Whatever Happened to Dominant Discourse?

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Abstract: This paper draws on twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork in Higher Blackley, North Manchester, England, to explore the ways in which individuals and groups who identify themselves and are identified as 'white', 'working class' and 'English' resist what they perceive as dominant ideas and discourses, deeply unsettling of their 'Englishness'. Perceptions and expectations of 'fairness' underpin social relations in Higher Blackley and this paper will explore perceptions of dominance through the local idiom of fairness. I explore how sentiments of belonging in this area are then imaginatively transposed onto national and international levels.

Keywords: belonging, dominant discourse, 'Englishness', fairness, government policies, immigration, political correctness, social exclusion.

Introduction

In this article, I explore local idioms of belonging, as they were discussed, challenged, lived and maintained in Higher Blackley, North Manchester, England, for the year I lived and worked there (June 2006 to June 2007). Specifically, this article will explore local and individual perceptions of dominance and dominant discourse by examining the individual construct and social concept of 'fairness' as a means of beginning to address the (re)creations and maintenance of belonging and 'otherness' in Higher Blackley. The 'mobilising metaphor' (see Shore and Wright 1997) and embodied subjectivity of 'fairness', as it was discussed and experienced in my fieldwork, demonstrates the struggles for power in effective political representation and acknowledgement from local and national government in England which individuals expressed in Higher Blackley. This article will demonstrate that dominant and subordinate identities are forged relationally, depending upon historical, political, economic and cultural contexts, rather than as independent cultural entities, which gives birth to the question, 'whatever happened to dominant discourse' in Higher Blackley?

Jeanette Edwards (2000: 8–9) has pointed out that 'there are overriding intellectual and political concerns generated at particular historical moments which make the need for certain kinds of research apparent'. Indeed, the ways in which my co-conversationalists constructed their experiences were, I am sure, significantly shaped by the political climate in England and the socially constructed languages of 'race', 'ethnicities', 'politics' and 'political correctness' current in North Manchester at the time of my fieldwork. The narratives might, I suspect, have read differently had they been gathered somewhere else and at a different time, as the effects of regional specificity are very relevant for individuals, particularly in this area of North Manchester. Particular perceptions and historically situated understandings of time and place were narrated and imaginatively transposed into 'common sense' notions of individual entitlements to what may be seen socially as 'fairness'. This underpinned local and

Anthropology in Action, 18, 2 (2011): 19–32 © Berghahn Books and the Association for Anthropology in Action
doi:10.3167/aia.2011.180204

personal relationships, at once binding people together through mutual understandings and maintaining perceptions of 'otherness'. The ways in which individuals express their notions of the 'fair' and the 'unfair' and what these may mean for them does not always imply the same meanings in expressions of difference or otherness; rather, in the complicated and ever-changing subjectivities of individuals themselves can be found specific rationalities for and motivations behind constructions of otherness and their outward determinations and manifestations.

Seeking to specify how each narrative is marked and changing by the interlocking concerns and effects of geographical origin, familiarity between individuals and groups, political orientations, ethnicities, genders and shared histories of racial and 'cultural' imaginations in Higher Blackley, this article will explore perceptions of 'dominance' in discourse through the politics of 'fairness'. The role of perception played a critical role in the communication of sentiments of belonging, which can be indescribable, emotional and, thus, beyond words.

Higher Blackley

Located about five miles north of the city centre of Manchester, Higher Blackley is Manchester's most northerly ward. The area comprises mostly social housing estates and has a historically informed categorical status as 'working class', although many individuals refused to associate themselves with any class status as such (Smith forthcoming). The contentious label of 'working class' was rarely, if ever, discussed unless to signal the abhorrence of a specifically 'middle-class' way of being, thus not implicating a formal class system but rather an ideological and desirable embodiment of integrity, humbleness – not 'going above your station' (cf. Skeggs 1997). The language used to explain the 'working class' people in council housing estates like the ones to be found in Higher Blackley was explained to me as a 'language used to describe the "type" of people in Higher Blackley to people *outside* of Higher Blackley', and a language that 'pigeonholes' and associates individuals with rigid categories and even uncomfortable and upsetting moral outlooks. Sweepingly referring to people in Higher Blackley as 'working class' was often described to me as being profoundly unfair because it does not consider what kind of person or people they truly are and does not take into consideration their everyday lives and actions.

It is an area where many governmental decisions are acutely experienced on various levels, whether such decisions concern housing, taxation, transport, commerce, immigration, industrialization or international trade. The metaphors used to express relationships and engagements with government and institutional policy became important as they were the vehicles people would use to express their frustrations with the sense of feeling 'ignored', 'pigeonholed' and neglected in their struggles for political representation as well as self-expression. This article goes on to address the social practices and the metaphor of 'fairness', which make these images effective as they are experienced in everyday life.

On Discourse

Numerous authors have written about discourse, mostly beginning in the 1960s with debates on political correctness, stemming from university students and staff, beginning in the US, as they took political stances on the term 'political correctness' (cf. Hughes 2009: 7), and which became associated with a variety of groups which have been striving for social change; groups such as anti-racist groups and activists, feminists and gay and lesbian activists (Heller 2001: 117).

Writing about psychological interpretations of ideologies and discourse, Richard Koenigs-

berg (2005) has argued that even though many authors have written about 'dominant discourses', the question still remains as to why specific discourses become dominant. With a degree of mutuality, discourses attempt to 'master fundamental desires', and so Koenigsberg goes on to argue that it is necessary to 'articulate the *meaning* of culturally constituted ideas; to delineate the *psychic work these ideas perform* for the people who embrace them' (original emphasis). From a psychoanalytical perspective, Koenigsberg offers important ways of connecting language with the material and muted worlds around us. Monica Heller (2001: 118) also considers the problem of the linkage between local linguistic practices and processes of social 'structuration' to be critical to the analysis of local linguistic practices as it can show us some immediate consequences for the regulation of the production and distribution of resources, and hence for the construction of social difference (criteria of exclusion and inclusion) and social inequality; but without an ability to situate those local practices in time and space, it is difficult to know what to make of them. Here I will attempt to expand upon the question: why do some discourses become dominant? Through exploring individual perceptions of 'dominance', I have learned that dominance can be perceived to be coming from many directions and allotted to groups of individuals generally seen as 'subordinate' in other social contexts. As such, perceptions of dominance and subordination implode and are seen to be aspects of myriad multi-directional processes of power. The ways in which individuals articulated their interpretations, perceptions and experience of 'dominant discourse', or dominance *in* discourse, was through the idiom of 'fairness', as in what is considered to be fair.

Focusing on the perception of 'dominance' in discourse, the ways in which dominance is negotiated and its effects are then expressed is to focus on the ways in which society and the individual are imaginatively constructed and entwined. Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu have been recognized for their works on the nature and constitution of discourse in and of society. While Foucault's (1978, 1991 [1977]) conceptual efforts became a reconstruction of the historical and present 'liberal' understanding of 'man' and society as a *discourse,* he also argues that the analysis of power, which involves observing the microstructures of domination and the strategies of the struggle for power, leads to a rejection of universals and, in particular, of the search for any kind of universally accepted morality (Foucault 1980: 112–113, 1988 [1986]: 47, 65, 1991 [1977]: 56–59). Thus, power is an aspect of many types of discourses – from discursive practices to non-discursive procedures (Foucault 1973: 37–41, 1980: 113;[1] see Callewaert 2006: 91). Bourdieu's view of 'domination' suggests a structural field within which to assess what dominance is and where it may be coming from. With a focus on social practice, Bourdieu (1977, 1991, 2003 [1998]) argued in his publication *Homo academicus* (1988: 180) that discourse neither causes nor explains action but discourse does not even explain discourse (see Callewaert 2006: 75). Importantly, Bourdieu (2001: 100) argues that in 'symbolic domination', two parties must have a mutual understanding and appreciation of categories in discourse, and the 'dominated' are constitutive of dominance, through reacting within the structures of perception of the dominant. As such, Foucault's 'discourse' and Bourdieu's symbolic domination are both referencing 'unthought', but still learned ways of thinking, feeling and acting (see Callewaert 2006: 89). Equally, what people themselves think about their own actions, their own explanations of their actions and their responses to their own perceptions (of dominant discourse), leads to questions of how one finds legitimacy, and feels satisfactorily recognizable in their actions, explanations and responses in social discourse? What are shared features of social life that might allow mutual understanding of individual identifications and perceptions between different groups of people?

Discourse analysts and psychologists emphasize the need for more complex understandings of the symbolic interactions in discourses – looking especially at the act of talking – but seem to neglect the notion that, as Pnina Werbner (2000: 150) among others such as Didier Fassin (2001) and Michel Wieviorka (1997) have pointed out, specific terms such as 'race', for example, may be tabooed concepts and thus silenced, not spoken (see also Frosh and Wolfsfeld 2006: 106). However, more recently Georgie Wemyss (2006) explored the mechanics of 'dominant discourse' in the national media in Britain and has referred to the idea of a (structural?) silence as 'discursive absences', which can be identified in dominant discourses and their mobilizations. Wemyss (2006: 21) refers to 'dominant discourses' within the constructions of racial categories, arguing that processes whereby dominant media discourses work to construct a 'White East End' through the omission of histories of Empire, racism, immigration and heterogeneous settlement, the omissions of which are central to dominant discourses of 'Britishness' and belonging. Many of the responses she collected during her fieldwork in 1993 in London appear very similar to some of the responses I received during fieldwork in Higher Blackley. She mentions the categories of 'Asian', 'outsiders', 'insiders' and 'extremists' as fixed categories in dominant discourse and highlights that the media's continual references to the 'Asian community' and ongoing use of these terms does not help remedy situations which lead to violence and racism. Violence and racism remain dramatic outcomes of categories that are generally understood, or expected to be informative, to point to particular meanings, people and moments, while at the same time attention is paid to fixed ideas of what the words make one focus upon.

Importantly, Chris Shore and Sue Wright (1997) have talked about keywords in the dominant discourses of policy-making and governance. They explain that such words 'rarely have fixed meanings and so are the sites of contest by the discourses of competing groups' (1997: 21). They argue that several keywords can form 'semantic clusters' (1997: 20), and shifts and changes in their meanings are mobilized by a central keyword, which the authors refer to as a 'mobilising metaphor' (1997: 19). As such, a key concern in determining a dominant discourse is who has the 'power to define' – Shore and Wright (1997: 19) argue that 'dominant discourses work by setting up terms of reference and by disallowing or marginalising alternatives'. Critically, individual perception is increasingly playing a vital role in the establishment of social conceptions of dominance in discourses, as the neo-liberal offloading of social responsibility and debates of citizenship and individual participation are increasingly indicting the individual as bearer of responsibility within the wider social order, which becomes more than the bearer of moral worth, but a 'battle ground for competing ethics' (see Back et al. 2002).

This article will demonstrate the multidirectional, fluid and unpredictable nature of perceptions of dominance, by beginning with the argument that it is important to ask how dominance is perceived in the first place. Thus, the subjective perceptions of dominant discourse in Higher Blackley do not so easily conform to the 'structure of the field' (Bourdieu 2003 [1998]) and 'regulations', which may be socially expected of individuals (Foucault 1980), but have been contested, socially, by individuals. The ways in which local practices were situated in time and space in Higher Blackley was through the mobilising metaphor and embodied subjectivity of 'fairness'.

The Politic of Fairness: Mobilizing Metaphor and Embodied Subjectivity

As a symbolic vehicle used to express important messages about perceptions and aspects of dominance, 'fairness' is not simply about any one particular aspect of a seemingly natural-

ized group identity. Rather, it is a cognitively constructed expectation in society, one of those self-fulfilling metaphors which can be drawn upon for specific and fleeting reasons, and which manifests in various conflicts of group and individual representation. The inconsistencies in the concept and what *may* consequently occur when this particular social construct is seen to be breached, when desires become disconnected from particular 'realities', and how ways of belonging are maintained through particular discourses and forms of relating, demonstrates that 'fairness' is a mercurial (local and individual) construct with historical and social underpinnings which appear to naturalize differences in personal and social relations.

Thus, 'fairness' may not necessarily be a token for a specific meaning but rather a symbolic vehicle used to express much more complex and subtle messages. The notion of fairness has been said to be in the 'eye of the beholder' (Lamerz 2002: 19). Indeed, 'fairness' is very fluid. Idioms of fairness were often expressed through discourses which stress individual desires and perceptions of familiarity and individuals who are seen to belong or have been 'born and bred' in Higher Blackley. Similar to Jeanette Edwards's (2000) ethnographic research on belonging, idioms of kinship and being 'born and bred' in the town of Bacup, north of Manchester, fairness is also an embodied subjectivity expressed through mutually understood intentions in 'actions of dwelling, neighbouring, of preserving history, conserving amenities and of joining in' (Edwards 1998: 148). Within an embodied space of 'fairness', individuals may then have the right to anticipate and affect the future of renegotiations and discourses of the concept. Thus, 'fairness' is not simply an ideology. As an individual construct and thus a social concept, it is embodied, performed and perceived, and used as a means to access chains of familiarity within and between groups of people.

In a Habermasian sense, it is used to discuss notions of the 'good life', but beyond this, fairness has myriad roles to play in the actual challenges of a changing social universe and, thus, can be seen as part of the historical subjectivities of individuals themselves. In discourses on 'fairness', there is a continual dilemma, however: fairness appears to draw on both conservative and liberal support (see Tileagă 2006). The fluid entanglements of liberal principles for illiberal ends permit the production of a wide range of ideological dilemmas for members of societies as they discuss and debate notions of fairness, equality and justice (ibid.). This dilemma has been discussed recently by Cristian Tileagă (2006: 482–483) who explains that notions of fairness, social justice and individual rights act as 'commonplaces', defining the boundaries of what he calls a 'liberal-individualist ideology', which is central to 'Western democracies'. In other words, liberal principles such as 'everyone should be treated equally' or 'you have to be practical' can be 'mobilised flexibly and in contradictory ways within particular contexts, which can be used to justify change in redressing disadvantage and improving a group's status, while in other contexts they can be used to justify and legitimate existing social relations' (Tileagă 2006: 483).

To explore perceptions of dominance through the politic of fairness is a distinctly ethnographic concern in that one must first address how 'dominance' is perceived in the first place – on individual and local levels – and how it is then communicated in reference to experiences in everyday lives. It was the means of expression, the metaphor used to express overriding concerns about the (re) creations and maintenance of belonging and otherness as well as how social relations are justified and maintained in the face of perceived dominance in discourse.

For instance, in Higher Blackley, Vincent explained to me his perception and expectations of 'fairness' and what caused his frustration with what he saw as the 'dominant' discourse of 'political correctness gone mad', as he put

it. Drawing on normative discourses of 'common sense' (see Turner 1993: 413; Taylor 1995: 184; cf. Agnew et al. 1984: 4), his complaint and frustrations were particularly emotive. He began explaining his frustrations as lying not with individuals who move to England needing asylum or immigrants in the area, but rather with what he saw as 'government' and institutions being profoundly 'unfair' in policy and law. I asked Vincent to explain what he meant by 'unfair'. He explained,

> My lad has had eight brain operations; he was given nine hours to live … there are only two people allowed by your bedside in intensive care, right? And there was a Pakistani family in the bed next to me. He was allowed eighteen people … and I thought, 'hang on a minute. I am allowed two'. But I was told it was their religion, though. But what about me? What about my family? It isn't fair. At the end of the day, you had two lads who were dying. I am not calling [the Pakistani family] for that. I am calling the hospital for allowing that! It has nothing to do with them being Pakistani, does it? That, to me, is insulting! It has to be fair, not dwelling on religion or culture. This wasn't about religion or culture. This was about two dying lads. [15 June 2006]

Vincent's responses appeared to be attempts to remove from the situation what he believed to be *part* of the import of the problem of 'unfairness': what he referred to as the hospital's recognition of another 'religion and culture'. Vincent was bringing the situation in line with his sense of humanity, death and equality in the hospital which he believed treated him neither equally nor fairly – an important distinction which I shall return to in a moment. Often, Vincent would explain to me that he was 'not racist'; he does not have 'anger towards anyone who might be seen to be different', but because of this particular incident, he felt that he could understand, a bit more, why some people may choose to resist accepting what he referred to as the 'rules and regulations' of political correctness in institutions such as the local hospital. Vincent pointed out that what might subsequently happen is the Pakistani family who are just there to be with their 'dying young lad', get the brunt of emotions and frustrations of individuals who feel something has become profoundly 'unfair'.

John Rawls's theory of 'justice as fairness' stresses the need to see each person as being responsible for matters over which the individual has control (1971). He argues that the principle of 'fairness' applies to *individuals,* but Rawls does not account for a lack of control over things an individual cannot change (see Sen 1992: 148). Amartya Sen (1992) has importantly addressed the idea that an individual willing to give up certain human rights, and individuals who have no control over giving up such rights, points towards issues of 'equality' rather than 'fairness' itself. The ways in which individuals actually enjoy a freedom to choose, rather than the notion that, in principle, they already have the ability to choose, involves 'taking note of *all* the barriers' (Sen 1992: 149); in this instance, those imposed by hospital policy. Vincent's situation with his son in the hospital illustrates the gravity and importance of this distinction, as it is a distinction that individuals in Higher Blackley referenced in their frustrations with institutional policies and bureaucratic indifference.

According to Habermas (1995: 178), when existing norms are checked from the perspective of fairness, a crucial differentiation is introduced into the domain of social practice (see also Benhabib 1992: 88; McCarthy 1992: 54): 'On the one hand, there are matters of justice to be regulated by norms binding on all alike; on the other, there are questions of the "good life", which are not susceptible to general legislation but have to be considered in connection with diverse life forms and life histories' (Habermas 1995: 178). It is only after the specifically moral point of view has come to be distinguished from concrete forms of ethical life that normative questions concerning what is 'right' can be adequately distinguished from evaluative questions concerning what is 'good', which can *also* be rationally

discussed but only within the context of a shared form of life (Habermas 1995: 180–182). In his 'discourse model of ethics', Habermas (1995: 44, 45–57) states, 'moral phenomena can be elucidated in terms of a formal-pragmatic analysis of communicative action, a type of action in which the actors are oriented to validity claims'. He goes on to point out:

> There is apparently an inner connection between, on the one hand, the authority of generally accepted norms or commands, i.e., the obligation on the part of those to whom the norm is addressed to do what is enjoyed and refrain from doing what is forbidden, and, on the other hand, the impersonality of their claim. Such norms claim that they exist by right and that, if necessary, they can be *shown* to exist by right. (Habermas 1995: 49, original emphasis)

The ways in which Vincent regularly expressed his concerns with being accused of racism was through reinforcing, through language (verbal and non-verbal), his sympathies with the Pakistani family next to him, and at the same time legitimizing his frustrations with the hospital through referencing the 'unfairness' of the hospital's impersonal and biased policy based on the right to cultural and religious tradition. What Vincent was clearly aware he was doing was not simply criticizing the hospital's policy but the politics of political correctness, multiculturalism and equality, as they were inappropriately made to influence a very private situation (a situation in which his son was dying, and that was perhaps seen as 'unfair' in its own right).

When claims to validity in expressions are challenged, according to Habermas, one's claim may be justified through a sort of introspective reflexivity (placing emphasis on the personal perspectives of the individual making the claims) or by *moral justification* which tends to illuminate a problematic action by excusing, criticizing or justifying it with moral feelings and attitudes as a theoretical argument (Habermas 1995: 51). This is where 'rational will' enters the picture for Habermas. Equally, this is where Habermas, like Rawls, falls short of taking into account 'all the barriers' (Sen 1992: 149), and this includes instances where 'rational will' cannot be fulfilled. Habermas's discourse model on ethics does remain indeterminate and open as he addresses the crucial dimension of the reflective efforts and contributions of individuals in wider social contexts. However, with this said, it is left without a definite anchoring in institutions (Benhabib 1992: 88).

The Self, the Other, the Institution: Habermas's distinction and Vincent's Entanglement

Although in the interview excerpt above Vincent was discussing the treatment of differences between himself, his family and the Pakistani family in the hospital ward, the hospital's perception of difference between these two families became part of Vincent's experience. He expressed frustrations with the feeling that he was faced with, and the 'unfairness' in having to maintain the distinction between the hospital's 'general policies', how each family should be treated according to perceived 'ethnic' backgrounds, and Vincent's notions of 'who we are' and 'the good life'. It was an institutional distinction and an intensely 'unfair' one. The institutional and dominant influence on Vincent's experience demonstrates the two opposing strands of Rawls's institutional focus and Habermas's focus on individuals. Both Rawls' and Habermas' insights shed light on Vincent's experience but neither fully encapsulate the individual's dilemma. As Vincent explained, he simply saw 'two dying lads'. The distinctions between these two lads, then, were imposed by hospital regulations, which touched upon many other formative discourses of 'fairness' (e.g. 'I'm not racist…'). Furthermore, contrary to Habermas's views, Vincent was actively engaging in envisioning himself and his family in other social contexts with different perso-

nas; he questioned the value and justification of the roles and practices in which he/they were currently implicated, and he envisioned different relationships and preferences (cf. Rapport 2002: 153).

However, in many ways Vincent was rationally criticizing and revising the values and standards of the hospital in a separate context of the ethnographic interview in much the same ways in which Habermas urged us to be critically aware. The forms and evaluative frames Habermas envisaged point to the notion that '"critique" and "criticism" remain tied to the context of action and experience in ways that discourse does not' (McCarthy 1992: 56, 1995: xi). The politically charged interplay between 'aesthetic experience' or 'the good life' and 'practical discourse' (Habermas 1995: 105–106), which is inextricably entangled and interdependent rather than separate spheres at loggerheads, as Habermas might have us think, perpetuates contentious value judgements embedded in a 'practical discourse'. This practical discourse is entangled with experience and language, such as that of 'religion and culture', as Vincent has pointed out. So although there may be the tendency to drift into the kind of abstractions and reifications that do little more than define or justify philosophical exigencies (Jackson 1998: 35), Vincent's expressions of the unfairness in the context of his hospital visit provides substance to what can otherwise become impersonal conceptual vocabularies.

However, the distinction can be made concerning Vincent's experience in the hospital, between 'unfairness' and 'inequality'. Sen (1992: viii–xi) argues that for something to be made 'equal', we should first ask 'equality of what?' and then acknowledge the fact that when something becomes 'equal' something else must become 'unequal' (Sen 1992: 2–3). Yet, fairness is quite different in the presence of uncertainties, and it can be 'directly influential in the determination of a person's well-being' (Sen 1992: 150). What have been signalled to me during fieldwork are the specificities of the uses and embodiments of 'fairness' in social contexts in Higher Blackley. 'It's only fair', 'fair enough' and 'it's unfair' were phrases employed in discourses of 'Otherness' with respect to the equal consideration of everyone: citizens of the United Kingdom and non-citizens, white and non-white individuals, British and Pakistani families at their sons' bedsides … Furthermore, there were particular ways in which differences were signalled in the employment of this concept in discourse. The removal of choice in wider social relations – choice to voice opinions, affect governmental decisions and policy-making, and 'be heard' in wider social arenas – were not *perceived* to be options for many in Higher Blackley. Thus discourses of 'fairness' became very particular, pointed, local and personal.

It is the conflation of notions of 'fairness', 'equality' and 'equal consideration' that I want to draw attention to now, as the ideological dilemmas to which 'fairness' may appear to point can be mobilized to create inversions of sameness and otherness.

'It's My Religion Too, Then!': Fairness, Equality and a 'One-man Protest'

Fernando Coronil argues that '[i]n the context of equal relations, difference should not be cast as "Otherness"' (Coronil 1996: 56). Yet what many authors as well as people in Higher Blackley have pointed out is that 'dominant' discourses on race relations, social inequalities, anti-racism(s) and racist discourses appear to produce 'grand narratives', essentializing concepts and even well-meaning but very derogatory categories. These 'fixed categories' (Wemyss 2006: 21) naturalize individual characteristics and are easily perceived to be 'dominating' within specific contexts as they are based on perceptions and expectations of the 'natural' body and mentalities. Importantly, however, there is not always one perception or social agreement of what 'dominant' discourse is ex-

actly, where it comes from or how it perpetuates. There is an awareness and understanding that people who are not from Higher Blackley (or other places considered 'similar' by people in Higher Blackley; for example, labelled as 'working class', considered 'deprived' or even 'dangerous') will likely have a different understanding of who and what are the 'dominant' and the 'subordinate' in social terms, as these differences are what constitute everyday experiences, particularly with institutional, bureaucratic and governmental policies and their implementations. In many respects, 'Otherness' is conceived in the process of engaging with political and bureaucratic discourses, which often stress 'equality' as of paramount importance. What is necessary to explore, then, is the ways in which 'otherness', 'sameness' and 'difference' are problematized by individuals in their everyday lives and what sort of impacts can be made through the ways in which 'sameness' is often inverted to make political points about the 'unfairness' (and 'injustice') of governmental, bureaucratic and institutional policy and law.

Talk about 'difference' implicates forms of symbolic and structural violence in disguised, normative languages and actions, reinforcing 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1980: 185–189, 193) to those who *choose* to subscribe to them. Referring to a form of 'structural violence', I mean the ways in which individuals may choose to voice and enact opinions in the attempt to communicate them to larger groups of people, those with political, juridical authority and to affect the perspectives and subsequent discourses of others. The term 'structural' here is the acknowledgement of bureaucratic and governmental policies which hold and disperse in a legal sense the framework with which individuals may choose to resist or not, use to their own advantage to the detriment of others, or forge new paths of resistance.

I follow Saba Mahmood's arguments (2005: 175–176) which focus on the terms and concepts used within struggles to destablize normatives. To direct us to analytical questions of authority and power, rather than a simplistic notion of resistance to norms, I point here to Patrick, who staged what he called a 'one-man protest' in Higher Blackley. When Patrick knew about my reasons for being in Higher Blackley conducting fieldwork, he spelled his full name to me to make sure that I included his story in my research. Patrick began referring specifically to Muslim populations in England and his views of institutional and bureaucratic principles concerning a view of 'integration' and governmental multicultural policies. Patrick went on to explain his 'one-man protest' in Higher Blackley, in which he put on a balaclava and went to each pub in the area for a pint of lager. He explained that he wanted to assess the reactions of others when he justified his actions by explaining that it was his 'religion too' to wear the balaclava to cover his face. His initial reasons for his 'one-man protest' were in connection with recent political statements made by then-Home Secretary Jack Straw concerning Muslim women wearing the hijab. Patrick explained,

> Patrick: I put on a balaclava. It thought, right, I'm going to make a statement. You know, what if I wore a balaclava on Sundays? That's what I told people anyway. I said, 'What? This is what I wear on Sundays. It's my religion too'! I put on a balaclava last Sunday night and went around four pubs in Higher Blackley. I was kicked out of all of them. And, you know, I have known the landlords in these pubs for years, but they all came up to me and they would say, 'Patrick, you've got to leave unless you want to take that off'. I told them, 'I'm not taking this off. It's my right to wear this; it's my religion too'! But they each had me leave. I was kicked out of all of them.
>
> Katherine: Why did you stage this protest?
>
> Patrick: I'm fed up, to be honest. You can write this in: when in Rome, you do as the Romans. I have been in fights with Muslim Turks and they put me in the hospital for two weeks. I missed two weeks of work because of them! I was hospitalized by Muslim Turks. But the police didn't arrest them, did they heck! I couldn't identify them

> in a police line up. They all look the same. So the police did nothing because I couldn't identify them. That's it though: when in Rome. They just do not try to integrate. And when someone asks them to, they kick up a fuss, don't they? I mean, look at what happened with Jack Straw! He just wanted to see their faces. That is because that is what we do in this country. When we see someone and we are speaking to them, we like to see their faces! It's our way of life here. But they don't respect that. We just have to respect them, in our country! I get really wound up. I really do. Bring back Enoch Powell! Put that in your diary!

Patrick's 'one-man protest' was meant to be specifically a (political) statement with which he was attempting to pronounce what he felt to be 'silenced' sentiments in a more 'public' arena. He travelled to and from multiple sites of group gatherings to enact his act of resistance to what he saw as 'politically correct' ideologies. While it is true that many personal sentiments and viewpoints are voiced within local social clubs and pubs in these areas of Manchester, Patrick was transposing what appear as national and even global issues onto more local levels, to test the boundaries of acceptance and support – which he was surprised to find he did not receive. The inversion of Patrick's *claims* to sameness between himself (wearing a balaclava for religious reasons) and Muslim women (wearing the hijab) failed to attract support because of the nuances of his overtly extreme claim to religious obligations of dress. His claims to similarity between his supposed commitment to a religion which requires him to wear a balaclava on Sundays and a personal decision of Muslim women to wear the hijab bypassed significant heterogeneous factors between individuals – not least between 'men' and 'women' – which are not overtly addressed in policies on multiculturalism or which simply point to an awareness to diversity. Complex ethnic, linguistic and religious pluralisms, intersecting forms of racial and class stratification, and gender and sexual hierarchies and divisions are amongst the many significant and commonly volatile features within societies and across national and transnational experiences and landscapes. Patrick's attempt to stress similarities between himself (in the context of his 'one-man protest') and specifically Muslim women wearing the hijab was a failed attempt at receiving the same acknowledgement in wider social contexts because of his glossing over of the both blatant and nuanced differences between individuals with specific and informative genealogical histories. It also should not go without mention that Patrick explained that he had known the landlords of the pubs in which he staged his one-man protest, and the familiarity between Patrick and the landlords of the pubs was stressed to make the point that the dominant discourses of multiculturalism and political correctness had become so prolific that it was affecting his long-term personal relationships. I asked Patrick if he really does wear a balaclava on Sundays and Patrick explained,

> Patrick: No. It was all about what Jack Straw said the week before, you know about the Muslim woman. But what about that one, the week before that when John Reid, the Home Secretary and the Muslim, Abu Issadeen, walked in and he sat there and he is like that, 'What are you doing in this Muslim area?' To John Reid, the Home Secretary, who we've elected in, you know what I mean? What are you doing in a Muslim area? Excuse me a minute. This is Guildford in London! What are you talking about 'a Muslim area'? It's England, for heaven's sake! If that was me going in a Muslim area like that and saying, 'What are you doing in an English area?' I'd be like that me (putting his wrists together behind his back) within two minutes, arms behind back, arrested. They've got free speech and we haven't. But the Labour government doesn't matter now. It's gone too far, but Labour has already given them Human Rights, so, there is no turning back now. That's why I protested. We're not allowed to say anything. I did it because I have never seen anything like this in my life!
>
> Katherine: Were you on your own in this protest?
>
> Patrick: Yeah, on my own, yeah. Yeah, it was a one-man protest.… No, it's not fair! That's what

> it is, it's not fair! It's not fair on us. We're English people and we take someone in, but excuse me, if you come here, you treat us as we treat you. No chance! [26 October, 2006]

Patrick's actions and his sentiments in those actions appear to be commonly understood by others in the pubs he visited, and although Patrick believed himself to be voicing a collective silence or local frustrations and sentiments, the lack of support and allowance perpetuated conversation and the airing of further views with respect to his actions. Even though Patrick was not allowed to drink and remain in the pubs whilst he wore his balaclava, what remains are the memories of his actions and the subsequent discourses concerning the issues which he was attempting to subvert. In this sense, Patrick stirred reactions in many who would otherwise have kept their viewpoints to themselves, thus affecting the mentalities of individuals and groups in the area. Even though Patrick's protest consisted of 'one man', he expressed to me that he sincerely believed that he was representing, in effect, the silenced viewpoints of many English people, in an extreme form. The sayings which Patrick employed, such as 'When in Rome, do as the Romans', 'it's not fair' and even 'free speech' were connected with wider social issues of 'integration', the reconceptualization of human rights and governmental debates that were occurring at the time. Patrick's one-man protest effectively highlights where larger political dilemmas and social conflict are not only imaginatively transposed onto local-level settings but how such imaginings and performed interpretations instigate discourses of conflict and fairness as well as question important aspects of 'Englishness'. The subsequent chatter that ensued in response to Patrick's actions may or may not reflect the reasons why Patrick was removed from pubs. The way that Patrick went about bringing up sensitive political issues may or may not be agreed with but certainly not discussed as openly or blatantly as Patrick attempted. With this awareness, Patrick's intentions were to make public competing discourses of difference, sameness, equality (of religious expression) and his own sense of (un) fairness. The outcomes of his actions were explained to be out of Patrick's control – not his choice – and his ejection from the pubs a demonstration for the public to see of what Patrick feels is the dominant discourse in struggles for equality. The difference that Patrick was pointing to and the attempt to sarcastically feign a sameness between himself and Muslim women was also a reference to the attempts for conformity echoed by political leaders at the time. By staging this one-man protest, Patrick brought into play the differences signalled by political leaders and expressed the outcome through his emotional responses to the outcome – a form of structural violence that leads one to question where perceptions of 'dominance' begin and end. So, what makes a difference is not only the inscription of difference but the kind of differences made (Coronil 1996: 73), and how they are influenced and expressed by perceptions of fairness.

Conclusion

Conceptualizing dominance in discourse is more than a linguistic battle and the comparative analysis of racial and ethnic violence challenge settled discourses and open up new spaces for debate. Certainly debates require explorations of how exactly (structural) violence may be perceived in an ethnographic context as well as the ways in which individuals and groups deal with the perceived challenges faced by individuals who want to resist 'Other' perceptions of 'dominance' in local, social and interpersonal relations.

In Higher Blackley, the ways in which 'dominance' was perceived and expressed was through the mobilizing metaphor and embodied subjectivity of 'fairness'. 'Fairness' is incredibly fluid, malleable and individually embodied and negotiated, and socially medi-

ated and maintained. It is mobilized when maintaining socially constructed norms as well as in acts of resistance to what is *perceived* as a new form of dominance, particularly in discourses of 'otherness'. What I learned in fieldwork in Higher Blackley is that dominance can be perceived to be anywhere where there appears to be restrictive and threatening influences to ways of life and the forging of relationships. Many people expressed to me their frustrations with not being able to express themselves publicly, the way they did in times past. Vincent's experiences in the local hospital and having to negotiate institutional policies and 'equality', and Patrick's one-man protest highlighted the manifestations in discourse and action of perceptions of 'unfairness'. The purpose of this article in examining particularly the issue of 'fairness' is because I believe that a better understanding of this social construct and individual concept is necessary to better understand local and individual resistances to the perceived challenges of institutional and bureaucratic philosophies of political correctness to forms of belonging in this area which are very much underpinned by a historically and biographically grounded notion of 'fairness'.

Individuals in Higher Blackley expressed deep-seated concerns with governmental, bureaucratic and local institutional influences on not only wider social issues such as housing, tax and incomes benefits but also everyday routine behaviours. 'There is no such thing as "Englishness" anymore', 'We can't be English like we used to be', 'I don't know what we can call ourselves nowadays' – these were regular responses and general statements from individuals in Higher Blackley which I heard and documented during the course of fieldwork. However, there were equally *resistant* responses to such forms of rationality such as, 'I'm sick of the do-gooders, the PC-brigade. I will do what I want to'.

The symbolic and material dimensions of inequality, unfairness and struggles for power are being actively renegotiated in dynamic contexts of entangled flows and overlapping fields of perception. Rosaldo (1993 [1989]: 196) argues that 'not only do people act in relation to perceived reality but it makes no sense to speak of "brute" reality independent of culture'; this would be an epistemological articulation of the disguised binary opposition between 'reality' and 'truth' (cf. Foucault 1974: 320–321; cf. Rabinow 1986: 237–249). Certainly, exploring the individual concept of 'fairness' in Higher Blackley has also led me to recognize that such modes of perceiving are individually specific and mutually experienced. Because 'different communities differ in their problems, possibilities and visions of social justice' (Rosaldo 1993 [1989]: 194), perceptions of human dignity, and expectations and elaborations of equality and fairness are articulated as more local, even individual, rather than universal. Experiences of individuals in Higher Blackley who perceive 'unfairness' were in response to perceptions of dominant ideas and discourses perceived to be deeply unsettling to their ways of life and expectations of a good life. Yet, conceptions of 'fairness' offer tools (along with various other, entangled, contingent means) for individuals to evaluate the degree of one's 'difference' or 'belonging' vis-à-vis specific groups, for specific purposes, at specific times.

Acknowledgements

This article derives from a paper which I gave at the Anthropology of Britain workshop held at the University of Aberdeen in January 2008 and which was organized by Dr Arnar Árnason from the University of Aberdeen and Dr Katharine Tyler from the University of Surrey. I am very grateful for the encouraging and insightful feedback I received from all participants at this workshop, for the guidance and support from both Dr Árnason and Dr Tyler and for the constructive comments from reviewers. I am also very grateful for the sup-

port, encouragement and astute feedback from my colleagues at the University of Manchester, Dr Tony Simpson and Dr Michelle Obeid. Of course, all shortcomings are my own to claim.

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Note

1. Interestingly, Foucault (1980) critiqued his previous work on discourse in *The Order of Things* (1972), in his later publication *Power/Knowledge* (1980). He explained that what was lacking was the problem of the 'discursive régime', of the effects of power peculiar to the play of statements (1980: 113). He argues that he 'confused this too much with systemacity, theoretical form, or something like a paradigm'; whereas, 'this is a central problem of power', as it tries to locate everything on one level (1980: 113–114).

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