph.co.uk) According to these reports, the prosecuter, Aftab Jafferjee said, "His wife was not only aware of his intention but positively encouraged it, despite the fact that his actions would almost certainly result in his death in some form of combat and would also result in their son being without a father."

Ahmed writes how "a crucial risk posed by migrant cultures is defined as their failure to become British, narrated as their failure to love the culture of the host nation" (2004:137). Emphasis on home-making could be seen as a gendered variation of the dominant discourse that violent extremism is related to a lack of belonging.[115] Hadiyeh told me that she felt that Muslim women's sense of having made the UK their home was seen as important. In relation to NMWAG and EMW projects, Hadiyeh explained that the projects were about making people "happy" and encouraging people to make the UK their home on the basis that:

> *…if you make your home here, if you participate in your surroundings, your community and government, then you wouldn't want to call for anything else or attack this country, you know, because you see it very much as yours… (Hadiyeh)*

Implicit in Hadiyeh's explanation is that women in the British context have sufficient power to either encourage or combat terrorism, even if they are themselves not inspired to commit such terrorist acts themselves. The argument goes that, the more Muslim women feel 'at home', the more they will be galvanised to counter extremist views. In addition it can be argued that the incorporation of women specifically was about getting mothers, wives or sisters to look out for the possibility that their sons, husbands, or brothers may be at risk of radicalisation. It follows that empowered women can contribute to 'community resilience,' either by being able to counter such views, or where that does not work, being emboldened to report anyone who holds such views or engages in suspicious activity to the relevant authorities.[116]

When we discussed whether there was a direct relationship between EMW and Prevent and the role of women, Hadiyeh explained that she thought it was more a

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[115] Devadason (2010) based on a study in north London suggests a sense of belonging is not evenly accessed by different ethnic groups.

[116] This can be linked to John Reid's comments about parents being 'taught' to spy on their children (see Chapter 3).

long term project "with an unfortunate name". She acknowledged that the "role modelling, arts, capacity building" were not "directly preventing" extremism, they were about "empowering women, personally",

> *and hopefully they think that more empowered women… means more confident women, therefore more women are able to influence what's going on in their communities, more women having a say… empowered mothers….can challenge within families, within communities, that's the link, that's the only link, indirect link… (Hadiyeh)*

The social policy discourse is based on stereotypes of patriarchal Muslim men, suggesting that women need to be empowered to counteract patriarchy.[117] In contrast to this stereotype, the reality presented by my interviewees was more complex. More often than not, however, rather than representing an over bearing presence, it was the *absence* of fathers that was highlighted as a problem. Kalsoom makes a specific reference to absent fathers and this is corroborated by Khalida who explained that, in her area of Brent in north west London, there were "a lot of absentee fathers in the community". She attributed this to the fact that,

> *most Muslim men tend to do unskilled or semi-skilled work and they tend to do work which has very antisocial hours, so like mini-cabbing or working in restaurants or factories or things like that (Khalida)*

Absent fathers might apply in any number of scenarios, although clearly in the upper echelons of white society this absence is never regarded as a problem; only women's absence matters, irrespective of class. The reference to absent fathers was accompanied by fear about the impact this had on families more generally, but also the extent to which radicalism or extremism might become more appealing as

[117] This is in contrast to the way that African Caribbean families have been portrayed, where an excess of matriarchy is deemed to be problematic.

a result. Although many respondents were positive about the road show, a number thought that role models were in fact more important for boys. Fajer told me that

> *I seriously think that should be done, I think that's really needed, really needed for young men, that so lack role models and have nobody to look up to, most of the time they can't even look up to their parents because they're not maybe properly educated, they're not doing anything, you know… (Fajer)*

Khalida told me that Muslim men in Brent had very little to do with their children and, therefore, as a result,

> *there is a disconnect between, often between the children and the fathers; very very dangerously between fathers and sons which then leads young boys to look for father figures because they don't have that in their family (Khalida)*

Humera added.

> *…The problem with boys is, often they have absent fathers for whatever reason, they don't have positive role models and …er they because it's that male gene of not being too introspective (slight laugh) right, whereas women tend to be a little bit more introspective. They don't therefore have the skills in order to work it out for themselves, because of all the factors in their lives. I think they become de-skilled. Right? (Humera)*

Less sensationally, whilst government focus is on mothers, both Humera and Yasmin spoke about outreach work they had done with fathers too. Humera told me An-Nisa had been involved with a project with Muslim fathers for the Fatherhood Institute. She described how she,

> *…went as a Muslim woman to these men so I was very conscious of all the different things…[and I]…just listened to what they had to say. I felt the report is a reflection of their feelings, you know, and shows Muslim men in a much more…err… normalising them. A lot of this academic stuff I think pathologises people more than it normalises them (Humera)*

Similarly, Yasmin explained how she had been involved in conducting focus groups with young and old Muslim men in Waltham Forest in 1998/99, describing how they were happy to be involved and "were really open about… relationships with women, not just with intimate partners but with their mothers, with their grandmothers…". She remembers it as "really open and…free flowing" and although some attendees "were a bit circumspect", overall she had found it to be "a really interesting event". It might be argued, as is clear in feminist critiques of social policy (Pascall 1997), that the state perpetuates retrograde gender relations in the family. Humera and Yasmin's accounts show that at least some Muslim women activists have potentially been more progressive in that regard.

Many of the respondents told me that they, and other Muslim mothers they knew, lived in fear for their sons too. Humera described it as "a sort of depression" or paranoia amongst mothers which meant that,

> *...particularly with boys, teenage boys, don't allow them to go anywhere, don't want them to do anything. They either completely lose control because they themselves are in a bad way so therefore they can't handle it. (Humera)*

Others raised concerns about sons going away to university and coping as non-drinkers in a very alcohol centric environment; about anti-Muslim racist insults on the football pitch; about anger at detention, and fear for their safety from racial harassment. As Yasmin explained,

… my son had been attacked after the bombing; he doesn't have a beard, he doesn't wear a jilbab or anything, he's just Asian as he would say (Yasmin)

I have discussed the way that empowerment is individualised when it comes to the role model road show. Despite the liberatory 'feminist' rhetoric of empowerment, the emphasis on mothering which permeates the policy discourse is hardly transformative. Rather it reflects a wider arena of a patriarchal system in which "men control women as daughters, much as they control their sons, but they also control women as the mothers of men's children…it is women's motherhood that men must control to maintain patriarchy" (Rothman cited in Forcey et al. 1994:141). Specifically, at the level of education, there is emphasis on individual aspiration and effort at the expense of wider societal factors. The wider social policy framework, within which EMW sits, is predicated on the idea of Muslims as a pathologised community; an enemy within, which requires civilising (see Chapter 3). As such, many of the debates and discussions are about cultural barriers to empowerment. I analyse these in depth in the subsequent chapter. In the next section, however, I discuss how the themes of 'cultural' barriers impinge on individual mothers.

6.1.3 Community Barriers & Communal Mothering

As I set out in the first half of the chapter, during the London role model road show none of the mothers indicated that they themselves individually had any objections to their daughters seeking academic or career success (although as I have already mentioned, this possibly reflects the self-selection inherent in this format of event, or an unwillingness to admit to such restrictions coming from within the family, suggesting instead that they are 'out there'). Many did, however, refer to real and imagined fears about what the 'community' might think and were concerned their daughters might get 'reputations'. Negative attitudes were therefore projected on to 'the community'. I now consider the way in which respondents discuss these

collectivised barriers and, by extension, the way in which collective empowerment is necessarily envisaged.

Research participants reflected how perceived community attitudes could work unfavourably against educated girls. Almeena's story shows how, despite her parents' supportive attitudes to her education and career choices, she and her parents were not immune from judgements by 'the community'. Almeena described how her parents had to contend with 'people in the community' questioning their daughter's achievements, given her Cambridge education and job as a TV journalist, and the perceived lack of morality particularly associated with being on TV. This tallied with what Kalsoom had told me, that young women who were getting "themselves an education were finding it really difficult to find marriage partners within their Muslim community" because she said that:

> *all the young men all want to marry who their mum wants them to marry, or they want them to go abroad and it's…you've got highly intelligent women unable to find marriage partners erm because the Muslim community is so judgemental in what they're looking for. (Kalsoom)*

This is consistent with the idea that higher education for girls may be frowned upon and that there may be some justification in fearing the views of the 'community'. Fauzia Ahmad (2012) highlights the possible tensions (for British South Asian Muslim women specifically) between the idea that holding a degree for Muslim women confers greater choice in matrimony, and the lived realities around difficulties in meeting suitable partners when factors such as increased age or being 'over-qualified' become significant. Ahmad argues that processes of social change are fluid and subject to continual negotiation and renegotiation, and are contingent instead upon localised, personalised, religious and transnational interpretations and influences (ibid). Anecdotally, Kalsoom suggested that as a result Muslim women were increasingly marrying 'Western' converts to Islam. Importantly, however, the existence of these views has not prevented either Almeena or the

girls Kalsoom is referring to getting an education. In fact, Almeena's parents' support for her career and education, despite hostile views from within 'the community', shows the diversity therein.

Many of my respondents' comments reiterated the stereotypes of Muslim women as 'victims of culture' which populate the social policy discourse. This can be seen in the idea that girls specifically are seen as the site of struggle. When I asked why role models were only required for Muslim girls, Almeena told me that, even though boys should not be ignored, given that "boys do tend to underachieve..[and]…girls are far more competitive and motivated in school", she felt that … "*culturally*, where girls have been and how they're pushed is very different from what it is now". Similarly, although Fajer acknowledged shared experiences between boys and girls and Muslim and non-Muslim girls, she suggested that Muslim girls experience "a little more difficulty":

> *…because their parents have come from different countries and their parents are more scared, and try to protect the girls more than your normal white parents would do, basically, and they're trying to hold onto their culture as well so badly.*

The concept of communal mothering is based on the premise that different communities are seen to be at different stages of "development". There are historical antecedents of these initiatives in the UK context amongst different diasporic communities. Susan Tananbaum, for example, has written about the way this idea of communal mothering worked for the Jewish community in London at the start of the 20th century. Although not formally instigated or sanctioned by government, she explains how a "native born, established, and largely middle class, Jewish community" were involved in "communal mothering" through voluntary, Jewish sponsored, social service programs in an effort to "anglicise immigrant girls and their mothers…training them to be good citizens." (cited in Glen 1994: 312)

In Chapter 4 I introduced the idea (through Adeeba) that different communities make progress or advance in different ways and that potentially there was scope for Bradford's Pakistani community to *learn* from other Pakistani communities. This idea was, however, discussed more explicitly by Hadiyeh who explained how:

> *"people whose parents came back in 70s or 60s or whatever, we've been brought up here and have done very well, taken advantage of going to university, getting a good job....we're pretty much sorted in that area."* [118] (Hadiyeh)

As a result, therefore, second generation Muslims could be used as role models "for those who are quite new to Britain and don't understand the dynamics." In this way different sets of Muslim women are positioned against one another; new immigrants are positioned against longer established groups, even though there may be different factors influencing their differential experiences, or degrees of 'empowerment' other than the length of time they have been in the UK. These second generation women were positioned against:

> *some of the newer immigrants who have come from Bangladesh and Somalia they...[...].... still live in a very closed circle and have separated themselves off from the rest of society in a way because they've got their shops, they've got their schools, they've got their madrassahs, everything all contained and it's about getting to them (Hadiyeh)*

It could be argued that the shops, schools and madrassahs, which for Hadiyeh indicate a *lack* of integration, represent better and longer established communities, rather than newer communities. By contrast, for example, Khalida thought a lack of infrastructure indicated a reluctance to settle or integrate. What is absent from

[118] It is interesting how Hadiyeh uses the term 'we' since she has already told me she is a convert albeit of South Asian origin thus highlighting the easy slippage between ethnicity and religion

this interpretation, however, is that these 'original' migrants, who are assumed to be integrated (notwithstanding what that means in practice), managed to become integrated without the presence of such policy initiatives. Their different 'starting positions' on arrival and the impact this has had on 'integration' are not taken into account as having any explanatory value.

Hadiyeh, however, also mentions "some of the other quite closed communities like Bradford's Pakistani communities", who, in spite of their long- established presence in the UK, she argues, remain closed off, disempowered and in need of such initiatives. Again, possible reasons for why Bradford's Muslim community may still be seen as requiring empowerment, despite its long established presence in the UK, are not explored. The position of Bradford's Pakistanis is 'ethnicised' (Mirza and Meetoo 2007) and any discussion of the socio-historical or geo-political context within which migration and settlement has occurred and which might explain their current status is absent (Bujra and Pearce 2011). Hadiyeh's description is consistent with Adeeba's position, outlined in Chapter 4, that problems attributed to the "Muslim community" were essentially about Bradford's Pakistanis who have become emblematically problematic Muslim communities. Notably, where I tried to explore ideas of differences *within* the 'Muslim community', such as those based on socio-economic class or regional variations, with interviewees (which might at least partially explain different communities' positioning or 'development') I was overwhelmingly met with bewilderment.[119] This maternalistic role of longer established migrant communities towards newer arrivals is consistent with the way that EMW initiatives rely on engaging with Muslim women primarily as mothers; as cultural reproducers of the nation, or more aptly, as cultural reproducers of a 'pathologised community within'. This sense of patronage, amongst for example, the middle class Pakistani women living in the suburbs of Bristol which Kalsoom

[119] Brah & Phoenix, citing Sayer (2002) have remarked that "the manner in which class is discussed in political, popular and academic discourse has radically changed to the point that…some sociologists have found it embarrassing to talk to research participants about class. This tendency is also evident in government circles as when the discourse on child poverty comes to substitute analysis of wider inequalities of class." (2004:18)

discussed (see Chapter 4) could be interpreted as internalised dominant racist discourses combined with a fear of being mistakenly associated with these newer Muslims who 'bring the religion into disrepute'. It could potentially be motivated by a sense of group shame or what might be called "*vergüenza ajena*" ("Spanish shame") characterised by feelings of ownership, responsibility, solidarity (Iglesias 1996).[120]

There were frequent references to 'culture' and 'cultural barriers' more generally. Hadiyeh (NMWAG) reflected on the idea that 'culture' acted as a barrier to 'empowerment' which, for her, referred to achievement of academic qualifications and a career. She said that the mothers had 'high aspirations' for their daughters, "it's not like 'no they're going to have to stay at home and get married'." At the same time, however, Hadiyeh suggested that girls "need the support to go out there and follow their, you know, their education and their dreams in a way that is not going to be a threat to their culture as well".[121] This reflects the potential paradox of communal mothering; that the process of integration could be too successful and lead to "a loss of culture" (Tananbaum 1994).[122]

Hadiyeh also referred to the tension experienced by those girls and their mothers who have those high aspirations, but at the same time "feel that they are pressured by those who hold *very cultural views*" (my emphasis), reflecting the mothers' feedback at the Newham road show. In that context, therefore, 'empowerment' for those women means, "to, one, go out there and not feel scared to obtain those [and] two, overcome pressures of communities". She perceives that such women are caught between their own desire not to "go against their culture"

[120] In this context there are comparable historical parallels. Tananbaum noted how middle class established Jewish women volunteers were motivated by "their concern with anti-Semitism, Judaism's requirement of caring for the less fortunate, feelings of ethnic solidarity, and appreciation of the commonality of experiences among women of different classes" (in Glen 1994: 315)

[121] In this way, she too iterates early 20th century middle class Jewish concerns about 'cultural preservation' (Tananbaum in Glen 1994.)

[122] Although in the context of turn of the century Jewish East End accounts, Tanabaum refers to Anglicisation rather than integration.

and those who “hold very cultural views” and might, therefore, hold them back. In this way, Hadiyeh, intimates that there is an acceptable level of ‘culture’ which permits empowerment, but also suggests that ‘culture’ might be threatened by too much 'empowerment'. This logic implies a spectrum, with empowerment and culture at opposite ends, fundamentally opposed to one another, but with the possibility of being balanced at the presumed point at which they coincide. Such characterisations interpret culture as always static, necessarily problematic and something ‘done’ to women, rather than something they constitute, produce or live through. By contrast, as I explore in the following chapter, the relationship between empowerment and religion is not seen as similarly problematic; uncontaminated by ‘culture’, religion does not hinder, and potentially even facilitates empowerment. This highlights broader debates about whether religion can be experienced or practised outside a socio-cultural context.

Fajer’s analysis is more nuanced on the issue of ‘culture’. Although she assumes that a monolithic concept of ‘culture’ is in itself a barrier (“You know everybody wants to preserve the culture, they don’t want to lose that, so I think they have more barriers to break in that sense”), for her, it is not an exclusively ‘Muslim’ thing, and she extends this concern to other BME communities, such as the Chinese community in Manchester.

> *…So that’s why I think kids have got this added thing to do now where they have to hold on to their culture, understand what their own identity is and you know make their parents understand what they want to do… (Fajer)*

Although Fajer’s comments are more nuanced than Hadiyeh’s, she continues to speak about culture in terms of common sense discourses (as something which needs to be preserved or overcome), despite her own experience. Fajer had come to the UK from Pakistan a decade before (at the time of interview). Although, she refers to not wanting to lose her ‘culture’, it is not clear that her own experience of her ‘culture’ entailed unsupportive or obstructive parents, which she attributes to

BME parents more generally. Speaking about her own experiences of growing up in Pakistan, she explained that she had been involved in helping her mother who was involved in charity work. She told me that she was allowed to do things many other young girls were not. Furthermore, her thoughts about how she was bringing her children up in fact indicate a different interpretation of culture. She herself did not see any conflict between 'preserving culture' and educational aspiration, success and employment (and did not envisage any such conflict for her children either). Despite this, however, she does not distinguish between her family's 'culture' and that of the families she deals with in Manchester.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that analysis of the role models road show defines empowerment in neoliberal terms. Just as neoliberal development discourses have (mis) appropriated feminist language and emancipatory goals (Cornwall et al 2008)[123], individualistic liberal feminism "has been absolutely incorporated into political and institutional life" in the UK in lieu of a more transformative politics (McRobbie 2009:7). This can be seen in the way that the "agentic self is valorised" (Daly 2011: 17) in the role models road show. As Yuval Davis and Anthias (1989) argue the "reproduction of culture within national and ethnic collectives primarily falls upon women, serving to reinforced particular constructions of gender roles and femininity. The focus is, therefore, on Muslim women as mothers ensuring their daughter's academic success through sufficiently high aspirations. Structural inequalities that Muslim women may experience as a result of their socio economic position or citizenship status, which are exacerbated by regional variations, are not seen as something which needs to be dealt with collectively; such influences are instead subsumed within the discourse of aspirations. Furthermore, inequalities in education and society more widely, and discrimination at the level of careers services and entry into and within the labour market are obscured. This chapter

[123] For example, it has been argued (with the development programmes) that such neoliberal approaches reproduce and reinforce conservative notions of womanhood and of women's role in the family.

concluded with a discussion of how the 'community' is referred to in abstract terms as a barrier which mothers might face in striving for educational and employment success.

I have also shown how the Muslim woman is engaged with principally as a mother. This engagement rests on the assumption that women will only engage politically as mothers. Yet, as hooks argues, although the home can be a site of resistance, by "romanticizing motherhood, employing the same terminology that is used by sexists to suggest that women are inherently life affirming nurturers, feminist activists reinforce central tenets of male supremacist ideology." (Cited in Forcey 1994:363). Although ostensibly at the heart of this project is the will to 'civilise' the Muslim population into embracing secular feminism, what is also curious to note is the way in which the romanticisation of motherhood is in fact consistent with certain aspects of Islamic discourse. As Peteet (1997) illustrates, despite its reputation for the treatment of women, the status of mothers is exalted in Islam. This is theme of Islamic feminism is one I will develop further in the following chapter.

Chapter 7: A Community of Communities: Privileging Religion

"…women are currently being disempowered through the very discourses of empowerment they are being offered as substitutes for feminism"
(McRobbie 2009:49)

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that some interpretations of religion, all religions, not just Islam, are not necessarily favourable to women (Yasmin)

You're right, what's the definition of empowerment? Economic empowerment, intellectual empowerment, cultural empowerment, you know what kind of empowerment are we talking about here? (Almeena)

Introduction

The previous chapter was principally focused on an analysis of individualised dis/empowerment. It also began a discussion of more collective forms of dis/empowerment in the form of cultural barriers and communal mothering. This chapter develops this theme in greater depth, focusing on the way in which religion is positioned as both disempowering, but also as a potential source of empowerment. In Chapter 3 I analysed the way in which the broader Prevent agenda incorporates Huntingdon's thesis of the clash of civilisations and that, despite emphatic disavowals to the contrary, the discourse suggested that the roots of violent extremism and terrorism lie in Islam itself. Problematic

interpretations of Islam are seen as responsible for Muslims' marginalisation. In relation to women this logic is best exemplified by "building faith capacity" or the "theological interpretation" strand of NMWAG's work.

This chapter begins by looking at the extent to which respondents' views correspond with the homogenising discourses regarding Islam, particularly in relation to women. I then discuss how respondents attribute differences within the Muslim community principally to ethnic differences. Cultural differences in religious practice, arising from ethnic differences, are seen as a source of contamination of a pure Islam. This framing was persuasive amongst respondents, particularly in understanding problematic so-called cultural practices, such as forced marriage, which was seen by some as the result of a culturally determined aberrant version of Islam. In this way, Islam itself is not at fault, rather cultural interpretations of it are to blame. Therefore, as well as being the problem, religion is also posited as the solution. At the government level this can be seen in the quest to fix the 'right type of Islam' through NMWAG's theological interpretation project and I explore how this project was received. I also discuss respondents' views regarding Islam as a potential source of empowerment. The NMWAG led initiative was supported by some respondents in principle but its impact was not far reaching. I argue that this emphasis on religion as a collective source of (dis)empowerment has negative consequences in terms of privileging religiosity. This chapter reflects the myriad ways in which research participants interpret and utilise the terms religion, race, culture, and ethnicity in ways that are sometimes consistent with the social policy discursive formations and sometimes resistant.

7.1 The problem with Islam and cultural contamination

Social policy discourses around the EMW initiatives and associated policy areas rely on Orientalist tropes about Muslim women and religious essentialism in order to make the case for empowering Muslim women. In this section I examine whether respondents thought there was something specific about being a Muslim and Islam which contributed to Muslim women's disempowerment. Despite recognition of

commonalities with other, non-Muslim, women, many respondents felt that there were specific factors affecting Muslim women. Shaista, stated that,

> *all women need empowering and not even just ethnic minority women. You only have to look at the political landscape there's not even…enough white women in politics there's 20% of MP's are women and it should be 50% so* all *women need empowering (Shaista)*

She thought, however, that Muslim women need empowering "a bit more than white women". This was due to the straightforward view that Muslim women were first and foremost disadvantaged because Islam, or at least the way it was interpreted and practised, was uniquely patriarchal amongst religions. I was told that Muslim women suffered, "particular disadvantages that are unique to them because of their faith." The following comments from respondents further illustrate this:

> *with Muslims [the problem] is a lot of men use Islam and misinterpret Islam...so therefore they [Muslim women] face a lot of internal barriers within the community things that perhaps other Asian women don't. Like for example polygamous marriages. It's not really happening in Sikh and Hindu communities so those need to be challenged, right?*

> *Sometimes Muslim men try to use … an Islamic verse in the Quran to justify domestic violence and they're wrongly misinterpreting that verse so there's issues like that...*

> *…if you look at forced marriages even although it's a South Asian thing… you only have to look at the statistics from the Foreign Office to see there's high proportion of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis on there; the Indians make up a small proportion. So what is it about Pakistanis, what is the commonality? It's their faith, isn't it?*

When Almeena, a BBC journalist who was one of the national role models, described what disempowerment meant to her, she relied on stereotypes about Asian and Muslim women not being able to access local services because they were not "allowed out of the house" or did not have very good English.[124] She added that, "the Muslim community itself, what help do they provide their own people, you know? It's a very patriarchal society still, very patriarchal." For Almeena this meant that there was a specific case for focusing on girls on the road show because, "there was some kind of notion that denying girls' access to education or further education or not letting them go is somehow religiously justified." This is despite the fact that Muslim boys do worse at school than Muslim girls and in fact is contradicted by girls' academic attainment levels.[125] Such responses conform to the view that Islam is a uniquely patriarchal religion (Kumar 2012) and that Muslim women and girls warrant special attention. This is consistent with the dominant social policy discourse which is imbued with a rescue paradigm.

Whilst recognising the supposedly unifying effects of shared religious affiliation, the issue of diversity within the Muslim community (and potential problems arising from that diversity) was also frequently invoked by respondents. These differences were principally deemed to be cultural; as Almeena said,

> *you can't just band Muslims together as if we're one …homogeneous group because we're not.* **Culturally** *(my emphasis) there's so many different types of Muslim and within Muslims, you know…it's just easier to stereotype and categorise people because that's the way you can put them in that box and it's just not, when you look at it, the complexities are far greater….*

[124] As Ahmed (2008) notes there is often an emphasis on this from the point of view of segregation rather than as something that might enhance women's lives.

[125] Experiences of women and girls in countries such as Afghanistan under the Taliban are easily extrapolated to all Muslim women and girls across the world.

In academic literature, culture and religion are frequently regarded as interchangeable or, at the very least, intimately linked. Kurtz, for example, argues that "any given religion is also part of a people's culture" and, even in a secular state, he argues that it constitutes at least "a part of the culture" (2007:12). Equally, "culture and faith are structured by and in turn structure the cultural, institutional and deliberative landscapes through which they are articulated" (Back et al 2009: 2). In relation to this policy sphere, and as research participants' responses suggested, however, the relationship between culture and religion (principally in relation to Islam) is conceptualised rather differently. The problem lies with the fact that, even though Quranic text is regarded as sacred, the unmediated 'word of God' (Jacobson 1998), the "fundamentally egalitarian nature of Islamic debate lends itself to differences in religious practice and differences in social profile of distinctive congregations of particular mosques" (Back et al 2009: 9). Rather than faith and culture being interchangeable, they are seen as discrete. Respondents frequently positioned 'culture' as problematic, reflecting wider discussions about the pitfalls of multiculturalism, whereas, by contrast, religion emerged as something distinguishable from culture and potentially a source of empowerment. Therefore, it can be argued that problematic 'cultural' interpretations can be seen to contaminate a pure version of Islam which is deemed to exist outside of culture.

This can be seen in the way that forced marriage was discussed by respondents. As stated previously so called cultural practices such as forced marriage and honour related violence have been conflated with violent extremism in the Prevent agenda. Consequently, forced marriage has come to be widely accepted as a uniquely Muslim crime. Humera described, for example, how "there's a generic view that this is endemic in the whole Muslim community", such that in public policy "all it sees when it sees Muslim women is forced marriages, domestic violence or all that". Furthermore these discourses were not generally resisted amongst respondents, which is consistent with Dustin and Phillips' (2008) findings. Yasmin suggested there was

a contradiction between, I mean they launched the violence against women strategy today erm so on one hand they've done more than I think any previous government in terms of that whole gender advance…erm but you've got the faith agenda running alongside. you know we've got the anti-abortionists in America… (Yasmin)

Even if Islam is deemed principally to blame, forced marriage is not prevalent across *all* Muslim communities. In the quote on page 194 Shaista refers only to Pakistanis and Bangladeshis whereas 30% of Indians living in the UK are Muslim. The respective proportions of forced marriage enquiries between Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are commensurate with the ratio of their respective populations (65% compared with 25%). However, according to statistics from the Muslim Council of Britain, there are about the same number of Indian Muslims in the UK as there are Bangladeshis; the statistics on forced marriage do not reflect that.[126] Although incidences of forced marriage have occurred amongst wealthier socio-economic groups[127], it is equally possible that factors such as socio economic status influence its prevalence. Given that Indian Muslims tend to be of higher socio economic status this might explain the proportionately lower incidence. What was clear from participants' responses was the idea that particular ethnic communities were associated with particular Muslim 'crimes'. Humera for example referred to "all these Kurdish families where other than Pakistani that's where you hear..[about]…these situations". (Although she associated this to their "traumatised past" and her experience is situated in the context of Brent.) Notably, however it is not perceived to occur widely amongst other Muslim communities such as Somali, North African or Arab communities, again contradicting Shaista's assertion that forced marriage and honour related violence were uniquely Islamic

[126] http://www.stopforcedmarriages.org/index.php?menu_id=79&exmenu=79&page=1 Ethnicity data: Pakistani origin - 675,000; Bangladeshi - 257,000 Indian origin - 984,000- say 30% Muslim - total South Asian Muslim population estimate:1.2 million1.5 million Muslims: Pakistani origin 610,000; Bangladeshi 200,000; Indian 160,000; Arab and African 350,000; others 180,000 from MCB statistics

[127] A recent case was that of Dr Humayra Abedin from Bangladesh (The Guardian 2008)

crimes. By contrast, issues such as FGM are more associated with non-South Asian Muslims.

The outcome of this stance understates the incidence of forced marriage and 'honour related violence' amongst non-Muslim women. Domestic violence is underreported and particularly so by BME women (Gill 2004 cited in Anitha 2008). As Anitha (2008) argues in relation to BME women, however, the focus of policy attention is often on the women themselves and their 'culture', rather than any inadequacy in service response. Brittain et al (2005) showed that whereas on average a woman facing domestic violence had to make 11 contacts with agencies before getting the help she needed, in the case of BME women, this figure rose to 17. In addition, even within BME groups, it is clearly not just Muslim women who experience domestic violence; Shahien Taj's organisation in Cardiff, the Henna Foundation, which dealt with domestic violence and forced marriage served both Sikh and Muslim women.[128] In addition, SBS, itself an avowedly secular organisation, deals with a wide spectrum of women, both Muslim and non-Muslim (cite Pragna report).

This section has looked at the way in which collective disempowerment through religion is discussed by research participants. I have described how Islam is homogenised as a collective source of disempowerment. This is the justification for the theological interpretation strand of the EMW initiatives (which I examine in the following section). At the same time respondents' responses also attend to the issue of cultural differences within the Muslim community which affect practice.

[128] One of the highest profile activists in this area is Jasvinder Sanghera who is of Sikh heritage.

7.2 Building faith capacity and Islamic feminism; turning up religious self confidence

> *Before the summer, we will organise a series of roundtables with academics, theologians and community leaders to stimulate debate on this important issue and to gain an understanding of why women are sometimes not allowed access [to mosques]. We will then support and encourage local communities to help break down these barriers" DCLG 2007: 10*

That religion, or specifically the right type of Islam, can potentially counter violent extremism is clearly exemplified in a number of work streams in the Prevent agenda. Within the EMW, this imperative is combined with the discourses of maternalism, which position Muslim women as cultural reproducers and as the victims of a uniquely misogynistic religion. Religion here too becomes a specific solution for women, and is exemplified in the faith capacity project (theological interpretation). This overtly positions (a) corrupted version(s) of Islam as a collective barrier to Muslim women's success. The theological interpretation project is about ensuring that the right type of Islam is promulgated, about assisting reform from within. Islam is framed as at once oppressive and potentially liberatory depending on how it is interpreted.

I now examine interviewees' responses to the NMWAG led initiative on theological interpretation with regard its usefulness and potential to effect change. Amongst respondents there was an acceptance that Muslims needed to 'get their house in order' and that a perverted or corrupted version of Islam was at fault. When Kalsoom had to explain to her Sikh colleagues in Bristol why Muslims needed additional support she had to argue that:

> *…people are using religion as an excuse to alienate themselves from the wider community…once we … put across that… this is not what Islam teaches…then we can go back to, you know, more cohesion work with other*

communities, but at the moment the Muslim community here have set themselves apart, they're using religion as that excuse and we've got to start all over again if you like (Kalsoom)

Kalsoom's justification, which suggests that there is a particular version of Islam which is more compatible with cohesion, implies that segregation or marginalisation is the result of following a particular isolationist version of Islam.[129] Such interpretations do exist and some people may believe and act on them. But such an argument ignores more structural factors, such as employment patterns or housing policies that might also contribute to some Muslim communities' spatial isolation or segregation (Finney & Simpson 2009).

In relation to women's rights, the rationale for the theological interpretation reflects the Islamic feminist position, in which religion is potentially empowering for women; that Islam can be a source of strength for women and a tool for negotiating against restrictions that might be imposed on them (Macey 1999[130]; Dwyer 1999; Mahmood 2005, Phillips 2007), even if "such choices [are] made within social, economic and cultural formations" (Dwyer 2000: 484).[131]

Kalsoom was one of the NMWAG members involved in the theological interpretation work stream. When we spoke (April 2010) the project had just been commissioned; and the output would be a two day seminar attended by scholars from all across the world. She was optimistic and described how

[129] This mirrors work which organisations such as An-Nisa Society and Radical Middle Way have undertaken "to develop relevant Islamic approaches to contemporary challenges to facilitate change" *Faith, Khidmah and Citizenship* (2012) Birmingham

[130] Macey (1999) reveals that there is a difference between male and female attitudes towards Islam. Some men are using it to justify violence against women, while women of all ages and backgrounds are using it as a source of strength and to negotiate the cultural and religious requirements which men try to impose upon them.

[131] This can be seen in relation to the use of sharia courts where women seek Islamic divorce certificates (Bano 2012)

…the aim was to use religion as a tool for social change. We realised that actually a lot of women really did not know the erm rights that women, that Islam gives them…and we really thought, well we'll turn it on its head and use religion, you know, to empower us. (Kalsoom)

The issues that she expected to come up included marriage, for example, whether Muslim women can marry non-Muslim men or 'people of the book', ("you know, there are grey areas and nobody's brave enough to actually say…"). When I asked her whether the eventual aim was to have a definitive view she told me that it was "a scholarly based approach" aiming to be more like the "Contextualising Islam" report which was more fluid and discursive.[132] She told me, "it's about being intelligent and discussing it for God's sake, otherwise we're no better than book burners are we?"

Hadiyeh too was clear about the empowering effects of particular interpretations of Islam. Rather ironically, however, it was in the context of discussing her time as a member of the proscribed Hizbt Tahrir prior to joining NMWAG. Sadiq Khan suggested that because radical Islamic extremists are misogynists, empowering Muslim women would go some way to preventing extremism. He explained,

But it (women's rights) also has serious consequences for preventing extremism, given that the majority of the extremist and radical ideologies that lead young men to turn themselves into human bombs are also deeply misogynist. The Taliban and their barbaric laws towards the women are a good example of this misogyny. (2008)

Although Hadiyeh was aware that some of the strict Wahabbi groups were very segregated and insisted on particular forms of dress for women, she told me that one of "the big misconception(s)" about organisations such as Hizbut Tahrir were

[132] El-Affendi (2009)

that they were misogynist. Instead, she described how "within the women's group [of Hizbut Tahrir] there was a feeling of empowerment that we could get involved in politics". She went on to explain:

> *…the men had the respect, of allowing us to do our own thing as well, so we weren't at their command; the men did their thing and the women did our thing; there was some … collaboration, various huge events that pretty much we were in charge of our own thing… (Hadiyeh)*

This was particularly resonant for Hadiyeh as a convert, who told me that, as a result, she was able to assert that she came "as an independent person" free from any attachment to a particular community. Instead she felt that she was able to link herself to all diverse Muslim communities. She told me, "I'm part of the Moroccan, part of the Somalian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi… [I am] in all of them…" In this way she reiterates the idea of a 'pure Islam', uncontaminated by ethnic and cultural differences. And it was during her time at Hizbut Tahrir that she learned that she could,

> *…[leave] culture behind, it was the culture that was bringing down the Muslims, we needed a revolution, a political idea, so it empowered women to go out there and have the rights that Islam gives to women and we took those on board*

Humera was quite cynical about the theological interpretation initiative. When I described it as potentially something new, she interjected:

> *It's not new – we've been working at a theological level for ages, yeah? So…er….you're not going to get, what's the point of it, you're not going to get the people you want to influence theologically, are not going to take anything from a government led women's led theological thing. You are not going to get it. Even if they do something which is spot-on they're not going*

to do it. Those women aren't the sort of women who are going to influence those people that need to be influenced, right? (Humera)

She told me that as an organisation An-Nisa had got "to a point after twenty five years, of working continuously, in the community and tackling, challenging, to the point that we get taken seriously by what we say". She explained how when she dispensed advice in cases of forced marriage,

"…you support the woman…and her key question is, 'am I going to make God angry?' … and [they think] the Koran says 'don't say no…to your parents'…so you have to work, step-by-step, through all of those things with them, to let them know if the circumstances are as they say, they have every right **from an Islamic point of view** *to leave that situation; you have to stand up against it, right? But what we've found is the more you turn up their self-confidence religiously and they know that God is not going to punish them or that they're not going to go to hell...they actually develop the confidence to resolve the situation themselves…(my emphasis) (Humera)*

The contrasting impact of NMWAG and An-Nisa can be seen in their experiences of engaging with potentially controversial characters. Humera said she had been involved in a scholars' tour with Radical Middle Way, involving Halima Krausen (a 60 year old German convert and 'Europe's leading female Muslim scholar'). She explained that:

because we'd been promoting her, and all this publicity about her, people know the name, people hear about it, see the connection with us and everything er we don't get any trouble whatsoever, right?...we went to different places, mixed audiences, and…she was really well-received.

By contrast, Kalsoom described the controversy prompted by the possible involvement of Amina Wudud, who infamously led a mixed congregational prayer,

in the theological interpretation seminar. This revealed a tension between the NMWAG members involved in that work and the "grassroots" (see Chapter 5). When we spoke, Kalsoom told me they were still at the stage of deciding who to invite but she explained that "we felt it was imperative to have grass roots people there as well because it's about looking at, it's in context with issues facing Muslim women today." She explained, however, that such grassroots women "perhaps…don't have the theological perspective…just see the controversy" and she was told that "if we have this woman [Amina Wudud] on this board our local imams will just say, if you have her, you can have dogs on this panel basically".

A slower, steadier and more organic approach may have proved more productive. Humera explained that because people know that "…we're working within the framework of an Islamic community, Muslim communities and they know the issues that we raise are positively for the benefit of the community" that they did not experience controversy.[133] She told me that they had "to take it strategically, theologically at the level where you can influence people positively." What Kalsoom aspired to achieve in terms of credibility at a top down level could be seen as irrelevant to others. Humera told me how she had been discussing the Contextualising Islam project (on which the EMW theological interpretation project was based) with civil servants at CLG, "the Muslim advisers". She told them how she had been to a seminar, which she had found productive and that it had been different from the usual events because "they had a lot of time for conversation, debate and discussion" but then said to them:

> *OK you've done this, what next? 'Oh, nothing.' Well, aren't you going to implement it? What's the point of it? 'Oh no, we can't, we just gave the resources, we want the government to take a back seat on it…we can't force implementation'. So what's the point of the women's one then?*

[133] This has parallels with the way I discuss how issues around domestic violence were less likely to be met with hostility if they were put in the context of family rather than women's rights (Chapter 5)

I now return to discuss the Faith and Fashion project which I described in the opening to the introductory chapter. It too is premised on accepting the possibility of a multiplicity of views within Islam. I had met Sophia through Hadiyeh at the Three Faiths Forum. Sophia was a white British convert who had spent time in Yemen learning Arabic. On her return to the UK she converted to Islam and worked briefly with Majid Nawaz at the Quilliam Foundation. After leaving there she had started working on devising projects to counter problematic representations of Muslims particularly women.

The workshops and school visits I attended were focused on discussing concepts of modesty.[134] Over the period of a school term, speakers of different faiths (Judaism and Christianity) had spoken to the girls about modesty in the context of their particular religions. At the V & A the girls looked at the rooms displaying the history of fashion. Sophia's guided tour also looked at portraits of men and women through the ages. I recall a particular painting of Puritans which Sophia used to explore the idea of modesty; this was to illustrate modesty as an absence of ostentation and showed how it applied equally to men and women. In her conversations with the class I noted how she was very open with the girls about her own (self-confessed) low level of knowledge about Islam. She was also very clear that she was not telling them *what* they should think, only that they should recognise that there were a variety of views regarding what modesty might constitute. When we discussed the project she had explained to me that she wanted,

> *to create a safe space where we could look at why some Muslim women have chosen to interpret some verses of the Koran to support the burqa and opening up that space allows opportunities for other choices and other interpretations. (Sophia)*

[134] The other aspect of the project was that the girls built up fashion portfolios which were judged and 20 girls were given the opportunity to attend a course at the London School of Fashion.

This project illustrated the multiplicity of different interpretations that are possible within Islam and was also done in the context of a cross faith based project and so could be seen to be in the interests of cohesion (albeit only with other Abrahamic religions).

The following section of this chapter looks at the negative consequences of characterising empowerment collectively with reference to religion. The underlying rationale needs to be considered in relation to a broader debate about multifaithism or 'de-secularisation'. Reducing all problems simply to misinterpretations of Islam results in the increasing privileging of religiosity.[135] There are a number of problematic outcomes of this which are examined such as: people who are cultural Muslims are not seen as Muslim enough; it produces a hierarchy of Muslims based on religious practice; it contributes to discrimination, whether subtle or more overt; and more widely, it leads to a siege mentality, and finally, it is not conducive to a securing solidarity with other marginalised women.

7.3 Becoming Muslim

> *I did not come into Parliament to be a Muslim MP. And I have never held myself out as a Muslim spokesperson or community leader. Just as ordinary citizens have multiple identities, so do MPs. I am Labour first and foremost. I am also a Fabian, a father, a husband, a Londoner, and yes, of Asian origin and Muslim faith….But no matter how hard I try not to allow my faith to define me as an MP – no matter how many times I ask not to have my religion precede my occupation when I am introduced or described – the fact*

[135] This can also be seen in the research arena. I attended an early career researcher workshop at LSE in 2009. One attendee was at the early stages of devising her research which was looking at the relationship between [Somali] mothers and daughters. When asked about access, she explained that her gatekeeper was based at the local mosque which was attended by some of the local [Somali] population. She seemed surprised when I asked her whether she thought all Somali women went to the mosque and whether she was going to take into account that her sample was more likely to be practising Muslims as a result.

> *is that others do define me by my faith.* (Sadiq Khan 2008: Fairness Not Favours)

This quote from a pamphlet, subtitled "How to reconnect with British Muslims", shows that Sadiq Khan is clearly aware of his ambivalent position; he recognises his identity and social positioning are multi-faceted, yet acknowledges the burden of responsibility that comes with being regarded as a representative Muslim MP. Only a few pages later, he criticises the Tory party for having appointed Baroness Warsi (2006:3), suggesting that this was to claim to have the most senior Muslim in Parliament. Khan seemingly revels in the fact that Baroness Warsi is unelected and criticises her for making an effort *not* to be seen as just a Muslim politician. Clearly this position contradicts his own, set out in the quote above, in which he has grudgingly adopted the mantel of British Muslim politician, tasked with pontificating about the compatibility of Britishness and Islam. Moreover, his criticisms of Warsi being unelected also seem hollow in the context of the stated *raison d'etre* underlying the EMW initiatives and the establishment of NMWAG (see Chapter 5).

Khan's comments highlight the disjuncture between what one thinks one is and how one is considered by others. In this section I explore this theme in the context of the research participants' reflections; how their ideas of 'the Muslim woman' compared with their own experiences as Muslim women. I discuss the consequences of being defined by others by one's faith. It can be seen in the way that respondents (and Muslim women more generally) carry the burden of responsibility of being Muslim (in a similar way to which Sadiq Khan describes his experiences of being a Muslim MP). Furthermore, it can also be seen in crude stereotyping, discrimination and hate crime, all of which enact violence (whether symbolic or real) on them as Muslim women (Mohanty 1988). All reflect the way in which the significance of religion is over determined. Much of this has emerged as a consequence of media representations of Muslim women, but social policy

framings, such as that entailed in the theological interpretation initiative, have undoubtedly contributed to this phenomenon.

7.3.1 Discrimination: "others do define me by my faith"

Shaista acknowledged that in addition to the difficulties caused by Islam for women, they were also "more discriminated against than other BME women's groups," arguing that they had to "face multiple discrimination" as a result of their gender, ethnicity and faith. Furthermore, such discrimination was particularly acute for those who appeared visibly as Muslims, as a result of wearing headscarves or veils. The focus of this section is, therefore, to explore experiences of discrimination, ranging from stereotyping to discrimination in employment and hate crimes.

Few interviewees made an explicit distinction between the idea of 'the Muslim woman' and the reality of 'Muslim women'. Respondents adopted non-oppositional rather than oppositional subject positions (Brah 1996). Although there was an awareness of the insidious effects of stereotypes, there was little self-awareness regarding their potential complicity in this process; thus they reinforced rather than contested the social meanings (ibid) embodied in discourses of the Muslim woman. By contrast, Adeeba notably distinguished between "women who are Muslim" and "Muslim women". Equally, Humera explicitly discussed the discrepancy between the image of Muslim woman and the reality of the Muslim women she knew. She described how:

> *when you're in the family, you don't see what people talk about, because it's normal for you, you see strong women, and you see stupid men (laughs) you see a whole range of different types of people (Humera)*

But she explained how, as she had got older, "news affects you more; you suddenly "see *this* is what they're saying". She described how in the early 1980s when

"niqab-ed women were first coming from the Middle East", she found it difficult to reconcile but realised,

> *..the way that people are projected and even women that I knew who dressed like that, I know that they're not what the image says. Behind is something else… (Humera)*

Being defined by one's faith also impacts upon women who, themselves, have not experienced any of the cultural or religious barriers which Muslim women are assumed to have faced. I asked Almeena, the Cardiff role model, whether she had experienced any discrimination. Given we were at the Muslim girls role model road show, implicit in my question was whether being Muslim had affected her career. She told me,

> *even at the BBC, the fact that you're a brown face you're suddenly put forward for big things you know I've been nothing but, you're able to apply for diversity things that nobody else can apply for and you kind of think, My God, you know but you just take whatever opportunities you can but they're so keen on, you know, rebalancing everything and being seen not to be 'hideously white' as Greg Dyke called it (Almeena)*

Almeena's response illustrates the slippages between ideas of 'race' and religion which are deeply entangled in discussions on anti-Muslim racism. From referring to her "brown face" it is clear that *she* at least is speaking of her 'race', rather than her religion, when talking about not having experienced discrimination. Despite such positive experiences, she also described how she had been bestowed with the burden of representation (Mercer 1994) of being Muslim through no conscious desire or efforts of her own. After saying that she "had nothing but er…positive experiences," in the BBC, i.e. she did not feel she had been discriminated against, she also described how there,

was a point when I just sort of thought every time there's a Muslim story or some kind of Asian story, or honour killing story, everyone would turn to me as if I was some kind of expert and I'm like, "What?"…So, you know, you kind of get over that, you kind of understand that and then you explain actually I don't know much about that or you know (Almeena)

This tendency for her ethnic and religious background to shape what she was given to do as a journalist echoes the phenomena, described in Chapter 5, in which the spaces in which Muslim women can speak (or can be heard) is often narrowly defined and delimited externally. Her general feeling that she had not been discriminated against sits in stark contrast to her own conviction that she was a suitable Muslim role model. This was despite not having experienced any of the barriers which allegedly hold back Muslim girls on which the entire role models road show was premised (see Chapter 6). This shows a willingness to conform to a positive stereotype of the model minority (i.e. to be a role model)[136] whereas when the associations are negative (i.e. with forced marriage and honour related violence), no such incentive exists. Despite this and even though she did not wear the veil, she was very aware that appearing visibly Muslim was a disadvantage.

The young hijabi girls at the role model road shows were concerned at how their veil wearing would impact on their future prospects. On one occasion, at the Q & A session of the Cardiff road show, one of the school girls asked Almeena, whether she thought there would ever be a newsreader on the BBC who wore the headscarf. Almeena explained to me,

Yeah, that's a really interesting question. I can't see it happening on mainstream news I mean there was, you know a huge debacle when Fiona Bruce wore her cross, it was recently, and people complained, saying that our news readers should be completely without…you know, so it's…Can you

[136] Peterson (1966) cited in Suzuki (2002)

imagine someone with a hijab?... And also, you're on TV, it's about presentation, it's about people being able to see you, you know, I'm not justifying it but I can see… I don't know if ever on mainstream telly there'll be a lady. I hope so. How fantastic would that be? But whether it'll happen I don't know…I hope so, but do I think it will happen? I don't think so…

It is interesting that she places reactions to a cross, a symbol of the main religion of the UK, as equivalent to responses to a headscarf which is symbolic of a minoritised (Gunaratnam 2003:17)[137] religion which is perceived to be uniquely problematic. She described how she was "stumped" by the question, but tried to be positive and realistic at the same time, again showing the gulf between her and the targets of some of the initiatives.

Humera also told me how "Muslim women, of course will be affected by the generic Islamophobia suffered by the Muslim community as a whole", but added that they were especially vulnerable because "they will get affected by the perceptions of the general public on them because they are the most visible if they are dressed in a particular way." She told me that she observed everyday encounters in supermarkets suggesting that checkout assistants "will be less helpful to these kind of [hijab wearing] women" She added that:

I've seen drivers when they see a group of Muslims wearing jilbabs *I see drivers, er …not slow down, but go faster…so Muslim women are really, really vulnerable if they are visibly Muslim or perceived to be Muslim, right? Because even non-Muslims who look like Muslims, you could even get Jewish women who sometimes wear scarves and do whatever. Errr they are*

[137] I use Gunaratnam's term here to refer to the *process* of becoming a minority

targets not because of who they are but because they they're perceived to be Muslims. [138] *(Humera)*

The Bristol police officers I spoke to told me that Muslim women experienced harassment and hate crime because of their dress.[139] They described how their involvement with the women in Bristol's Muslim communities was partly driven in response to hostility directed at Muslims in Bristol after the 7/7 bombings. They realised there was quite a lot of hate crime being reported. Whilst the police were quite good at responding in terms of engaging with the mosques, they thought that women were being "side-lined" in terms of underreporting hate crime particularly those wearing headscarves. As a result the police told me they had felt that "there was a need for someone to specifically engage with women in the community".

Throughout my field work I noticed a palpable sense of 'veil-fatigue' permeating many of the discussions. This could be seen, for example, in Adeeba's weary response to my question about what empowerment meant specifically in relation to Muslim women or girls. At that point I had not even mentioned the issue of clothing but the first thing she said to me in response was:

I'm going to say something here [pause] I think the groups need to stop making a view about niqabs, scarves and covering and all that stuff... I think it needs to be closed and I think the Muslim women have to talk about things that are of wider importance….I'm not saying the hijab isn't important, I'm not saying that the niqab isn't important, but it's about, how do you develop yourself and how do you create a scenario for that particular group which is seen to be broad, it's not stereotyped as being a group that's just linked to the hijab. It certainly is at the moment…(Adeeba)

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[138] This has clear parallels with attacks in US on turban wearing Sikhs in aftermath of 9/11 and more recently in the gurdwara shootings in Wisconsin
http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/05/wisconsin-sikh-temple-domestic-terrorism

[139] Tell mama stats from guardian article sara khan 11/3/13

Adeeba's heartfelt exhortation is commendable in its attempt to move beyond the veil as a defining trope through which Muslim women are viewed and a very likely source of discrimination. The association between Muslim women and the veil continues to be perpetuated by politicians, as shown by the Jack Straw episode, and more broadly in the media, irrespective of how many Muslim women and others in the policy sphere may want to move beyond that. The veil is imbued with symbolic power and acts as a very visible marker of difference and, as I have argued, is regarded as a symbol of gender oppression and self-segregation.

When I asked Adeeba what was specifically Muslim about the issues faced by the women she worked with in Bradford, she seemed quite perplexed. After a long pause I rephrased the question asking whether we needed the label 'Muslim' if the things that really mattered were education, employment and poverty; what was the value in talking about a Muslim community? After a further extended pause, she replied quite pensively:

> *… It didn't happen when I was a child, it didn't happen in my teens, it didn't even happen in my twenties and I'm talking about this is a person here who was brought up in a very… traditional Muslim Pakistani family but also er was very linked to the white community through their education, through work. But unfortunately I don't think it set out, it set itself out to be labelled as this Muslim community. (Adeeba)*

Yasmin felt that these stereotypes were "disempowering". She told me that when she spoke to "older people, [her] mum's generation but also… middle aged women with adult children" they felt that:

> *one, that they're excluded from the dialogue and two, all they ever get is criticism, this is Muslim people, that they are criticised on every level, if*

they're not terrorists, then they're slaughtering animals in an unacceptable way or they're murdering their children… (Yasmin)

She explained that the consequences of this were that the people she was talking about felt there was "no space for them to be actors or take action in a positive way". Nor were they able to explore "finding a new path" that allowed them "to embrace a British identity and a religious identity"; in fact the climate of fear and hostility reinforced the idea of the incompatibility of the two.

Moreover the presumption of religiosity potentially excludes as many as it includes. Islamic identities may be the only opportunity some individuals have for gaining greater freedom, but equally, it may simultaneously limit opportunities for others (Dwyer 2000). For example, it over determines which women are recruited to particular initiatives or nominate themselves to become involved. I asked Sarah from the Bristol police force how the women that she worked with were recruited to the community events organised by the police. She told me that the women all volunteered to be involved, but that very often they were invited at public meetings "advertised…through the All Mosques Together initiative which is a group of mosques and the representatives that meet".[140] As Yasmin pointed out, however, when community engagement is principally through the mosque, many other people who might describe themselves as Muslims could be excluded. She told me, "a lot of Muslims do not go to the mosque [and] there's…just no acknowledgment that there's anything outside of it." In addition, the idea of a 'pure religion' contaminated by 'culture' may lead to a hierarchy of Muslimness between different ethnic groups, intersected by 'race' and global positioning. Kalsoom implied that South Asian Muslims started wearing the hijab because that was more akin to the Middle East/Arab version of Islam and therefore 'purer'. Yasmin and I had also discussed the concept of "cultural Muslims" who have grown

[140] This might also ensure ethnic diversity since, as Kalsoom told me, the mosques are frequently organised around ethnic differences.

up as Muslims but are not (fully) practising (Ruthven 1997: 3). Yasmin had told me that she knew,

> *… an awful lot of people who fit within that …you say that you're of Muslim heritage and from a Muslim background you're almost afraid to say that you practise it because maybe you're not practising on a daily basis but erm you haven't got those links through the mosque and through faith leaders and to the wider community (Yasmin)*

Yasmin's use of the term 'cultural Muslim' was in the context of not being seen as Muslim *enough* and, therefore, not representative of 'the Muslim community', and reflects how the wider trend of privileging religion means certain Muslim women become invisible.

From the above it is clear that one unifying characteristic of Muslim women's experience is, at best, being stereotyped or, at worst, being discriminated against or becoming victims of hate crime. What then might empowerment mean? Adeeba explained:

> *Can I just say in terms of the empowering of the Muslim women I think it's really important… that the agencies, institutions and employers.... change their perceptions…because you know we want them to be also thinking about how they see this particular community; that if a Muslim woman does apply for a job, you know the stereotype that I have of her has gone out of the window and they look at that CV on the basis that it's a good CV (Adeeba)*

7.3.2. A siege mentality?

Writing in Bradford in the aftermath of the Rushdie affair, Haleh Afshar observed that "At times of hardship, particularly when the Muslim community has perceived itself a beleaguered minority, women have had to submit to much greater degrees of restrictions than at times of success and prosperity" (1994:130). Yasmin's account suggests parallel developments in the post 7/7 era. She told me that a siege mentality has emerged in some of the more marginalised communities she has been dealing with over the years. She described how in the 80s, when she was working on what she described as "very taboo issues" within 'the Muslim family', "you had to tread carefully because it was so new" because "the community weren't at the stage where they were ready to talk about things". Over time, however, by the late 90s she felt things had changed, she talked about focus group discussions she'd been involved in, talking to men across different generations and described that they had been very open about their relationships with mothers, daughters and wives and that although there were some people who were "a bit circumspect" on the whole "it was really open and…free flowing". She suggested, however, that "post 9/11 but certainly post 7/7 in the work that I've done…there's been a reluctance to come forward" particularly amongst women who may be experiencing domestic violence,

> *because Muslim people do not want to engage with the police and not because they've got anything to hide but there's this fear of… if we go and talk to them about something that has been happening at home will they start asking me questions about how many times he goes to the mosque, and does he have a beard and all sorts of things? … not being believed, not being taken seriously but what ..just a few of what the repercussions might be you know, that it's pretty frightening (Yasmin)*

This is not necessarily inconsistent with comments from the police, mentioned earlier, about an increasing willingness to report hate crime. What it could suggest,

however, is that, whilst police engagement might encourage reporting certain crimes, such as hate crime, a community which perceives itself to be under siege may not be so keen to report domestic crimes for the perennial fear of 'washing its dirty linen in public'. This can be seen in relation to forced marriage.

During the New Labour era, forced marriage became a cause celebre, becoming the rallying cry of imperial feminists such as Anne Cryer MP. The high profile given to forced marriage in the New Labour era was unsurprisingly welcomed by many BME women's organisations. Yasmin had been a senior advisor to the Metropolitan Police on Forced Marriage. She agreed that the issue had come to greater prominence when the Labour government came to power, even though, as she explained, "…work was going on and the work was being done quietly and the work was being done by communities." Accordingly, previously "…the communities were seen as, particularly the women's sector as…the ones with a solution to the problem." Despite, government involvement and funding being welcome, it is also clear, however, that the *way* in which this involvement was implemented meant that such "top down" interventions were not wholly unproblematic.

Not only do such top down interventions perpetuate the idea that Muslim women are victims purely of cultural relativism (Yasmin spoke of "the sensationalisation of it all, the 'Other'-ing"), they also ignore the more nuanced and multi-directional ways in which some BME organisations had been engaging with these issues. When I had asked Pragna how SBS avoided colluding in racist stereotypes about pathological Asian families, she was very clear that SBS was also committed to fighting racism; their approach took into account the intersectional aspects of BME women's lives. By contrast in relation to forced marriage, Yasmin was critical of the fact that the way it was portrayed changed once the issue got on the broader political agenda. She explained that previously such work "was couched within, the violence against women agenda…clearly set in that context but also racism which nobody wants to talk about now." She told me it was seen as part of a continuum of violence (Kelly 1987). She added, "No one wants to talk about racism or

Islamophobia". As Meetoo and Mirza suggest, "young ethnicised women have become highly visible…problematically contained and constructed in the public consciousness within a discourse of fear and risk posed by the presence of the Muslim alien 'other'" (2007:6).

Moreover, this external involvement, if not done sensitively, has potentially been counterproductive. Not only have such interventions been closely associated with immigration control (Anitha 2008), this experience and response of communities already 'under siege' is to make feminism 'other', to make it 'western' rather than look for continuities and solidarity. For example, Dustin and Phillips (2008) have criticised the symbolic use of legislation in lieu of costlier interventions, such as educational initiatives or support work, whilst at the same time lending them to cultural stereotyping. Yasmin suggested this may have affected how people sought help, to the extent that it may have even "driven the issue underground". This was in part due to the association of some of the forced marriage groups with Prevent. She said she knew of people "in pretty damned awful situations" who "will maybe go to a woman's group, or will go through a religious group, but they're damned if they'll go to the police".

When I had spoken to Humera at An-Nisa about the issue she told me that part of this reluctance to involve the police was that "there is a difference between really the sort of criminal activity of forced marriages and between parents who are in fear of their girls, in particular… going off track". She told me that "what we always argue is: a crime is a crime and therefore it needs to be dealt with". On the other hand, she suggested, "with those families who are actually afraid, you have to tackle them differently". She was adamant that "what they do is categorically wrong", but thought that "the root of what they are doing is fear" which needs to be dealt with. They need to be asked "why are you afraid that she's making a different choice?"

7.4 Whither Solidarity?

> *Separate electorates, along with reservations and weightages, gave birth to a sense of Muslims being a religio-political entity in the colonial image - of being unified, cohesive and segregated from the Hindus. They were homogenised like 'castes' and 'tribes' and suitably accommodated with political schemes and bureaucratic designs. Self-styled leaders were emboldened to represent an 'objectively' defined community and contend with others for patronage...in this way separate electorates created space for reinforcing religious identities, a process which was, both in concept and articulation, profoundly divisive.* (Hasan 1997)

The quote refers to the experience in British India and the lessons here are salutary. In the previous section I mentioned how the tendency to privilege religiosity works to make certain Muslim women more or less visible depending on whether they are seen to count as Muslim. Equally, this trend of privileging religion over 'culture' has had adverse effects on relationships within South Asian communities by working to reduce historically 'cultural' commonalities and obscure potential solidarities[141]. The legacy of a shared South Asian religiously syncretic culture is elided by emphasis on strictly demarcated religious affiliation, particularly where acknowledging this shared history might position South Asian Muslims as inferior to Muslims from the Middle East[142]. In this section I want to examine the consequences of privileging religion on solidarity.

Popular, political and academic discourse associates the splintering between different South Asian communities and the ascendancy of religion as the determining signifier to the Rushdie affair (Malik 2009). During our discussion about the politicisation of religious demands in the context of the post-Rushdie

[141] Not that these syncretic 'traditions' were not without their critics. In India arguably the British operated policies of divide and rule which were accompanied by various religious revivalist (Deobandi and Brahmanical, BJP/RSS) trends as part of the nationalist movements.

[142] In the Bangladesh civil war of 1971 one alleged issues was that West Pakistanis felt superior to the Bengalis in East Pakistan because they were Aryan, descendants of Mughals whereas Bengalis were seen as Hindu peasant converts (van Schendel 2009)

policy landscape, Pragna acknowledged that religion had featured in earlier anti-racist struggles. She distinguished such instances, however, as "cultural religious" (e.g. the demand for halal meat in schools) as opposed to "pure religious values' terms" (e.g. blasphemy laws).[143] Pragna's narrative referenced a halcyon era of black feminists' unity against racism and patriarchy reflected in a diverse range of Black Sister groups across the country. Then the Rushdie affair happened which was accompanied by:

> *... a serious agenda which was that you know "as Muslims we want to be recognised, we want our religion to be privileged in the same way that Christianity is privileged"… and that manifested in demands for example to extend the blasphemy law … more religious schools was the other big demand and of course we've seen that that's kind of now just gathered momentum to the point that we are at, at the moment so the politicisation of religion was not there before…(Pragna)*

Pragna's understanding would fit Macey's position that such moves constituted a *demand for special treatment* on the basis of religion (2010:39). There was clearly a demand amongst some Muslims for a greater politicisation of religion. Indeed, both Humera and Khalida told me that they had been lobbying for legislation against religious discrimination from the late 1980s onward. They also told me that this had stemmed from their perception that the apparent successes of the anti-racist movement in the 1980s concealed the under-representation of Muslims in civic society from scrutiny (in Brent). As such their demands did not necessarily constitute 'special attention', rather they were an attempt to secure equality. That there were calls to widen the scope of the blasphemy law to incorporate Islam is undeniable. This is, however, only a partial view. What also needs to be considered is that asking for Islam to be recognised by existing blasphemy legislation was not necessarily asking for 'special treatment'. It can only be regarded as such if one

[143] This possibly says more about what secular people are prepared to accommodate. It may also be seen as the difference between cultural needs vs cultural wants as distinguished by Jayasuriya (cited in Yuval –Davis 2011)

accepts that only believers in the Church of England are eligible for protection from religious offence. Furthermore, such a request did not preclude other religious groups from demanding the same.[144] Equally, the demand for separate schools also needs to be considered in this context. As Haw (1994) has argued the demand for separate Muslim schools was by no means unanimous and often reflected shortcomings in mainstream schools' responses to religious and cultural demands. This has obvious parallels with the supplementary school movement amongst black parents, as well as precedents in the form of Roman Catholic and Jewish schools.

Not only do we need to consider the presence of such demands, we also need to look at whether these requests for 'special treatment' were met by those in power and if so, to consider the motivations for this. These developments therefore need to be considered in the context of the wider post-Cold war political landscape. The Rushdie affair did not escalate purely because of book burnings in Bradford, it occurred because of the wider geopolitical environment in which the controversy erupted. By contrast, the 2004 furore over the play *Behzti* which depicted a rape that took place in a gurdwara, did not escalate in the same way in the absence of wider global or supra national links, despite public disorder and death threats to the author emanating from the UK.[145] At a micro level the growth in Muslim schools was facilitated by the Education Reform Act (1988) which encouraged schools to opt out of local authority control as well as the emerging faith agenda.

It is, therefore, undeniable that there have been profound effects on opportunities for solidarity with other marginalised groups. The historic syncretism of South Asian religions and more recently, experiences of British Asian-ness have in the past formed the foundations of a shared solidarity (Ali et al 2008). Whilst research participants were ostensibly supportive of the idea that Muslim women needed empowering as Muslim women, some were aware of the potential for antagonisms

[144] For example, Sikhs who, despite being a religious group, were considered as an ethnic/racial group for the purposes of the Race Relations Act [Mandal vs Dowell Lee] but were not similarly accused of having sought special treatment.

[145] http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/dec/20/arts.religion

with BME women which might be associated with this. Pragna told me about some protests SBS had been involved in against the EDL in Harrow. As well as telling me she had been disappointed that there had not been more visible support from Muslims, given it was at a mosque, she told me that,

> *…. whereas in the past you would have seen Asians coming out and saying well this is an attack on Asians, you know, it's a mosque, but it's an attack on Asians, here it's kind of 'well it's Muslims, they deserve it, they're the trouble makers, they're the terrorists and we Hindus - aren't we wonderful, we're law abiding Hindus and it's precisely why the BNP think they can get away with this focus on Muslims because they've*[146] *split that kind of solidarity potential (Pragna)*

Equally, Yasmin told me how over the course of her lifetime the situation had gone from one in which "there was this sense of commonality, solidarity, of you know, we're Asians together" but that now it is:

> *'we're not Muslims, we're Sikhs', 'we're not Muslims, we're Hindus, we don't do things like that' and… I think it's a shame that people don't feel that they can stand together and have to distance themselves…it's like "we [the Sikhs] have these problems but we're not as bad as they [the Muslims] are…" and it's scapegoating almost which ….. I think is really sad…now creating more boxes to pigeonhole people in, narrowing down the agendas to the point where you lose the focus and you lose the continuity…(Yasmin)*

But this regret was accompanied by pragmatism (see Chapter 4). After saying that it was not wrong to get funding as Muslim women, Shaista admitted that it should not have been "at the cost of BME women". She said she could see "why they are upset" but that ultimately it was "the government's fault". She concluded;

[146] Unfortunately it was not clear from the transcript whether "they" referred to the government or to Muslims themselves or both.

…I mean if someone's saying, "We're going to empower you", you're not going to say "ok, don't empower me because BME women are gonna be upset" you're gonna grab that opportunity right? So I think... they've created a lot of animosity between the groups and that's wrong…(Shaista)

Shaista's justification for 'special treatment' for Muslim women, therefore, is tempered by the recognition that other BME women need empowering too, but that the realpolitik of Prevent funding for Muslim women means that political ideals and potential solidarities can be easily compromised or squandered altogether. She does not, however, take into account that her initial agreement to be involved in NMWAG could be seen as colluding in this historic tactic of 'divide and rule'. A more timely alternative strategy of resistance might have consisted of presenting a united front which resulted in no Muslim women's organisation taking funding unless its association with the PVE agenda was retracted or unless other marginalised women were involved.[147] By contrast, the An-Nisa society had originally been involved in the pathfinders projects (forerunners to EMW) but then chose to withdraw from the scheme out of principle, as they set out in their evidence to the Prevent Enquiry.

Equally, there needs to be awareness amongst secular feminists of the fact that Muslim women do experience racism *as* Muslims. Although Pragna was clear that anti-Muslim racism existed as a separate strand within racism generally, she also suggested that it was often just directed at any one "who's Asian-looking" and that it was "not just Muslims". She told me that sometimes she thought "it gets relabelled as anti-Muslim racism when actually it's just pure and simple racism". The example she used to illustrate this point, however, did not support this,

[147] Rather than saying so after a high profile resignation once NMWAG was set to be dismantled.

and a lot of the women like this woman she also talked about how she went into one shop and the security guards surrounded her and she had a rucksack and they must have mistaken her and so clearly it's not even about whether you are Muslim or not you are just going to face racism…

This has obvious parallels with the 'Don't freak I'm a Sikh' response of Sikhs in the US who were targeted in the post 9/11 climate because they appeared to be Muslim (Sian 2010; Puar and Rai 2002).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have built on the idea of dis/empowerment which was analysed in the previous chapter. I developed the themes of 'cultural' and 'community' barriers, discussing how 'culture' and religion are positioned as a collective source of oppression for Muslim women which needs to be tamed and modernised. Whilst potentially more hopeful since it takes into account more than just individualised disadvantages, it is problematic because it privileges religion to the exclusion of any other factors. Furthermore, it is not always clear at whose behest this privileging occurs.

The theological interpretation work stream of the EMW initiatives encapsulates this idea of collective (dis)empowerment. It potentially disrupts the idea of a homogenous Islam practised equally and unquestioningly by adherents across the board. Such efforts disrupt the notion that Islam is absolutely patriarchal since they acknowledge that alternative interpretations exist, in particular those promoted by Islamic feminists. Respondents partially accepted that the need for empowerment was almost exclusively the result of religious identity, although they emphasised the importance of cultural differences. But these differences are privileged at the expense of other cleavages of difference.

Given that religion *is* used to justify patriarchal and separatist behaviour, considered alone, this work stream is difficult to dismiss entirely. The flaw with this argument, however, is that although religion can be used to justify patriarchal

violence by its perpetrators (and this is well documented in WAF 1992), patriarchal violence still occurs in its absence and can be justified by alternative means. For example, there are legal precedents regarding more lenient sentences for men convicted of killing their female partners for socially unacceptable behaviour, so called "nagging and shagging" defences (Siddiqui 2005). Furthermore, even though laws exist against violence against women, they do not guarantee that either problematic views or actions disappear in wider society. There are ongoing contemporary debates within mainstream society about 'rape culture' and the effects of increasing sexualisation in the media.[148]

It is not clear what the theological interpretation initiative has achieved. On one level the government's reticence to 'implement' it is understandable since it is true that it would be very difficult to implement such a project in terms of logistics and it would have been criticised for being heavy-handed. Irrespective of the desirability of doing so, there were no channels for disseminating the outputs of this project more widely, since there is no equivalent institutional structure akin to Vatican or Synod through which such a process might take place. Moreover differences in priorities between those involved in the project from a 'top down' level and those involved at the grassroots illustrate the difficulties with the project. The question, therefore, becomes: what work does this initiative do if it cannot achieve its purported aims?

The tendency to privilege religiosity reflects the tautology at the heart of a project focused on Muslim women *as* Muslim women. It supports the view that Muslim women only care about whether they can wear the veil and getting access to mosques. Clearly such campaigns have been instigated by Muslim women themselves in particular localities and under particular circumstances, but the involvement of the state not only undermines these 'grass roots' projects, as

[148] This can be seen in on line campaigns against Facebook for not censoring sexist pages founded on 'rape' humour. It can also be seen in the debates around Julian Assange's extradition from Sweden on rape charges and the kinds of comments this has led to. For example, comments about 'real rape' by George Galloway.

Katherine Brown (2011) has argued, it also ignores the question of whether all Muslim women even want access to mosques. State involvement, rather than merely accommodating religious difference, makes political capital out of those differences as well as potentially reinforcing the structuring effects of religion in Muslim women's lives.

Chapter 8: The Muslim Woman: Victims of Oppression or Agents of Change?

> *The idealising of the victim is useful for a time; if virtue is the greatest of goods, and if subjection makes people virtuous, it is kind to refuse them power, since it would destroy their virtue. If it is difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, it is a noble act on his part to keep his wealth and so imperil his eternal bliss for the benefit of his poor brethren. It was a fine self-sacrifice on the part of men to relieve women of the dirty work of politics.*
>
> *Bertrand Russell (1950 : 73)*

Introduction

A survey article in the Guardian on 22 April 2011 entitled “Woman have emerged as key players in the Arab Spring” offers a lament on the failure of the Arab Spring to deliver on its potential in terms of women’s progress. The article conforms to the tendency to homogenise all Arab women’s experiences and builds on the fixation with the uniquely patriarchal nature of Islam and Arab countries. It conflates the divergent experiences of women across countries as (internally) diverse as Libya, Yemen and Tunisia. The author suggests that “Arab women are barely one small step forwards on the road to greater equality with their menfolk”, a statement which reveals more about the journalists’ own preconceptions than the complex realities of different women’s experiences in each of the countries involved. They write, "it was clear that old images of Arab women as deferential, subservient and generally indoors would have to be revised”. Yet, the same article makes various references to female university graduates and women from highly

educated elites, suggesting that some women at least had not done too badly under the old totalitarian regimes. In terms of women's role in the 'Arab Spring', the article is littered with references to their relationships with "their menfolk" as "mothers, sisters and widows", inferring that this represents their motivation for involvement in the movement which is, the article implies, principally with reference to food deliveries and the provision of blankets.

The discursive framework established in this article replicates many of the themes raised in this thesis in relation to the production of 'the Muslim woman' in the UK. I have argued that the experiences of Muslim women are homogenised and also seen solely in relation to patriarchal relations with 'their menfolk', rather than the multiplicity of their social positionings in terms of class, region and citizenship status. Equally their political involvement is seen as part of 'modernising' discourse even if, paradoxically, it is framed within narrow perceptions regarding the role of women as maternal and nurturing. In contrast to the EMW initiatives, however, women's mobilisations in the context of the Arab Spring are spontaneous, emerging from the grass roots rather than imposed from above.

This chapter is divided into three sections: the first addresses the key findings of the research and examines these in the context of the theoretical underpinnings of the research strategy; the second situates these findings within wider debates regarding multifaithism and the consequences for solidarity with other BME and marginalised groups; and the third section offers some thoughts on the limitations of the study and suggests avenues for possible further research.

8.1 Revisiting the Research Strategy

This thesis has examined the rationale and practice of the EMW initiatives which formed part of New Labour's Prevent strategy from 2008 when they were launched until 2010 when NMWAG was disbanded. My objective in undertaking this project was to provide a historically located intersectional analysis of initiatives to

'empower Muslim women' as part of the UK government's Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda. Social policy contributes to constructing the social problem which is in fact the target of its intervention (Ladner 1987; Harding 1987). While the initiatives were undoubtedly on a small scale (less than £70m), they offered the opportunity to consider a variety of different sociological issues and political concerns. Informed principally by black and post-colonial feminists such as Mohanty (1988) and Narayan (1997) who interrogate the discourses around the "third world woman", this research has analysed the way in which the EMW initiatives fit into this framework; specifically, how the Muslim woman is produced in policy and public discourses.[149]

In examining the relationship between Muslim women's 'empowerment' and preventing violent extremism I approached the subject from a number of perspectives. To begin with, I situated the initiatives within a broader policy context in relation to, at the national level, multiculturalism and debates on Britishness and community cohesion, and at the global level, the 'War on Terror'. Secondly, the logic of these initiatives is premised on the basis that Muslim women need empowering, thus presupposing their disempowerment. I analysed how 'empowerment' in the context of these initiatives was characterised and by extension, therefore, 'disempowerment'. Thirdly, I examined how the EMW initiatives worked in practice.

A key theme in my research has been the way in which Muslim women are seen solely in relation to their religious affiliation. This is based on orientalist stereotypes of the uniquely misogynist Muslim man, inflected with contemporary representations of problematic Islamic masculinity in the post 9/11 world. The primacy given to this cleavage of difference reinforces the idea of a narrowly bounded internally homogeneous Muslim community to the exclusion of other axes of inequality arising from region, class and citizenship status. It did not set out

[149] In contrast, however, I am addressing this by looking at women 'over here' rather than 'over there'.

either to prove or disprove the common sense assumptions underlying the EMW initiatives. Rather its objective was to unsettle them and move beyond the simplistic binaries which dominate this field.

8.1.1 Unsettling policy paradigms

This research represents a critical intervention by offering an alternative stand point to much of the existing literature in this field. Rather than conform to the social deviancy paradigm within which much research on Muslims is located, it disrupts it by turning the focus of attention on the production of dominant discourses around Muslim women within the field of social policy. Equally the focus on policy rather than media draws attention to the relationship between the trope of the Muslim woman and the institutional structures within which the idea of the Muslim woman is produced and circulates. It therefore also unsettles the relationship between policy and research.

The thesis develops existing work (Allen and Guru 2012; Brown 2013) using original empirical data. This research has analysed the process of "discursive reiteration" (Narayan 2000: 82) in looking at the way in which these discourses are engaged with, co-opted, contested and resisted by those working within this policy arena. Such reiterations operate “to help construct the senses of gender identity and cultural identity that shape the self-understandings and subjectivities of different groups of people who inhabit these discursive contexts" (ibid). It has analysed the EMW initiatives from an intersectional perspective attending to the historical juncture at which the initiatives took place.

I have not claimed that ‘the Muslim woman’, as characterised in the EMW initiative came into being purely as a result of this initiative. The trope of the Muslim woman outlined in this thesis builds on previous and parallel constructions, both throughout history and contemporaneously across the globe. Since embarking on this research the political and policy landscape has changed. Many of the themes discussed remain salient, however, since these are not new dilemmas; they are expressed differently in different places and at different times. The trope does not

disappear with the demise of the initiative. As such the analysis of this research remains pertinent for informing the analysis of future iterations.

8.1.2 Revisiting the War on terror

> *Counterterrorism is a form of racial, civilizational knowledge, but now also an academic discipline that is quite explicitly tied to the exercise of state power (Puar and Rai 2002:122)*

Through examination of the wider social policy discourses within which EMW was situated I analysed how, at a particular historical moment, with all its concomitant geopolitical contingencies, the discursive frame exemplified in Huntingdon's thesis of the clash of civilisations permeated the policy language related to Prevent in the UK. This broader framing depoliticises the roots of Islamic terrorism and reinforces the idea that a belief in Islam of itself is sufficient to risk radicalisation. The discussion of the wider causes of terrorism was largely absent. It is more likely, however, to be a reflection of the way that this aspect has been elided in the debate overall. As Butler writes, albeit in regard to the US, it is impossible to consider the causes of terrorism as this would be tantamount to justifying it (2004). Instead the focus is on the process of radicalisation and women's role in countering this.

Furthermore, within the discourse of Prevent and the parallel/ensuing discussions about multiculturalism and community cohesion, the issue of women was seen as a principal fault line along which this civilizational clash was being played out; it was the *true* clash of civilisations. I described how Muslim women were seen only in relation to patriarchal relations within their communities. They were seen as victims of cultural relativism and symbolic of the self-segregation of which 'the Muslim community' stands accused. Any links between Muslim women's empowerment and preventing terrorism is about making women more equipped to uncover and report potential terrorist or radical behaviour from within their families - whether that be as mothers, wives or sisters. The idea of rescue which imbues discussions of the status of Muslim women makes 'the Muslim woman'

automatically a victim. Equally, it necessarily fosters the demonization of Muslim men, since it is principally from them that they need to be rescued.

In the context of the UK, the 'oppression of women' and 'violent extremism' are metonymies. The discourse which positions Muslim women as victims of oppression contributes to a broader anti-Muslim rhetoric which, combined with the emphasis on 'soft power' and 'shared values' and 'the battle for hearts and minds', has real effects in terms of allowing for the dramatic and asymmetric curtailment of civil liberties. As Kundnani writes, "never before has such a vast and rapidly expanding accumulation of state power confronted young Asians, Africans and African-Caribbeans, Muslim and non-Muslim, immigrant and British born" (2007: 167). It is worth quoting at length.

> *Under anti-terrorist powers, they face mass stop and search without reasonable grounds for suspicion, the virtual return of the 'sus' tactics…new powers of arrest that dramatically extend the time held in police custody prior to any charges being brought. They face threats of raids in the early hours, often on the flimsiest of suspicions of involvement in terrorism or 'immigration offences'. They face virtual house arrest without the right to defend themselves in a court. They face mass surveillance at places of worship, at train stations and at airports. They face the risk of armed police deploying shoot-to-kill tactics. They face prosecution for expressing unacceptable opinions, for protesting, for supporting foreign charities, for being members of political organisations deemed unacceptable to the government. Finally, they face the ultimate sanction of having their citizenship itself stripped away at the behest of the state. (Kundnani 2007: 167-8)*

The discussion of women in the broader policy framework, therefore, echoes the way in which the oppressed Muslim woman in the Afghan context was instrumentalised to justify the invasion of Afghanistan. Within the context of EMW specifically, however, women are simultaneously positioned as potential agents of

change. They, along with young people, constituted a silent majority who needed to be supported to be given a stronger voice to combat terrorism.

8.1.3 Muslim women as agents of change

…may Allah give you an opportunity to use your voice (Nazneen)

What emerges in the EMW discourse is that Muslim women are being engaged with solely as Muslim women, whereas clearly such women have multidimensional identities (on both subjective and structural levels). The proposed routes to empowerment envisaged in EMW were both individualised and collectivised. The two are deeply implicated in one another. At a simple level both involved blaming the victim. Firstly, conceptualising dis/empowerment as a 'lack of aspiration' is attributed to 'bad parenting', specifically mothering, and a failure to inculcate good neoliberal values. Secondly, religion is identified as a source of dis/empowerment.

Women's individual empowerment does not conform to feminist definitions of empowerment, other than the most faux liberal ones. Rather they are couched in maternalism and promulgating good neoliberal values to secure individualised aspiration; consumption is indirectly promoted, but the emphasis is more on 'modernising' recalcitrant Muslims to be good neoliberal citizens. The idea of empowering 'Muslim women' presents Muslim women's lives as removed from class, ethnicity, region, age, sexuality and race. I have illustrated how these other axes of identity do not emerge in the policy discussion and are subsumed within the presumption that Muslim women's disempowerment is rooted principally in religious affiliation or identity. By contrast, collective but 'secular' forms of oppression (or causes of marginalisation) which might arise from different class positions are redefined as individual challenges which need to be overcome. Important structural inequalities which are not based on religion and which impact on (some) Muslim women's lives are studiously ignored.

I have argued that the empowerment of Muslim women acts as both a proxy and a conduit for integrating what is assumed to be a homogeneous, yet inassimilable community. Rather than acknowledge the complex inter relationship between societal and community attitudes, the agency of individuals and quirks in circumstance that combine to produce particular outcomes, certain 'cultures' are instead deemed to be pathological or deficient, as suggested by Huntingdon. A clear expression of this is in the way that Muslim women, symbols of the dangerous consequences of 'too much multiculturalism', are positioned collectively as constrained by 'cultural barriers' which they must overcome.

Both ways of articulating empowerment rest (implicitly) on particular notions of subjectivity. The individualised discourse presumes the autonomous aspirational neoliberal subject, whereas the collectivised discourse evokes an image not of individuals but of people as members of a group, the 'other' of neoliberal subjectivities. This reflects different understandings of culture and how they produce different forms of subjectivities (Brown 2006). In this way Muslim women are seen as either neoliberal agents, which disregards structural constraints, or as members of a group in which they themselves *are* culture and therefore determined by culture. This articulation of empowerment is pathologising, homogenising, and by disregarding internal differentiation, could be seen as disempowering since it does not grant full subject status to particular individuals.[150]

Mainstream feminism acknowledges that women are as a group marginalised, particularly in the institutions of politics, Parliament, local government, local councils. Whilst there was potentially symbolic value in an organisation such as NMWAG its presence did not ultimately alter the wider structural political relations in society. EMW efforts to represent Muslim women need to be considered against a broader discussion regarding women's political participation and democracy more generally.

[150] With thanks to Christina Scharff for our discussion on this.

Irrespective of what the EMW initiatives themselves achieved, the profile of Muslim women has been raised during the course of the research. In the post New Labour period Muslim women have been elected to Parliament. Roushanara Ali was elected in Tower Hamlets. In addition, Baroness Warsi became the most senior Muslim in government (despite her eventual fall from grace). And, in March 2012, when Galloway took the seat at Bradford West overturning Labour's erstwhile majority of more than 5000 at the 2010 general election it was attributed to the support of Muslim women. The Guardian's headlines discussed 'how women won it for Galloway'. The story of Galloway in Bradford highlights the way in which Muslim women continue to be instrumentalised for others' benefit. Salma Yaqoob explained that he had managed to get women 'on side'[151] and that the defining factor was because the Respect Party was headed up by a woman. She claimed that "Having a woman as leader does send a strong message of equality and non-discrimination", adding that "there is a symbolism having a woman at the top, especially a Muslim woman, given the nonsense about the oppression of Muslim women". Whereas the EMW initiatives were premised on and perpetuate the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman, Yaqoob suggests that it was because the Respect Party confounded stereotypes of what Muslim women should be which worked in its favour[152].

What emerges, however, is that politics remains the business of men or if not men then some non-Muslim women. Being represented in politics, however, does not necessarily equate to having political power as the vicissitudes of Baroness Warsi's career testifies. Not long after Galloway's victory[153] in Bradford, however, Salma

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[151] http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/apr/04/how-women-won-it-for-galloway

[152] A Women's Involvement Strategy Head" was recruited and specific tactics employed to target Muslim women. The Head was assigned pairs of women as door knockers, calling during the day when 'man of house likely to be at work', targeting primary schools, managed to make women feel like they mattered.

[153] Despite this initial framing, however, Galloway himself continued to address men. He told them: "You need to remember that women are half your power. If you are not going to let your women get involved and stand by your side, you are taking away half your own strength". Clearly his focus is

Yaqoob resigned [154] following the controversy regarding George Galloway's apologist comments after Julian Assange's extradition following rape allegations in Sweden[155]. These instances exemplify the way that women are used in politics to achieve particular ends but are ultimately expendable. The terms of engagement continue to be set by white male classed agents who are quick to capitalise on having women or minorities to prove their egalitarian credentials. And the formation of NMWAG effectively socially engineered political participation; rather than addressing inequalities it continued to buttress them.

8.2 Multiculturalism to Multifaithism

As a whole, the EMW reflects the paradox described by Yuval-Davis in which there is both an assimilationist focus on Islam "in order to try and make our Muslims the 'good ones'…and on the other hand, you have faith as the only legitimised difference within the nation" (2009:134). The EMW initiatives discursively privilege religious affiliation. In doing so it could be argued that the initiatives reflect the transition from multiculturalism to multifaithism. This research, therefore, provides some important insights to the emerging debates on multifaithism which I raised in the introductory chapter.

The social policy framework, analysed in this thesis (and which has academic environment) shows an increasing emphasis on religion. These developments could be seen partially as a response to demands from Muslims themselves. They are, however, also the product of a particular historical juncture, not only in the context

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still men and his use of terms such as 'your women' are hardly in keeping with this alleged respect for women since he is reproducing existing 'traditional' gender divisions. Presciently the closing quote of the Guardian article stated that: "But even his most fervent supporters warn Galloway that he can't take their support for granted." "Women here have a got a taste for democracy now," warns Faizi. "They know now how it works. If they don't like what he does in Bradford West, they'll vote him out again."

[154] http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2012/sep/22/salma-yaqoob-respect-george-galloway?intcmp=239

[155] http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/the-northerner/2012/aug/27/george-galloway-rape-bradford?intcmp=239

of the post 9/11, post 7/7 landscape, but also in terms of neoliberal policies of 'rolling back of the state'. The faith agenda works to fill in the gaps left by neoliberalism with third sector resources (Patel 2008; Yuval-Davis 2011). Such an approach, however, effectively blames the victim (for being Muslim) and reduces the scope for solidarity with marginalised groups (whether BME or white). This needs to be analysed in relation to the wider economic and political environment. Since 2010, both national and global recessions have taken their toll. Austerity measures have been introduced and are starting to bite. The effects of such measures are not evenly experienced across different regions nor within those populations and these are predicted to get worse.

To an extent research participants' responses conform to Yuval-Davis's characterisation of faith being the only legitimised difference within the nation. Some respondents uncritically accepted the homogenisation of Islam as oppressive to women, whilst others readily took comfort in its potential for salvation. In both scenarios religious affiliation as a primary source of difference was legitimated. This could be seen in some respondents' wishes for specifically Muslim organisations vis a vis other religious groups, such as Sikhs, or because of the failures of multiculturalist policies. Within the category Muslim, respondents further differentiated between who counted as a Muslim. While there was little explicit mention of sectarian differences, respondents distinguished between themselves and others in terms of perceived religiosity (as did I in my interactions with research participants). Yasmin referred to the concept of a 'cultural' Muslim and the possibility of not being considered 'Muslim enough'. Given the wider discursive framing of good v bad Muslims (Mamdani 2005) there is the implicit possibility of being *too* Muslim, or having too much culture (as an obstacle to empowerment) as suggested by Hadiyeh in Chapter 6.

The research also showed, however, that respondents continued to identify complexities or cleavages of difference between Muslim women in terms of ethnicity, whether ethno national or ethno religious (discussed below).

Respondents differentiated between ethnic communities within 'the Muslim community' and explicit connections were made between the cultural differences arising from these ethnic and ethno-national differences which caused variations in religious practice, for example, in the way in which people dressed. Kalsoom told me how the arrival of Arab students in Bristol had affected the way Bangladeshi and Pakistani girls veiled. As the discussion in Chapter 7 about 'cultural practices' showed, some 'practices' were more strongly associated with particular groups. In addition, as Chapter 5 showed, there was an emphasis on ensuring the ethnic representativeness of NMWAG. Notably respondents did not themselves subscribe to the view that they were ethnically representative, with the exception of Hadiyeh. She negatively asserted her ability to represent everyone since, as a convert, she was *not* restricted to a particular ethno-religious community, implying, therefore, that others were. According to the respondents the problems of Islam were attributed to its 'cultural contamination'. A 'pure' Islam could only emerge, therefore, by transcending ethnicised differences to reveal a new Islamic feminist utopia.

The failure of mainstream services to meet the demands of Muslim women was a theme amongst respondents. This was often related specifically to faith based services as could be seen in comments from Humera and Khalida regarding their rationale for establishing An-Nisa. Their argument was that even in the heyday of multiculturalist polices, they were aware that not all BME groups in Brent were sharing these benefits equally. Such requests could represent an apparent shift to multifaithism on the basis of Omoniyi and Fishman's definition in that it constitutes "institutional recognition of multiple faiths by the state and the granting of equal rights and protection to devotees by law" (2010: 315). Multiculturalism was, however, never resolutely secular. Different ethnic minority groups' demands were not purely 'cultural'; they frequently had religious underpinnings e.g. dietary requirements, prayer rooms, uniforms being more religiously sensitive (turbans and headscarves) and paid leave from work for religious holidays. Much, if not all, of the liberal plural accommodation of minorities in the legal context prior to the

Rushdie affair has been around religious accommodation (halal/kosher slaughter of animals, religious wedding ceremonies, wearing of turbans). It was the law that characterised, that *named* these issues as being about race and ethnicity.[156][157] Although not all the shortcomings in mainstream services raised by my respondents had a religious character as I will explore later.

Similarly there seems to be some element of amnesia. Pragna's comments regarding Indian and Pakistani workers' associations being secular ignore that the very foundations of the difference between Pakistan and India was a religious divide. Pragna told me she thought memories of communal violence in South Asians' countries of origin meant that in the post-war era people preferred not to privilege their religious identity. Equally, however, it could be argued that memories of Partition and communal violence have remained salient issues. Sian (2013), for example, explores how historical discourses of forced conversions amongst British Sikhs continue to circulate in the contemporary UK.

Accommodating faith is, therefore, nothing new even though *how* it has been accommodated institutionally might have altered. It is nonetheless true that issues are now couched more explicitly in terms of religious identity. There is more overt political mobilisation and organisation around religion and this process has been facilitated by government. We need to think carefully, however, about the origins of that discourse and I would argue that part of this mobilisation is also directly attributable to social policy measures and discourses influenced by broader geopolitical issues and concerns. Since 1997, when New Labour came to power, the

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[156] See Mandla v Dowell Lee [1983]This case defined the terms 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group' in UK law, with the latter referring to those with 'a long shared history and a distinct culture'. Other 'relevant' characteristics were 'a common geographic origin or descent from a small number of common ancestors; a common language; a common literature; a common *religion* and being a minority within a larger community'

[157] Growing up in London during the 70s and 80s I participated in the GLC's multicultural accommodations for example. Concessions to religious dietary requirements meant that at primary school I wore a small sign around my neck (during my lunch hour) which said "No Pork" while my friend from a Hindu background wore one saying "No Beef"!

government has engaged more publicly with faith groups and communitarian ideals. Within this, religious communities have been identified as a particular source of social capital, especially in deprived areas where other forms of social infrastructure may be absent.

Even if religious based demands are regarded as a continuation of multicultural demands, one of the clearest developments accompanying a greater emphasis on faith is the rise of anti-Muslim rhetoric and racism, which I explored in Chapter 7. As many of the research participants recognised, the issue of discrimination against Muslim women *as* Muslim women was a pertinent one, particularly for those who wore veils[158]. In the context of this I revisit and reframe Okin's question.

8.2.1 Is Multifaithism bad for women?

To address this question we need to distinguish between the theory and practice of multifaithism. The theory of it refers to incorporating religion into the existing multicultural paradigm, offering equality and recognition to religion not just freedom and tolerance (Modood 2010). In principle, as I have suggested, to some extent this is a continuation of what multiculturalism involved. The practice of it can be criticised, however, since it results in formalising gender discrimination and cultural relativism (Patel and Bard 2010). Yasmin recognised that there was a contradiction between the way in which the EMW policy initiatives ran alongside a faith agenda, highlighting the contradiction, given that some interpretations of (all) religions are not necessarily favourable to women.

Given the potential for women (across various religious faiths) to be adversely affected by the entrenchment of religion (Patel 2008; Jeffreys 2011), the immediate logical response is to advocate a retrenchment. The dilemma emerges, however, from the fact that religion is clearly important to some women. As I discussed in Chapter 7, respondents recognised the value of Islamic feminism and

[158] In May 2012 an organisation was launched to record instances of anti-Muslim attacks; 58% of incidents are targeted at women. http://tellmamauk.org/

using alternative religious interpretations in their work against forced marriage, for example. Given that there are clearly women who are Muslim for whom religion is an integral part of their values or an important source of comfort, overtly secular spaces as advocated could be seen as exclusionary.

Pragna suggested that, in the context of New Labour's faith agenda, middle class women could "shift in and out of whatever identity they choose" but pointed out there were other women who were "boxed…[into]…that kind of rigid identification along faith lines". I do not disagree with this characterisation; indeed I observed examples of this amongst respondents. Where I disagree, however, is in positioning retrenchment away from multifaithism as a necessary and sufficient solution. Instead it would suggest that the solution to this dilemma lies in addressing the factors which facilitate the ability to "shift in and out of whatever identity they choose". These could be the result of a variety of factors such as racism and patriarchal relations in wider society. Equally, as Pragna herself notes, the issue of class too is of great importance and I discuss this below.

Conversely, there are those who conflate the marginalisation of some Muslims to all Muslims, without paying due attention to the diversity caused by other modalities of power. Extensive socio economic variations within the Muslim community play a part in some Muslim women's marginalisation in terms of poverty, access to health services, access to learning languages, or unemployment. Conflating the experience of all marginalised Muslims who may be marginalised for reasons other than their religious affiliation alone is therefore equally problematic if not understandable. As Nancy Fraser argues, today's struggles for recognition assume the guise of identity politics in response to "demeaning cultural representations of subordinated groups" (2000: 119). She argues, however, that such struggles for recognition "abstract misrecognition from its institutional matrix and sever its links with political economy" which "lead to enforce separatism, conformism and intolerance". She states that such "struggles for recognition

simultaneously displace struggles for economic justice and promote repressive forms of communitarianism" (ibid: 120).

This dichotomy of 'multifaithism is bad for women' on the one hand and 'all Muslims are equally marginalised solely because they are Muslim' on the other is reductive. Both approaches over determine the role of religion, privileging it to the exclusion of other salient factors. This research has demonstrated the importance of drawing greater attention to these other modalities of power.

8.3 Intersectional contestations[159]

The objective of this research was to deconstruct the idea of 'the Muslim woman'. More significantly, its objective was to draw attention to the axes and modalities of power which get ignored in the context of the dominant discursive framework in which religious affiliation is privileged. Crucially, differences arising from class or socio economic background (in access to cultural, economic and social capital) were not explicitly identified. It was, however, ever present. It differentiated between different role models. As well as ethnic differences in the composition of NMWAG, there were also class differences between members which reflected the grassroots/high profile expert split in the composition of the group. In Chapter 6 I showed how some of the shortcomings attributed to Muslim mothering were in fact attributable to wider societal and socio economic factors, for example, in the provision of careers services and the inability of schools to provide adequate careers advice or work experience to students. This was, therefore, often indicative of a wider problem in schools attended by working class pupils whose parents' access to social, economic and cultural capital is limited. Pupils from marginalised backgrounds share these conditions irrespective of their faith.

Chapter 4 provided an explicit focus on the impact of local variations in both how the role models project worked in practice, and the impact on intercommunity relations. Adeeba's comments regarding the difference between Bradford's

[159] Yuval –Davis (2011)

Pakistanis and Bangladeshis and London's Bangladeshis reflects the different economic realities of these two cities. Kalsoom mentioned the relationship between Somali and Pakistani women in Bristol. It would be too simplistic to reduce these simply to ethno-national differences. I analysed the way in which local particularities, incorporating local politics and stories of migration which have affected the composition of populations played a crucial part in these dynamics. Although Kalsoom did refer to class when she shared the problematic views of some middle class Pakistani women in Bristol towards Somali women, she did not mention difference arising from their citizenship status or their specific reasons for migration. The fact that even NMWAG respondents recognised that NWMAG itself was dominated by Pakistanis reflects at least an awareness of a larger Muslim population with whom they may have had little in common.

Race and Religion

'Race' too emerges in the data and there is often slippage showing the way in which race and religion are mutually constituted. Shaista referred to there being no black representation on NMWAG, for example. Equally, Almeena's responses to my question of whether she had ever experienced discrimination reflected the easy slippage between race and religion. She referred to her 'brown face' never having been a problem for her, but also said that she simultaneously carried the burden of representation as a Muslim, since she had to deal with queries on forced marriage etc. It also shows that religious identity is constituted through race since it is difficult to conceive of a white Muslim having the same experiences. In addition, it reflects her being 'ethnically' South Asian since it is equally unlikely that a black Muslim would have been associated with 'forced marriage'. Almeena's experience also shows that while she merely carried the burden of (religious) representation, she was fully cognisant of the impact that looking Muslim through wearing the veil could have on others. This is particularly so given that Blair implied that the wearing of the veil was an indication of extremism. The slippage between race and

religion was also mentioned by Pragna to suggest that what was often interpreted as anti-Muslim racism was in fact 'ordinary' racism towards South Asians.

Religious affiliation cannot be ignored. The presence and influence of anti-Muslim rhetoric is undeniable. It results in specifically anti-Muslim discrimination and hate crimes and forms the basis of contemporary mobilisation of the far-right (into which non-Muslims have been recruited irrespective of their 'race'). At the same time, however, we must also resist the lure of religious essentialism that this fosters and recognise the role of the state and its motivations for colluding in this process. The diversity of the Muslim population and the underlying material non-culturalist reasons for that diversity need to be given greater attention, whether that be regional inequalities or byzantine immigration laws. Equally, racism and patriarchal relations in wider society also need to be attended to. As Fraser advocates, "what is needed…is an alternative politics of recognition, *a non-identitarian* politics that can remedy misrecognition without encouraging displacement and reification" (author's emphasis) (2000:120).

8.4 Recommendation, limitations, and scope for future research

This thesis offers a critique of social policy initiatives undertaken at a particular historical moment. It is, therefore, difficult to make specific policy recommendations. The broader lessons which I hope emerge are that it is important to consider the way that particular groups of people are produced as objects of social policy and the repercussions of doing this. While not necessarily informed by an explicit decision to stigmatise Muslims, it is also not neutral; it reflects wider ideological and political concerns with potentially long term effects. What are "problems" to us "are built into the flesh and blood of the young" (Spender 1969)[160].

[160] cited in Arendt (1970: 17)

The limitations of this research reflect the skewed nature of this arena. Just as it could be argued that NMWAG was dominated by particular women, so my research too reflected these constructions embedded within the institutional environment itself. NMWAG's own lack of representativeness and the top-down impetus behind its formation mean that the research only 'gives voice' to those involved in the scheme at that level. This research reflects the side-lining of non–South Asian Muslims within the Muslim cohort of engagement; it also reflects the association of Muslim women with forced marriage and what they wear. Nonetheless, the research has unsettled the dominant discourses within the literature and its critical approach offers scope for future research.

In Khattab's quantitative analysis of 2001 census data he suggests that it is "important to move beyond a simplistic notion of a Muslim/non-Muslim and he refers to "… the vastly divergent starting points for different groups" (2012: 570). He describes how ethnic and religious cultural differences characterize aspects of this story and are reflected in the relative integration. He notes, however, that the "Muslim Black African group experiences greater penalties than Pakistanis on a consistent basis" and therefore that we "need to move beyond the historical focus on South Asians ….[to one].. that is aimed at a more holistic interpretation and analysis of the Muslim experience in Britain per se". Whilst on many levels I agree with this approach, it does not go far enough. Such an approach falls short because it is still within the confines of talking about 'the Muslim experience', whereas it is important that future research adopts a more intersectional analysis which, in particular, takes into account socio economic differences. Locally situated intersectional research in lieu of an exclusive focus on religious affiliation will be more productive, not only for correctly framing problems, but also for opening up the possibilities for solidarity with others. As Ali states; "A political will to challenge categories which make up racial hierarchies is the only way to begin to tackle ordinary racism which arises from the instigation of 'difference'" (2006:483).

Finally, in solidarity with respondents who raised the issue, some respondents suggested better research is needed on discrimination against Muslim women as Muslims. As Bulmer and Solomos argue "...it is important that research addresses the impact of racism in real-life situations. Racial harassment, direct/indirect discrimination, racist violence and victimisation are not fictions or figurations that admit of the free play of signification." (2004:10) Thus research with an "experiential and analytic anchor in the lives of marginalized communities of women provides the most inclusive paradigm for thinking about social justice." (Mohanty 2003: 231).

Conclusion

> *Deconstruction does not say anything against the usefulness of mobilizing unities. All it says is that because it is useful it ought not to be monumentalized as the way things really are (Spivak 1991:65).*

Following the 2010 elections and the coming to power of a coalition, Prevent as a major policy initiative has declined in significance and its profile has all but disappeared from the policy landscape. Nonetheless the analysis encapsulated in this thesis remains pertinent. This research and its approach were designed to provide an analysis of a particular policy initiative at a particular historical juncture whilst at the same time recognising the way in which these concerns and dilemmas are not new. I argued that policy focused on 'Muslim women' collated together all women who are Muslim, a disparate and multiply-differentiated group and de facto attributed any problematic issues to religious affiliation. As well as perpetuating anti-Muslim rhetoric, such policy discourses, focused on religious affiliation alone, also obscure continuities with earlier racisms as well as other axes of social division in society, such as class and regional inequalities which also affect non-Muslims.

The research illustrated how the empowering Muslim women initiative utilised, fomented and produced common sense Orientalised stereotypes of Muslim women. Such understandings were analysed in the context of a broader policy landscape dealing with counter-terrorism, immigration, forced marriage and 'honour killings'. Taken together the various initiatives were essentialising, reducing Muslim women's circumstances purely to their membership of a religious group. I analysed the way in which social policy discourse around community cohesion and Britishness constructs the Muslim woman in a particular way. I also drew attention to the way in which feminism is invoked and instrumentalised in these discourses, for example, in the use of feminist rhetoric of 'empowerment' and 'giving voice'. Such neo-Orientalist discourses inflect the way in which policy works in practice. Muslim women are engaged with solely as Muslim women at the expense of considering the more complex and differentiated realities of their lives. This aim of the research was not to deny the presence of marginalised women who are Muslim, nor is it a manifesto espousing the liberatory emancipatory potential of Islam, since it acknowledges that Muslim men can and do persist in sustaining patriarchal relations.

The extent of diversity amongst Muslim women has been a recurrent theme throughout the thesis. What emerges, however, is that different differences are validated differently. Through analysis of qualitative interview material and observation I highlighted the way policy practitioners working in this policy arena, themselves predominantly Muslim women, conformed, responded to or resisted these characterisations. In the context of the broader policy framework defined by multiculturalism, community cohesion and multifaithism, the discursive repertoires available to characterise this diversity is restricted; ethnic and religious diversity are readily invoked to the exclusion of any explicit discussion of other equally (or more) salient axes of difference, such as class, region and citizenship status.

There have been ongoing reports regarding the issues faced by BME women in general in relation to employment. Both figures and anecdotal evidence show that

BME women are suffering discrimination. Moreover if the trend continues in this direction it will be BME women who suffer seeing as they are over represented in both the public and voluntary sectors which are the targets of the most swingeing cuts to continue until at least 2018 according to November's 2012 Budget statement. Notably organisations which offer help to those experiencing domestic violence are also suffering cuts. Against this background of austerity those most marginalised in society are becoming further marginalised. As such I conclude with Nancy Fraser's exhortation,

> *"This is a moment in which feminists should think big. Having watched the neoliberal onslaught instrumentalize our best ideas, we have an opening now in which to reclaim them. In seizing this moment, we might just bend the arc of the impending transformation in the direction of justice – and not only with respect to gender." (2009:117)*

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Annex A

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Annex B

List of interviewees

Adeeba Malik - Director of QED , Bradford training organisation for ethnic minorities , including ESOL teaching, computer skills, careers advice (interviewed in her offices in Bradford)

Almeena Ahmed BBC journalist/Role model at Cardiff road show (interviewed at Cardiff road show)

Alveena Malik (ICoCo) and faith Adviser to John Denham (interviewed in British Library)

Fajer Rabia - Inspired Sisters – women's group in Manchester local contact for Manchester role model road show (interviewed in café in Manchester)

Humera Khan - An Nisa Society (interviewed at her home in NW London)

Kalsoom Bashir – NMWAG (Bristol) (interviewed at her offices in Bristol)

Khalida Khan - An Nisa Society (interviewed at her home in NW London)

Faz Hakim - Independent Consultant, Faz Hakim Ltd; Former Member, Defeating Extremism Together Task Group 5 May (interviewed in café in South London)

Hadiyeh Masiyeh – ex Hizbut Tahrir and NMWAG member and member of Three Faiths Forum (interviewed in Three Faiths Forum Offices in NW London)

Helen Wollsaton: Direcor of Equal to the Occasion the firm recruited to deliver the role model road shows http://www.ettoltd.co.uk/ 14 May (interviewed in café in Kings Cross)

Luke (pseudonym), Bristol Police – Community Engagement Officer Prevent (women) (interviewed in local police station in Bristol)

Nazneen (pseudonym), - senior Muslim woman in civil service (interviewed at her offices in London)

Pragna Patel – Director Southall Black Sisters (interviewed at SBS offices, Southall)

Rebecca (pseudonym), Bristol Police – Community Engagement Officer Prevent (women) (interviewed in local police station in Bristol)

Robina (pseudonym), NMWAG member (interviewed in café in London)

Sabira Lakha - NMWAG member – interviewed at lunch after NMWAG quarterly meeting

Sara (pseudonym), Muslim Women's Engagement Officer, DCLG (interviewed at LSE)

Sarah, Bristol Police – Community Engagement Officer Prevent (women) (interviewed in local police station in Bristol)

Shahien Taj – NMWAG/Henna Foundation (Cardiff) (interviewed in café in Cardiff after road show)

Shaista Gohir – Muslim Women's Network ex- NMWAG (Birmingham) 25 May Executive Director, Muslim Womens Network UK, Arena View, 4 Edward Street, Birmingham, B1 2RX (interviewed in Birmingham and at LSE)

Sophia Tilley – Three Faiths Forum and organiser of Faith and Fashion work shop (interviewed during observation over 3 days)

Talat Ahmed – Women's officer Muslim Council of Britain (interviewed in café in Holborn)

Tasmia Akkas - volunteer on Faith and fashion workshop Three Faiths Forum (interviewed at V&A)

Yasmin Rehman – Former Adviser on Forced Marriage to Metropolitan Police (interviewed in LSE)

Annex C

Information Sheet

About me and my research

My name is Naaz Rashid. I am a self-funded PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science in Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE working with Dr Suki Ali.

My research is looking at government initiatives to "Empower Muslim women" which have been funded as part of the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda. I am also exploring what "empowerment" means to different people in central and local government, the third sector and to Muslim women themselves.

Interview

I am undertaking semi-structured interviews (of between ½ an hour to an hour) in which I want to explore some of the themes raised by these initiatives and more broadly, the way Muslim woman are represented in social policy in the UK. This might include questions about:

- what empowerment means (in relation to Muslim women)
- potential barriers to success
- how Muslim women are represented in public policy debates
- how projects on role models, theological interpretation and civic participation affect Muslim women (and girls)

Participant's Agreement:

I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation.

The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to my personal identity unless I specify otherwise.

If I have any questions about this study, I am free to contact the student researcher at LSE or on 07779 620 212

I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference.

I have read the above form and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in today's interview.

Please sign below

Participant's signature: Date:

Name and contact details

I agree to (me/my child) _____ taking part in the interview detailed above. I understand that there will be no payments for this participation and I give permission for the material to be used for doctoral research reports in accordance with attached information. I also understand that I can remove consent at any time.

(To be signed by young person if 16 years of age or over, or by an authorised Carer or Guardian if under 16 years of age)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Person/Parent/Carer/Guardian (delete as appropriate)