

**The Political Mobilization by Minorities in Britain:  
outcomes, side-effects and negative feedbacks of 'Race Relations'**

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# **The Political Mobilization by Minorities in Britain<sup>1</sup>: outcomes, side effects and negative feedbacks of ‘Race Relations’**

## **Introduction**

Within Britain’s shores, the political mobilization of minorities is much in the news headlines in the 1990s. Refugees and asylum seekers waiting seemingly endlessly for their applications to be processed by the Home Office, riot against the conditions of their detention at a centre in Campsfield, near Oxford. British Muslims mounting a legal challenge against a company director who refused to employ them have their case thrown out by an industrial tribunal in Sheffield on the basis that religious discrimination is not covered by the Race Relations Act. More monumentally, the publication of the McPherson report in February 1999, outlined recommendations for fundamental changes to British policies for integration. This can be seen as an outcome of a long running public campaign by minorities against racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system and the police, that was only in part sparked by the campaign started by the parents of a black student murdered in a racial attack. Greeted by miles of column inches in both the broadsheet and tabloid press, and lengthy editorial comment, one could be forgiven for thinking that the publication of this report - which is in fact of limited coherence - marks a rite of passage for British ‘race relations’ into a new enlightened era. But British politics and society has witnessed so-called ‘watersheds’ in Race Relations before, with the Scarman report in response to the urban disturbances of the early eighties, and the Swann report on education, and yet the position of minorities in relation to the British state, and the majority population, maintain a seemingly permanent potential for political conflict. Politicians and elites may sometimes attempt to manage such powder-keg topics, that are potentially divisive and party splitting, and keep them away from the political agenda. Experience tells us, however, that most of the attempts to provide institutional solutions relating to issues of migration and ethnic relations tend to provoke more rather than less public reactions and opposition.

Within this context, it is rather surprising that relatively little research has focused on the topic of ethnic mobilization - the protest and political demands that are made by minorities in relation to the British state and society. The debates and discussions among political elites in the formation of the British Race Relations system -policies, outcomes and implementation-, and the majority public concerns, have been relatively well documented (e.g., Solomos 1993). Recent important survey work has also made an important contribution to finding out how different minority groups see themselves within British society (Modood et. al. 1997). However, there have as yet been few systematic attempts to provide empirical information on the types of collective action by different minority groups in Britain, and the political conflicts over migration and ethnic relations policies that are made visible by political mobilization in the public domain. It is this ‘visible’ process of conflictual interaction between the state, and the ethnic majority and minority populations, over the relationship of the minority to the political community which is the topic of inquiry here. With the exception of the national overview by Rex (1991), many accounts of ethnic mobilization are limited by the fact that they are case studies, which makes it difficult to see to what extent their findings are of general significance for other minority groups, or for similar groups in

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different areas. Other accounts seem to focus rather one-sidedly on ethnic mobilization simply as a form of interest representation by the major political parties (e.g., Sewell 1993, Goulborne 1998, Geddes 1998a, Saggat 1998), which is, of course, an important dimension, but one which perhaps tells us more about the parties than the minorities themselves. Lastly, some accounts of ethnic mobilization seem more geared toward advocating some idiosyncratic normative version of 'black politics' than giving detailed and accurate information about the subject matter (e.g., Shukra 1998).

Faced by this apparent gap in academic knowledge, the first aim of this piece is straightforward and descriptive, it aims to give a first 'bird's eye' overview of the patterns, aims, forms and targets of mobilization by minorities in 1990s Britain. Secondly, following the recent important international work on citizenship, and the institutional channelling of political action by minorities (e.g., Ireland 1994), it is clear that patterns of minority mobilization can tell us much about the system of incorporation. Applying a political opportunity perspective that has been developed in an internationally comparative research project, Mobilization on Ethnic Relations Citizenship and Immigration (MERCIC)<sup>2</sup>, the different levels and types of mobilization between different groups will be interpreted as an indicator for the 'outcomes, side-effects and negative feedbacks' that have been produced by the British 'Race Relations' system for dealing with ethnic relations. It is to this theoretical perspective on political opportunities, drawn from social movement research that I now briefly turn.

### **Political Opportunities for Ethnic Mobilization**

In the international comparative literature on citizenship, migration and ethnic relations that has been booming in the 1990s, many authors have pointed to the ways that national policies and laws governing citizenship and naturalisation can impact upon the integration of minorities and shape the patterns of migration and ethnic relations politics (e.g., Brubaker 1992, Castles 1995). Some such as Patrick Ireland (1994) have described these institutional frameworks as a 'political opportunity structure', where variables of citizenship laws, naturalisation procedures, and social and political rights attributed to minorities, including social welfare, are seen to causally shape the patterns of the collective organisation by minorities and migrants. Others such as Adrian Favell (1998) have pointed that such institutional variables have a public discursive dimension - as 'public philosophies of integration' - which are embedded in a nationally specific set of language and symbols, and through which they achieve legitimacy. In general, however, one might claim that the application of opportunity approaches in the migrations field is still in its infancy.

Social movements scholars (e.g., Tarrow 1989, 1998, Kriesi et al. 1995) have long used the concept of 'political opportunities' for studying protest and collective mobilization, and it is also well established in the field that political opportunities have both institutional and discursive dimensions (see the contributions to McAdam, McCarthy and Zald eds. 1996). In the international comparative project MERCIC, a systematic attempt is made to apply a political opportunity approach for comparing 'claims-making' by collective actors in the field of migration and ethnic relations politics. By claims-making we refer not only to convention forms of protest and

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<sup>2</sup> The MERCIC project group includes the author and Ruud Koopmans at the WZB Berlin, Marco Giugni and Florence Passy at the University of Geneva, and Thom Duyven de Wit from the University of Amsterdam.

collective mobilization that have been the focus of much social movement studies, but also to speech acts and more conventional action forms which make demands visible in the public domain. For international comparison, the different national institutional forms and discourses about 'citizenship' have been identified as a key variable for defining the structure of political opportunities which confronts claims-makers.<sup>3</sup> Following the findings of much of the work on citizenship cited above, the determinants for the degree and form of inclusiveness/exclusiveness of a national politics for incorporating minorities can be defined along two broad dimensions of citizenship: first, the criteria for formal access to citizenship, and secondly, the cultural obligations that this access to citizenship entails. The approach and findings of this comparative research has been published elsewhere (Koopmans and Statham 1998, 1999a, 1999b forthcoming), and will not be elaborated further here. However, these two dimensions of citizenship can also be applied to the national level, in order to draw hypotheses for comparing the claims-making of different types of minority groups.

When applied to comparing different minorities internally within a nation, the first important dimension of political opportunities relates to status of citizenship rights of the minority group. Clearly, minorities with full national citizenship rights will have greater opportunities for access to institutional politics - e.g., through voting, party representation of interests - and social welfare rights, and be conferred a greater legitimacy in the public domain, than either foreign migrants, 'illegal immigrants' or asylum-seekers. The second dimension of political opportunities facing minorities, relates to the cultural obligations, which the state places on defining access to citizenship. These requirements depend on the specifics of a state's incorporation regime, and may range from assimilationist to cultural pluralist approaches, which differ in the degree of cultural homogeneity a state demands in attributing full rights to minorities. There are different ways in which the position of a minority is defined in relation to the state and majority population. Assimilationism is the more demanding variant, requiring the minority to undergo full conversion to the dominant national culture as the single and unitary focus of identity and belonging within the national political community. In contrast, cultural pluralism is the more accepting variant, where the state recognises the right of the minority to retain a degree of ethnic or religious difference as part of the deal for being fully included within the national political community. Of course, much is dependent on the specific categorisation of cultural diversity, which a state chooses to recognise as legitimate within its strategy for incorporating minorities within the framework of the national community. Translating this into opportunities, one would expect those minorities which are recognised by the state's criteria for attributing cultural pluralism - either on the basis of race, religion, or ethnicity - to find it easier to constitute themselves as independent collective actors, and to assert claims for a further extension of minority rights. Alternatively, minorities faced by assimilationist pressures, can be expected to

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<sup>3</sup> It should be made explicit here that when we refer to 'citizenship', we are not just referring to the 'narrow' meaning of citizenship in formal legal statutes, but to citizenship as a field where political and social rights and cultural obligations are contested by collective action. Authors such as Tilly (1997:600) define citizenship in terms, where access to citizenship is seen as a basis for political claims-making, 'Citizenship designates a set of mutually enforceable claims relating categories of persons to agents of governments... It differs from most other contracts in 1) binding whole categories of persons rather than single individuals to each other, 2) involving differentiation among levels and degrees of members, 3) directly engaging a government's coercive power. To the extent that governments control substantial resources, including coercive means, these three differentials single out citizenship as a potent form of contract liable to fierce contestation.'

mobilise across cultural boundaries -of religion, race or ethnicity- and to make demands as a common status group -e.g., as immigrants or along class lines- within the national political community.

More extensive details on how this model is applied to the British case are given in the empirical analysis. Before moving on to the analysis of ethnic claims-making in Britain, however, I first give a few details on the method that was used for retrieving the data from newspaper sources.

### **Reconstructing Claims-Making from Newspaper Reports: a note on method<sup>4</sup>**

The research strategy attempts to combine the quantitative rigour of recording collective actions with a qualitative sensitivity for the discursive elements of the claims that are made by actors. For the national study, the core data source has been retrieved from one national newspaper, *The Guardian*, which is a broadsheet newspaper with a reputation for a consistent and detailed coverage of the topic. Reports relating to the topic were collected from the 'hard news' sections of the newspaper reporting national daily events, omitting editorial and commentary sections, for three editions (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) of the six which appear each week. This meant using the newspaper materials as a record of significant public events, and bracketing out the journalistic opinion and commentary, which presents the reported news events. It should be made absolutely clear at this point, that this method has also been applied to other newspapers in order to control for biases in the primary newspaper source.<sup>5</sup>

For coding, the primary unit of analysis for 'claims-making' is the reported act. This follows in the methodological tradition of protest event analysis from social movement research (Rucht, Koopmans and Neidhardt eds. 1998), and not that of many media contents analyses which take the article as the unit of analysis. The coded acts for claims-making may either be a protest event (demonstration, riot, arson, etc.) or a conventional action form (public statement, press conference, policy decision, etc.). It needs emphasising that the opinions and claims made by the author of the news article are not coded, we are interested only in the acts and claims that are attributed to 'third parties'. All acts within the ethnic, racist/extreme right, and anti-racist mobilisation fields are coded, plus all acts by all actors in the issue fields of asylum/immigration, ethnic relations, anti-racism and xenophobia that occur on the national territory. Important variables refer to actor types; action forms; the size, target and intensity of protest mobilisation (where present); and the institutional or civil society actor on whom demands are made (addressee). Regarding the semantic contents of the claims, these are coded for the political aims and/or causal frames (where present). The different claims made by one actor in relation to a specific act are

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<sup>4</sup> A more detailed exposition on the theoretical underpinning to the method, and its international comparative as well as national application, appears in Koopmans and Statham (1999b).

<sup>5</sup> In the British case, *The Times*, *The Sun*, *The Daily Express*, *The Mail*, and *The Mirror* have been coded in addition to *The Guardian* for 1995. In all cases except *The Mirror* – where there were too few cases – similar overall proportions of actors appear in the other samples, as in the *Guardian*. This vindicates the method by showing that the political affiliation and even genre (broad-sheet/tabloid) of the source does not significantly affect the proportion of recorded collective actions by different actor types. For example, in the *Guardian* sample for 1995, 21.1% of the acts were by government actors; 18.6% by ethnic minority actors; and 1.7% by the extreme right; whereas for *The Sun*, a populist right-wing tabloid, the respective proportions were similar, 23.3% government actors, 16.3% ethnic minority actors, and 2.3% extreme right.

coded as part of the unitary act, and in cases when several demands are expressed, these are coded with the first as the first political aim, the second as the second political aim, and so on. As well as using a highly detailed category system, an attempt is made to store the discursive contents of claims, where this is feasible and necessary by retrieving the original speech of the claim, which is present in the original text.

The resultant database has a high level of flexibility. It is suitable for macro-level analyses of general issue-fields for cross-national research (see Koopmans and Statham 1998, and 1999a forthcoming), but at the same time it can give detailed information on a particular actor or movement and its strategic location within the national issue-field, which will be the main object of investigation here.

### **Claims-making in British Migration and Ethnic Relations: an empirical overview**

In this article I aim to analyse the national context of political mobilization by minorities in Britain. A broad definition is taken for political contention, which covers both institutional forms of political participation, such as the demands made by Members of Parliament from minorities that are made within the field of migration and ethnic relations politics, and extra-parliamentary forms of protest, such as peaceful demonstrations or violent riots. All forms of political mobilization that are considered are made and rendered visible in the public domain. The aim is to focus on the empirical contours of political mobilization by minorities, firstly, as a way of telling us about the context of political opportunities - institutional and discursive - that are available for different groups for making and expressing substantive political demands, and secondly, to look at the way in which groups themselves attempt to shape the institutional channels and discourses on integration which confront them, through their collective action. Following authors such as Tilly and Gamson, the term 'claims-making' is used for this broad range of forms of political contention, which of course includes not only the unconventional forms of protest that are often the focus of social movements research, but also speech acts, such as press releases and contentious public statements by other collective actors - institutional and civil society - in the field of migration and ethnic relations politics.

The first important dimension of claims-making that I wish to address relates to the position of minority claims-making in relation to the claims-making by all actors in the migration and ethnic relations field. Table one shows the distribution of claims-making by all actors in the migration and ethnic relations field. The fourth column gives the distribution for the full field, whereas the first three columns give the distribution in three sub-fields of migration and ethnic relation's politics. The first column 'immigration and asylum' politics refers to claims regarding the regulation of immigration in Britain, the position of resident migrants in Britain, and questions regarding their integration into British society. Whereas immigration and asylum politics deals with minorities without full rights of citizenship in Britain, the next two columns - what we might refer to together as ethnic relations politics - deal more centrally with the position of resident ethnic minorities, most of whom can be assumed to have British citizenship. The field 'minority politics' covers the claims which are made in the field regarding the relationship of the state to minorities, and the policies it undertakes regarding their integration and for dealing with cultural diversity, and the real or perceived problems which may arise from such policy approaches. In

the British context, this may be thought of as the first two parts of the famous three part equation for race relations policy, as defined by Roy Jenkins in the 1960s: 'equal opportunity and cultural diversity, in and atmosphere of mutual tolerance'. Lastly, the third field (column three) 'anti-racism versus xenophobic politics' may be seen as the third part of this equation namely 'mutual tolerance', and covers the claims which are made regarding the relationship between the ethnic majority and minority population in Britain, and the state's attempt to regulate and control this relationship. This includes the expressions of racist sentiments and racial attacks, as well as the anti-racist demands that are made in civil society, and the measures and initiatives which are taken by the state to regulate the mutual relationship between the ethnic majority and minority in the public domain, e.g., calls for the repression of extreme right mobilization, questions of public order.

-table one about here-

The first striking point to make regards the prominent position of minority claims-making in Britain. Minority groups and organisations account for more claims than any other institutional or civil society actor, and a fifth (19.4%) of the total claims-making in the field. This shows that in Britain, the politics of migration and ethnic relations is not just *about* minorities, but that it is a political field which is importantly *shaped* by them, and the claims which they make. In addition, it is worth noting, that international comparison with Germany, shows that minorities in Germany have a more marginal role (accounting for less than 7% of claims) in the political field than in Britain (Koopmans and Statham 1998). This finding is explained by Britain's relatively more inclusive ethnic relations policies than Germany, where many second and third generation minorities still have the status as 'foreigners' without political rights, and face high barriers of conversion to German citizenship. In contrast to Germany's ethnic exclusionism, British 'Race Relations' policies are more pluralist, which not only enhances the chances for the visibility, and the legitimacy of minority organisations and their claims, but also provides minority actors with established channels of access to political and legal decision-making, e.g., through bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). More detailed arguments regarding these internationally comparative findings have been made elsewhere (Koopmans and Statham 1998; 1999a). As I mentioned earlier, this work has emphasised the importance of the national versions of citizenship that are embodied in political institutional arrangements and public discourses, as set of 'political opportunities' which confront minorities in their attempts to act decisively and shape the nature of their relationship to the dominant state and society. From the national perspective, the important dimension for an internal comparison, is the way that the set of national institutional arrangements and public discourses which define the relationship of minorities within British society, provide opportunities differentially for the different categories of minority groups, and how this becomes manifest in their patterns of claims-making.

A first distinction to make is between those resident minorities who are fully included within the British political community and those who are not. In the British case, most of the immigrants to Britain from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan already possessed formal political and residence rights due to their being subjects of the British Commonwealth. When such conditions and rights to settlement were removed by nationality legislation and the introduction of highly restrictive barriers to new

immigration in the early seventies<sup>6</sup>, Britain already possessed a sizeable minority population which has grown naturally to the present day - when it accounts for about 5% of the population - without further large new influxes of migrants. Although possessing full citizenship, such minorities are officially recognised as a group which lack full equality, because they suffer the adverse effects of 'racial' discrimination, and the state takes on a limited obligation to redress this situation to the parity of 'equal opportunity' for individuals, especially in employment. In Britain, such policy attempts aiming for the social integration of minorities who were already resident and possessed full citizenship rights, were usually implemented parallel to greater restrictive immigration controls. The 1976 Race Relations Act and subsequent legislation recognised the principle of 'racial equality' for individuals, and introduced measures for redress against discrimination on the basis of 'race, colour or national origins' and 'equal opportunities' especially in the labour market. The Commission for Racial Equality was set up as a national watchdog to encourage fair and equal treatment, but with only limited advisory powers. In contrast to this 'equal opportunity' policy for 'racial minorities', Britain has maintained a highly restrictive policy toward new immigrants, even at times when immigration may actually have benefited economic growth. This has left new waves of migrants to Britain, such as political refugees and asylum-seekers, in the relatively weak position of facing a restrictive state treatment and hostile political discourse, which makes it extremely difficult for them to make political demands and gain access to basic rights of permanent residence and naturalisation. Such features of British migration and ethnic relations politics, and in particular the sharp division of the related topics of migration and ethnic relations into two strictly separate policy fields - immigration and race relations - have been well documented and do not bear repeating here (e.g., see Solomos 1993, Layton Henry 1995, Favell 1998). However, the effects of the differential policy treatment of resident minorities and resident migrants, is visible in the patterns of claims-making across the different fields of migrations and ethnic relations politics.

Firstly, minority groups and organisations have a three times greater share in claims-making in the field of minority politics (29.8%), and almost twice as much in the anti-racism/xenophobic field (16.8%) than they do in immigration politics (9.8%). This shows that resident minorities are able to draw on the legitimacy of the official political discourse on equal opportunities and anti-discrimination/anti-racism, and rights of access to institutional politics, to be the most prominent actors in the field of political demands about them, and their relationship to the national political community. By contrast, in the immigration politics field they are only the fifth most prominent actor in the political field, after on the one hand, the national government (27.6%), legislative (18.8%), and judiciary (9.5%), which together account for just less than half of all claims-making, and on the other, the human rights, welfare and pro-minority organisations, such as the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), which are the most prominent of the civil society actors (15.5%). Whereas minorities with full social and political rights, and official cultural recognition, play an important role in shaping the politics of ethnic relations, those without such

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<sup>6</sup> The earlier restrictive approaches to immigration of the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts 1962 and 1968, were consolidated in the 1971 Immigration Act which gave the government complete control over all immigration except for 'patrials', i.e. people with close connections with the United Kingdom through birth or descent. The system was further rationalised in the 1981 Nationality Act which made 'patrials' into British Citizens with a right to entry and settlement, and created the categories British Dependent Territories Citizenship and British Overseas Citizenship without such rights.



resources, such as asylum-seekers, political refugees and new foreign migrants, depend more heavily on the altruism of groups and organisations from the dominant culture and resident minority groups to represent their interests in the political conflicts about them.

An attempt was also made to compare the ideological position of the political fields of claims-making, in the way it defined the relationship of the minority to the national society. Acts of claims-making were coded with a 'valence' that was designed to give a qualitative indicator of the strategic dimension of the claim. If on the basis of the claim, an act of claims-making was either pro-minority or anti-racist it was given a valence of '1'. Conversely, if according to the claim, the claims-making act was either anti-minority or racist, it was attributed with a valence of '-1'. Acts of claims-making that were neither pro- nor anti-minority, nor racist/anti-racist were attributed with a valence 0. The 'average valence' score which is indicated on the bottom row of table one, thus gives an indicator of the relative pro- or anti-minority position of the political field, with a lower valence indicating a more anti-minority position, and a higher one a more pro-minority position, within a range of -1 to 1.

The average valence of immigration politics (0.32) is considerably lower than that for minority politics (0.51), whereas that for anti-racism/xenophobic politics (0.41) is an intermediate position and similar to the overall average valence of the total field (0.41). This finding confirms that the political field, which faces resident minorities, is more supportive of their interests and claims-making than that facing foreign migrants, such as asylum-seekers. This again relates to the more favourable position of minorities compared to foreign migrants, regarding the institutional policy measures and political discourses that define their relationship to the political community in Britain. This point has now been adequately made.

Looking at the state and party actors, which for immigration politics make up more than two thirds of claims-making (67.0%) compared to only two fifths (42.4%) for minority politics, it is clear that conflicts about immigration politics are more contested within institutional politics. About a fifth of claims-making in the immigration field (18.8%) was Parliamentary, compared to only 5.6% in minority politics. This indicates that immigration politics is more subject to party political competition in the institutional political arena, whereas minority politics is less so, a finding which supports those authors who claim that political parties have tended not to 'play the race card' and have attempted to keep race away from party competition, at least regarding the position of British minorities. This is clearly not the case for politics relating to the position of those minorities without access to full formal citizenship, immigrants/asylum-seekers, which has been much debated in Parliament in the 1990s along party political lines. Regarding ethnic relations in general, it appears that Parliament makes decisions and debates about racism in British society (13.4% of claims-making in anti-racism/xenophobic politics versus 5.6% in minority politics), much more than issues of integration and cultural diversity to do with minorities. This indicates that whereas the position of British minorities is seldom in itself disputed at the level of national institutional politics, the necessary policy measures for regulating the relationship between the ethnic majority and minority populations, in the attempt to bring mutual tolerance, is still a contentious issue within mainstream party politics.

Table 2 adds more detail to these general comments on political institutional actors, by looking at the proportion of claims-making by actors according to political party

identity. The distribution of claims between the parties broadly fits with the expectation drawn from the fact that for the period (1990-6) of the data, there was a Conservative government (59.0%) and Labour opposition (29.8%). The most striking finding however, concerns the average valences of the parties. Here the Labour party (0.72) appears as an institutional actor which strongly supports and represents the interests of minorities, whereas the Conservative party takes the opposite position and is much more negative regarding the interests of minorities and migrants. The Liberal Democrats have an intermediary position, whereas the small proportion of claims made by the extreme-right British National Party - which is of course not represented in Parliament, and faces the highly restrictive institutional barriers of the first-past-the-post electoral system - takes up a clear anti-minority, anti-migrant position (3.9%; -0.73).<sup>7</sup> These findings indicate that migration and ethnic relations politics is subject to party political competition in Britain, and that the Labour party has a special position in representing minority interests within institutional politics, which is also underlined by the presence of claims-making by minority Labour MPs (11.4% of Labour claims-making). In contrast, the Conservative Party comes out with a negative position on minorities. One ought to be cautious here, and add that the Conservatives were the government of the day and that governments are always forced into more negative decisions and actions than opposition parties. However, it is clear that facing a situation where there is party political competition over migration and ethnic relations between the two major parties, that minorities cannot expect their interests to be represented by institutional party politics without their own intervention into the field, either through the vehicle of the Labour party or autonomous extra-parliamentary activism.

-table two about here-

In fact, more than seventy per cent (70.8%) of Conservative claims-making was in the immigration politics field, which had an extremely negative average valence (-0.5), whereas for the two ethnic relations fields the Conservatives held a more positive position (0.03). In contrast, less than half of Labour's claims-making was in the immigration politics field (44.7%) though it held a strong pro-minority position (0.8). These findings indicate that immigration politics has become a highly polarised field in the 1990s, which is subject to intense party political competition. Whereas the position of British minorities within society is less contested and conflictual - though there is still sufficient difference between the major parties to make conflict possible, especially on issues of anti-racism/xenophobia - the position of asylum-seekers and other foreign migrants in relation to British society is an issue of major party political conflict. One might argue here, that the Conservative Party sees a potential for tapping into popular British anti-foreign and xenophobic sentiments and situating itself as the anti-immigrant, anti-asylum-seeker party. It is interesting to note that the extreme right has not been able to establish itself in the immigration field in Britain (none of its claims were in this field), perhaps in part because of the Conservative Party's dominance of this issue on the right of political spectrum. The co-optation of the issue by the Conservatives leaves little discursive space for the extreme right to thematise the issue, though it also is clear that at the present time, that the British extreme right lack sufficient institutional resources to make a serious party political challenge on any issue. Regarding the two main parties, it will be interesting to see

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<sup>7</sup> Such findings fit in, of course, with the large body of research which has studied the allegiances between minorities and the major political parties, and seen the Labour party as the primary vehicle for minority advancement in British politics (e.g. Geddes 1998b, Sewell 1993).

what the position of the Labour government in office will be on immigration and asylum politics, and whether the anti-foreign migrant position that we have found for the Conservatives is explained more by party identity or the pressures of governmental office.

The discussion of the overall field of migration and ethnic relations politics has sufficed to show that minority claims-making is not superfluous in Britain, and that minorities are an autonomous independent actor, not least because co-optation by institutional actors such as political parties cannot be relied upon to fully represent minority interests. In the remainder of the paper we turn to the minorities themselves.

### **Minority Claims-making in Britain**

The literature on social movements indicates that the impact of political opportunities on levels of mobilization is curvilinear. When facing highly favourable or highly unfavourable political opportunities, mobilization levels are likely to be low, in the first case, mobilization is not necessary and demands are taken up quickly by a responsive political system, and in the second, it is too difficult and there are few chances of success (see e.g., Tarrow 1998, Kriesi et al. 1995). In Britain, although significant steps have been taken through race relations and anti-discrimination policies to combat the inequality and discrimination faced by minorities, the political opportunities facing minorities are not sufficiently favourable to make mobilization superfluous, not least because the state has itself been identified as a key source of disadvantage and discrimination in society. Of course, not all minorities are in a position to mobilize political demands in the public domain. For example, they may lack the material and organisational resources for entering the political field and making their demands visible in the first place, or alternatively they may lack the symbolic resources of a legitimate and officially recognised 'status', which is likely to make their claims appear more justified and reasonable by other actors in the political discourse.

The composition of resident minorities in Britain shows that there are about 900,000 people of African-Caribbean origins, and about 1,500,000 with origins in the Indian subcontinent. As these two groups comprise about 80% of the minority population in Britain<sup>8</sup>, most of the remainder of the discussion will focus on a comparative discussion of these two large macro-categories of minorities. Reference to other categories of minorities will make to draw out specific points. As we shall be comparing groups from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan, one can assume that the large majority of these people already possess full access to formal rights and British nationality. Much of our discussion will therefore focus on the assimilationism/cultural pluralism dimension of citizenship that we referred to earlier, the set of cultural obligations which a state places as a requirement for access to the political community.

The degree of assimilationism/cultural pluralism in a state's approach for integrating minorities varies from country to country, or may vary within a country over time. As stated earlier, when translated into opportunities the two approaches lead to different expectations in the claims-making of minorities. Faced by the pressures of a

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<sup>8</sup> According to the 1991 Census which included a question on ethnic origin, ethnic minorities account for 5.5% of the national population: 1.6% are 'Black' (Black-Caribbean; Black African; Black-Other), and 2.7% 'South Asian' (Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi) (Mason 1995:35).

strict assimilationist approach, where minority groups are expected to give up all form of cultural allegiance other than to the nation state in exchange for full membership in the political community, mobilization can be expected to crosscut cultural boundaries of race, religion or ethnicity. Conversely, faced by a cultural pluralist approach, where a form of cultural diversity is officially recognised, one would expect minority claims-making to be made by a plethora of different types of autonomous cultural groups. The British approach is a hybrid between the extremes of assimilationism and cultural pluralism. A commitment is given to recognising one form of cultural diversity -race- as a necessary form of redress to discrimination which prevents full access to social and political equality for racial minorities. However, this official public support for 'racial equality' represents only a minimalist cultural pluralism, where other types of cultural diversity, such as religious identification, are relegated to the status of individual private concerns.<sup>9</sup> Under such conditions, one would expect to find mobilisation by groups along racial lines, where minorities would have their demands recognised as legitimate by the official pluralist approach. On the contrary, minority groups which mobilise on a cultural categorisation that is not recognised by the state - e.g. a non-recognised religion- face high barriers to making their demands heard in the political domain, as their group status is a legitimate basis for seeking redress to discrimination. Facing such assimilationist pressures, where its self-identification does not fit the state's categorisation for cultural pluralism, the minority group is likely to be marginalized from access to the political system and subject to internal pressures of fragmentation, unless they can find a way of linking their demands to the official basis of the policy -e.g. by racializing the definition of religious discrimination. Such an alignment of minority claims-making toward the discourse of the dominant policy approach for cultural pluralism, is likely to be the best chance that the minority has for sustaining its challenge, and gaining support for its demands from other state and civil society actors.

From the perspective of the minority groups themselves, it is possible to identify four different strategies for claims-making, which they may use in response to the set of institutional and discursive opportunities, which confront them. These are arrived at by relating the self-definition of a minority group's claims-making to the definition, which it is attributed by the majority group in the state's policy approach to integration:<sup>10</sup>

The *assimilative strategy*: where the self-categorisation of minority claims-making primarily emphasises the majority group dimension of membership to the political community, which is embodied in the state's integration policy approach, and which relegates the minority identity.

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<sup>9</sup> The characteristics of British Race Relations on the cultural pluralism/assimilationism axis have been much discussed from a normative perspective in the literature on multiculturalism. See for example, Rex's (1996) discussion of a 'two domains' thesis -advocating assimilationism in the public domain and cultural pluralism in the private domain- which is based on reference to the British case. Parekh (1998) similarly brands Britain as a mixed assimilationist/cultural pluralist variant, which he labels a 'bifurcationist' case. Our point of departure is in contrast empirical rather than normative, and to see how the idiosyncratic version of British Race Relations has shaped differential opportunities for mobilization by different minority groups.

<sup>10</sup> These four strategies of minority claims-making have been changed and adapted for my research from Modood (1997), who takes them from Hutnik (1991), but they are in any case easily derived from the common distinctions which are made in the literature on citizenship and national modes of integration for minorities, and that have been discussed above.

The *dissociative strategy*: where the self-categorisation of minority claims-making is made in terms of minority group membership, and not in terms of the majority group labelling, that is embodied in the official categorisation and language of the state integration policy approach.

The *acculturative strategy*: where the self-categorisation of minority claims-making is a mixture of the dissociative and assimilative dimensions. This is an intermediary position which strikes a balance between the majority/state-sponsored categorisation for membership to the political community, and a self-identification as a member of a minority group that is not fully recognised by the state's policy approach.

The *marginal strategy*: where claims-making reflects neither the majority/state recognised categorisation for minorities, nor the membership of a minority in the national community. In this case, claims-making rejects categorisation either as a 'minority' or in relation to the dominant authority of the host state, for example by defining itself as a transnational community, and its interests beyond categorisation within the receiving state.<sup>11</sup>

The first dimension of minority claims-making that I wish to look at concerns the type of collective identities that are used by the minority actors in the migration and ethnic relations field. The collective identities which minority groups use in their claims-making to enter the political field are not a given, but they are specifically constructed by the group as a self-definition of its relationship to the wider political community, and other ethnic groups. In this sense, the specific collective identity by which a group makes itself visible when entering the public domain, from the range of possible alternatives, is a strategic dimension of claims-making. The process of 'self' and 'other' labelling by minority and majority communities, and the nature of the symbolic boundary markers on which such distinctions are made, are important for defining the position of a minority in relation to the set of institutional and discursive opportunities which it faces for entering the political system. Minorities may optimise their chances of success by organising their claims-making along lines of national origin, ethnicity, religion, or common status, depending on which identity is recognised as being legitimate by a country's migration and ethnic relations politics. For example, minorities of Pakistani background in Britain may make collective claims as 'Pakistanis', 'Asians', 'Muslims', or 'Blacks'. The actual collective identity, which appears in the field, is a political outcome that gives important information on the nature of the relationship between the minority and the state.

Table three shows the collective identities that were expressed by minority claims-making in Britain. It distinguishes between four broad types of identities. First, 'status groups' are where the minorities identify themselves as having a common status that crosscuts ethnic or cultural boundaries. Examples here include claims-making by groups defining themselves as 'ethnic minorities', or 'asylum-seekers'. Secondly, minority claims-making may be on the basis of 'racial' labelling or self-identification as 'Black' or the generic identity 'Asian'. Third, religious identification may be the important symbolic boundary marker in claims-making, or in the fourth case, it might be common national or ethnic descent.

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<sup>11</sup> Theoretically, there is a fifth strategy for claims-making, an 'integral' one, where collective claims-making is not necessary because the minority group is fully integrated, equal and recognised by the state and majority population. A close empirical example to this situation would be EU citizens in Britain. Such cases are not relevant to the present discussion in any meaningful sense.

-table three about here-

In table 3, there are two columns and a distinction is also made between ‘minority groups’ and ‘named organisations’. This distinction is made because the collective identities which appear in the sample of claims-making have been drawn from newspapers, and in some cases, this may mean that the collective identity which appears may have been ascribed by the journalist rather than existing from the group’s self-expression. For this reason, the second column of named organisations includes only those cases of claims-making where the actual name of an organisation was present. In addition to removing the possibility of journalistic ascription of collective identities, the second column therefore also excludes those groups which have relatively low levels of formal autonomous organisation, such as for example ‘asylum-seekers’, or groups of minority ‘youths’. However, it gives concretely reliable information on the identities of minority organisations involved in public campaigns.

It is well documented that in Britain, ‘race’ is the state sponsored category for cultural difference that has been applied in the attempt to integrate minorities within the national community. Integration policies have been framed by the concept of ‘racial equality’, which has been backed up by several rounds of legislation since the 1976 Race Relations Act, and state sponsored bodies such as the national Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), and local race equality councils which operate with a mandate to uphold these principles (see e.g., Layton Henry 1994, Solomos 1993). In the British case, the racial term ‘Black’ has not only become the predominant form of identification for minorities with backgrounds in the West Indies or Africa, but it has acquired the notion of a ‘status group’ for representing all minorities in general. Looking at the first column of table three, more than a third (36.7%) of minority claims-making used racial identities, which was higher than either religious or national and ethnic forms of identification. Of the minority claims-making using racial identification, virtually all occurred with the officially sponsored racial sub-categorisations of ‘Black’, ‘Black and Asian’, ‘Asian’ or ‘Black African’ that similar to those which appear in the national population census. Allied to the fact that another 8.4% appeared with the status ‘ethnic minorities’, at first glance it appears that there is a strong tendency toward an assimilative strategy by about half the resident minorities in Britain.<sup>12</sup>

Of the African-Caribbeans in Britain, the majority -just under two thirds- have origins in the Caribbean. It is therefore striking that there were no cases in the data of claims-making on the basis of national or ethnic origin by minorities with Caribbean ancestry, such as ‘Jamaicans’ or ‘West Indians’ despite the relatively large number of migrants with such characteristics. In the case of Africans, the few cases of claims-making by national origin as ‘Nigerians’ or ‘Zairians’ were by groups without British nationality, who were seeking political asylum, refugee status or resident rights, and did not have access to the assimilationist criteria. This indicates that virtually all claims-making by British minority groups with Caribbean or African national origins or ancestry takes place under the racial label ‘Black’.

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<sup>12</sup> Of course, in a pure sense this is a qualified assimilative strategy, in that British conditions for assimilation, unlike those in France, for example, are themselves on the basis of a recognition of racial identity, and so involve a degree of recognition of cultural pluralism.

The British state policy extended the racial categorisation to include the later waves of migrants from the Indian subcontinent under the label 'Asian'. However, there are relatively more assimilative strategies of self-identification in the claims-making of African-Caribbeans as 'Blacks' than by groups from the Indian-subcontinent as 'Asians'. In contrast to the African-Caribbeans, the Indian subcontinent minorities who do not make claims on the assimilative basis as 'Asians' or 'Blacks' make claims on a dissociative basis of national origins as 'Pakistanis', 'Indians' and 'Bangladeshis'. On the surface, this finding illustrates a point that has been made by some authors (e.g. Modood 1988) that British Race Relations policies and the concept and identity of 'black' have been more geared toward the integration of African-Caribbean minorities than those from the Indian subcontinent.

This last point relates to a striking finding from table 3, that a quarter of all minority claims-making (24.5%) occurs on the basis of religious self-definition, and this figure rises to almost a half of all claims-making by named organisations (47.9%), virtually all of which is by organisations with 'Muslim' or 'Islamic' identities. Within British Race Relations policy, there is no recognition of a principle of 'religious equality'. The British state has its own Anglican Church, and it upholds general religious tolerance, though religion itself is relegated to the private domain of individual conscience and not seen as a field for state intervention. Specific policy measures against religious discrimination apply only to Northern Ireland where they are designed to prevent sectarian conflict. Jews and Sikhs are recognised, however, as 'ethnic' and not 'religious' minorities by British law, a recognition which does not extend to Muslims. Acts of discrimination against Muslims in employment or housing cannot be prosecuted under the British race-centric anti-discrimination law. At face value, the high proportion of minority claims-making under the identification 'Muslim/Islamic' can be seen as evidence for a high level of dissociative self-identification strategies in Britain.

Estimates put the number of Muslims in Britain at roughly 900,000, not all of whom will be practising religion to a significant degree (e.g., Rex 1996). In the British case, 'Muslim' or 'Islamic' claims-making is in most cases by groups with origins or ancestry in the Indian subcontinent, and principally in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Whereas British policies for racial equality appear to have produced assimilative strategies of self-identification among African Caribbeans, they have produced dissociative strategies of self-identification among a significant proportion of politically active Indian subcontinent minorities. This important finding illustrates that there are limits to the capacities of a state's migration and ethnic relations politics to shape the identities of minorities in their own image, and it indicates that there is at least a grain of truth in the emphasis which multicultural theorists place on cultural difference and the expression of particularity as the key to minority claims-making (e.g., Young 1998).

When we turn to the second column in table 3, and consider claims-making by minority organisations more closely, it becomes possible to add some detail to the general findings. Almost half (47.9%) of the named claims-making organisations had 'Muslim/Islamic' identities, whereas another 5% had identities from the national country/region of origin in the Indian subcontinent. Together these can be considered as the organisations representing the Indian subcontinent minorities. It is worth noting that no organisations made claims as 'Asians', the state's preferred label for such minorities, although the Black and Asian Police Officers' Association does provide a

single example of the use of an official 'racial' label, not surprisingly for an organisation within a state institution. As 'Asian' and 'Muslim/Islamic' and 'Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Indian' are alternative forms of identification for principally the same groups -and especially groups from Pakistan and Bangladesh-, the data on claims-making shows that Indian subcontinent minorities are organized around types of identities which contradict the British state's racial categorisation of them. Although this is indicative of a dissociative strategy of self-identification, where the minority identity is the dominant form of expression, a closer look at some of the organisations somewhat qualifies this statement.

Two thirds of the named Muslim/Islamic organisations identified themselves with British society or their locality in Britain, by their name and scope of operation- e.g., Muslim Youth Movement of Great Britain, Muslim UK Action Committee, Supreme Council of British Muslims' Conference - and so can be seen to have strong acculturative dimensions to their strategies of self-identification. Of the other 'Muslim/Islamic' organisations, a ninth had dissociative self-identification strategies, such as the Islamic Society for Religious Tolerance, whereas the remaining two ninths had marginal self-identification strategies, such as the People's Mojahedin, and al-Muhajiroun, whereas one was actually the British version of Farrakhan's Nation of Islam movement, which draws support from African-Caribbeans.

These findings make clear that much Muslim claims-making also identifies itself within the specific national context, as 'British', and so should rightly be seen as acculturative. It indicates that the explanation for a significant amount of 'Muslim' claims-making relates to the specificity of the British political context for incorporating minorities. The high levels of 'British Muslim' mobilization cannot simply be explained by the 'primordialist' argument which has some popular saliency, that there is a world-wide rise of militant Islam. On the contrary, many Muslims see themselves as British<sup>13</sup>, and the high level of claims-making is better explained by the specific set of political opportunities, which face them in Britain. British Muslims are a group on whom the state confers 'racial equality' which provides a degree of legitimacy to their status as a minority, and on this basis they find sufficient resources of recognition to mobilize for an extension of cultural pluralism by the British state to include the principle of religious equality for Islam. In addition, the groups are sufficiently well organized at the community level to make themselves visible as an autonomous actor in the public domain, despite the fact that making demands for religious rather than racial equality provokes strong reactions from sections of the majority society and the state itself. A final point to make regarding the Indian subcontinent minorities, is that even among the few organisations with 'national homeland' identities, there were examples of 'British' identification, e.g., the Council of British Pakistanis. Again this underlines that a substantial majority of the claims-making of minorities from the Indian subcontinent should perhaps correctly be characterised as acculturative rather than dissociative.

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<sup>13</sup> Of the minority groups questioned about identity by Modood et al (1997: 329), 66% and 60% of two groups who can be considered predominantly Muslim, Pakistanis and Bangladeshi, answered in the affirmative when asked if they thought of themselves as 'British'. This compares with the similar figure of 64% for Caribbeans, who are of course predominantly non-Muslim. It should be also noted that this research found that minorities did not think of identities in a mutually exclusive zero-sum way, and that in most cases they saw themselves as being both 'British' and belonging to a 'ethnic' group. This indicates that minorities may select the identities which they use to enter the public and political domain strategically, which is, of course, the premise of the data which I have collected.



Regarding the named 'Black' organisations (29.1%), it is worth noting that virtually all of the organisations identified themselves as representing 'black' minority interests in general rather than specific demands for African-Caribbeans - though as I have noted 'black' in the British context does primarily mean African-Caribbean. The Society of Black Lawyers and the National Black Caucus alone accounted for two thirds of the 'black' organisations. What is interesting here is that such organisations indicate the important representative function of middle class organisations for minorities in general, but the African-Caribbean minority in particular. There were very few autonomous 'Black' organisations that are clearly linked with the African-Caribbean minority, one example being a group calling itself the 'Black Panthers UK'. This relative absence of organised African-Caribbean mobilization should not be interpreted as an indication that British assimilationism on the basis of 'race' has been so successful, that their claims-making is superfluous. The fact that the middle class 'Black' organisations of lawyers are so active indicates that this is not the case. Indeed the lack of autonomous African-Caribbean organisations might be taken as evidence of 'minorization' (Rath 1991). According to this interpretation, the British system of race relations provides limited opportunities for access to the political system - channelled along the racial category 'black' - that are taken up by the middle class organisations, whereas the remainder of the African-Caribbean minorities are structured into a position of disadvantage and marginalisation, lacking the resources to mobilize on the basis of an autonomous collective identity and challenge the British state.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, although the self-identification strategies of the 'Black' organisations are primarily assimilative, what is not clear is the extent to which this serves the full African-Caribbean community.

According to the identities of minority claims-making, it seems that the vast majority of minorities define their interests within Britain, even though in the case of Muslims their self-identification does not fit within the institutional and discursive framework of Race Relations. In contrast to what some of the literature on diasporas and postnationalism (e.g., Shain and Sherman 1998, Jacobson 1996) might predict, there is relatively little evidence of minority organisations which define themselves beyond the nation as 'transnational' communities - only 7% of all named organisations, and only then if one counts all fundamentalist Islamic organisations as 'transnational'. If most minorities define themselves within the British context, then the range of self-identification strategies which are applied are best explained contextually by political opportunities, as outcomes, unintended consequences, and negative feedbacks, from the peculiar hybrid of assimilationism and limited pluralism defined by 'race equality' that has dominated the integrationist thinking of British elites since the early sixties.

Table four moves onto another important dimension of claims-making, the action repertoires that are used by minority groups for entering the political field. In addition to presenting the overall distribution of the action-forms used by minority groups, we also compare those of different groups, that are defined on the basis of their collective identities (from table 3). Regarding the four categories that we use for action-forms: 'conventional' refers to public statements, press conferences, and other conventional forms of gaining access to the public domain; 'demonstrative' protests, are those

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<sup>14</sup> This interpretation is in fact supported by the findings of focus group discussions which I conducted with African Caribbeans in London, who were highly critical of the élites within their own community, and the 'representative' function which they perform. At the same time they expressed admiration for the level of organisation of Indian subcontinent minorities, which in some cases reminded them of the community support networks which they remembered from the Caribbean.

symbolic non-confrontational actions such as peaceful demonstrations, petitions, and vigils; 'confrontational' protests are strikes, hunger strikes, boycotts, and other forms of confrontation; and finally, 'violent' protests are illegal action-forms, including violence causing damage to people or property, attacks, and in the extreme case murder.

-table four about here-

The first point to draw from table 4 is that those groups which are most directly recognised by the British migration and ethnic relations politics have a more institutionalised and conventional action repertoire, than those which have more limited channels of access to institutional power and less recognition. Thus ninety per cent of the claims-making of the status group 'Ethnic minorities' and the racial status group 'Black' took conventional forms such as public statements. The same incidentally holds for the 'ethnically' recognised religious group, 'Jews', where 12 out of 13 cases were conventional. In contrast, the group lacking basic rights of residence and nationality, asylum-seekers, needed to use many confrontational protests (44%) to make their demands visible in the public domain.

Another point to make from table four is that more than two thirds (77%) of claims-making by groups from the Indian subcontinent with national or ethnic forms of identification -Sikhs, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Indians and Bengalis- used conventional action forms which is much higher than the official racial label 'Asian' (46%). This indicates that the post-colonial basis of British Race Relations gives a degree of legitimacy to the use of the 'old' colonial national identities, and underlines once more the difficulty of groups from the Indian subcontinent for identifying themselves as a single racial minority group. Following on from this, another striking feature is the contrast between 'Asian' and 'Muslim' groups. Although 'Asian' is the officially recognised racial status category, which would lead one to expect relatively easy access to the political field, less than half of 'Asian' claims-making took conventional forms (46%) and more than a third (39%) were actually violent and illegal actions. In contrast, almost three-quarters of 'Muslim' claims-making was conventional (72%), despite the non-recognition of Islam by British Race Relations policies. Indeed the action repertoire of 'Muslim' claims-making has a similar distribution to that of all minority groups, which once more quashes the popular myth of Islam being a militant threat to law and order in British society. The relatively high number of 'Asian' violent actions were mostly committed by gangs of 'Asian' youths, attacking the majority population. Whereas 'Muslim' claims-making is highly organised (see Table 3 column two) and the community has established an organisational infra-structure for mobilising demands within the framework of British society -partly to compensate for the lack of state recognition and resources it receives- the violence of 'Asian youths', is indicative of the alienated few, who are not provided for by either the state or the community network. These findings provide some support for the body of work which sees some marginalized 'Asian' youths as being doubly disadvantaged, through existing 'between two cultures' Britain and the Homeland culture, neither of which fit or provide adequately for their aspirations.

In Table 5, I turn to the institutions and civil society organisations, which are addressed by minority, claims-making. Regarding all minority claims-making (column three), the first point to make is that just less than a third of all demands (29.8%) were made on the police and security agencies. This high proportion of demands were

principally directed against the police - although there were also several cases relating to the armed services - and cover demands relating to real or perceived discrimination in the carrying out of law enforcement, and also the charges of racist violence and abuse by police officers. Clearly, this is a prominent concern among minorities, and in a state which upholds the principle of racial discrimination, minorities are able to target a large proportion of their demands toward state institutions, which they perceive as failing to live up to the standards, which it sets itself. The government (18.7%) and judiciary (9.9%) together account for just less than another third of all addressees, which is again indicative of the institutional channels for redress which are available for minority claims-making when the reality of state provision on discrimination fails to live up to expectations. Another point to make briefly, is that there is little evidence that British minorities target their demands on supranational institutions (less than 2%), which the thesis of 'postnationalism' (Soysal 1994, 1997) -fashionable in much contemporary citizenship literature- suggests is an increasingly important type of claims-making in an age of globalisation. Even the few examples that exist, are by organisations, such as the Supreme Council of British Muslims, calling on the Allied Coalition to cease hostilities against Iraq during the Gulf War, and so cannot be taken in any meaningful sense as evidence for minorities reacting to a 'new' set of supranational opportunities provided by international human rights institutions and conventions which operate beyond the parameters of the nation state (for detailed discussion comparing Britain and Germany, see Koopmans and Statham 1998). Minorities in Britain target their demands predominantly on the national state institutions.

-table five about here-

Moving on to compare the claims-making by different groups (columns one and two), we find striking differences in the addressees of 'Black' and 'Muslim' organisations and groups. An important difference is the proportion of claims where there was an identifiable addressee. More than 80% of claims by 'Black' groups and organisations were made on an identifiable actor or institution, whereas only 30% of demands by 'Muslim' groups and organisations had an addressee. This confirms that the focus on racial discrimination by the British state policy approach provides more opportunities for groups that are defined on the officially sponsored racial basis -i.e. 'Black' groups- to make demands on other actors and institutions than it does for those which identify on a religious basis - i.e. Muslims. According to our data, it is relatively harder for Muslims to find an addressee for making their demands resonate within the institutional framework of British politics. As we shall see below (table 6), many of the demands made on British state institutions were for an extension of the concept of discrimination to include religious discrimination. The reverse pattern is evident for 'Black' groups, just under two thirds of their demands were made on the police/security agencies (43.1%) and the judiciary (19.0%) alone. As a group who have a legitimate recognised status within British race relation's politics, 'Black' claims-making is channelled toward the state institutions, which are bound to enforce redress for discrimination. Thus a large proportion of 'Black' claims targeted the police, both for discriminatory treatment of minorities and for (real or perceived) racist acts, and a significant proportion were directed toward the judicial system which is where the individuals from minorities can seek redress for acts of discrimination.

A last point to make from table 5 concerns the higher than average proportion of claims made on civil society organisations by 'Black' groups (about 25% compared to the average of about 20%). This again relates to the opportunity, which officially sponsored groups have for criticising the real or alleged discriminatory practices of private institutions within a society that upholds the principle of racial equality. The large number of 'Black' claims addressing 'other civil society organisations' (17.3%) primarily targeted the Bar School College of Law, and was part of the concerted campaign by the National Society of Black Lawyers against alleged discriminatory practices in the recruitment, selection and training that serves the British legal system. This provides another example of 'Black' claims-making being channelled directly within the British institutional framework by being able to draw on the legitimacy of the official recognition for 'racial equality'.

Finally, I turn to another important dimension of minority claims-making, the types of claims, and the political fields in which they are made. In table 6, the field of migration and ethnic relations politics is divided into six sub-fields: 'immigration and asylum', 'integration and anti-discrimination', 'cultural diversity and group politics', 'anti-racist and xenophobic', 'ethnic conflict', and 'homeland politics'. Immigration and asylum politics is the same as that defined for table 1, covering issues relating to border controls and the position of groups without rights of residence, such as asylum-seekers and refugees. Homeland politics refers to issues which are defined outside the politics of the host society, and which refer to conflicts or issues in the country of origin of the minority. The ethnic conflict category refers to issues and conflicts between different minority groups that occur within the British national context, which cannot be traced to homeland politics, and the attempts to regulate such conflicts. This includes, for example, inter-ethnic violence between 'Black-African' and Islamic students at a College in London. Integration and anti-discrimination politics and cultural diversity and groups politics may be taken together as two different sides of ethnic relation politics, which covers a state's relationship and policy approach for integrating and dealing with minorities. Reminiscent of the famous distinction made by Roy Jenkins' formula for the British integration of resident minorities in the sixties, 'equal opportunity and cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance', integration politics and cultural diversity politics are the issue fields represented by the first two parts of this equation. Thus integration and anti-discrimination politics covers the set of state policy measures and actions for integrating minorities, and their implementation and outcomes, whereas cultural diversity and group politics is the field where the state regulates for aspects of pluralism and the cultural diversity of the minority group. Finally, anti-racist and xenophobic politics covers the third part of the Jenkins' formula - 'mutual tolerance', and issues relating to the regulation of the relationships between the majority and minority populations in the public domain. My discussion of table 6 will focus on minority claims in these three issue fields, which are central to understanding the political conflicts over relationships between the state and resident minorities, and between the majority and minority British publics.

-table six about here-

The first column that I wish to draw attention to is the average valence of non-minority actors (column two). This ranges from -1 which represents an anti-minority/racist position to 1 which represents a pro-minority/anti-racist position (see explanation for table 1). It gives an indication of the support or opposition from other

actors within the political issue field which confront minorities in their claims-making. A first point to make here, is that there is a much more supportive set of discursive alliances available for minority claims-making in the integration field (0.55), than in the cultural diversity field (0). This underlines that the state and society in Britain is more geared to upholding the assimilationist principles of integration under the existing race relations formula, than it is to supporting demands for a more radical version of cultural pluralism - e.g. by recognition of religious discrimination or a set of group rights. Indeed, just more than a tenth of all claims-making (11.8%) related to issues of cultural pluralism in Britain, and half of these (50.0%) were made by minorities themselves. By contrast, more than two tenths (20.2%) of all claims-were made in the integration field, and only a quarter (23.0%) were made by minority groups themselves. Thus although minorities made roughly the same amount of claims in both the integration and cultural diversity/group politics fields, they faced a much more supportive discursive field for demands relating to institutionally sponsored aspects of integration, than they did for expressions of their own identity and group-based demands. Conversely, cultural diversity is an issue field, which is shaped and pushed to an important extent by minorities themselves.

Turning now to look at the distribution of demands made by different groups (columns five and six), there is a striking difference in the claims-making by 'Black' and those by 'Muslim' groups and organisations. Whereas more than half of 'Black' claims-making (51.4%) was related to integration politics and another sizeable third (37.2%) to anti-racist/xenophobic politics, together these two fields were the subject of just more than a tenth (10.6%) of 'Muslim' demands. In contrast, more than two thirds of 'Muslim' demands related to issues of cultural diversity/group politics, compared to about only a twelfth (7.1%) of demands by 'Blacks'. Following our earlier discussion, 'Black' groups can be considered primarily as the demands of African-Caribbeans, whereas 'Muslim' groups can be considered as the demands of Indian subcontinent minorities, and Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in particular. At the risk of repeating points that have already been made, the marked difference in the distribution of claims between 'Black' and 'Muslim' groups can once more be explained by the differential opportunities facing them. 'Blacks' are defined as a racial minority by British politics, and they see themselves as such, by making anti-discrimination demands relating to the state treatment of minorities - 'equal opportunities' policies, and discrimination in the labour market, law enforcement agencies, and judicial system - and anti-racist demands relating to unfair treatment in civil society - racist abuse, majority society attitudes and acts. The official language and system of British race relations politics structures an institutional framework and political discourse - a set of political opportunities - which channels the demands of this recognised group into focusing on their perceived or real unequal treatment by the state and majority society.

The claims by 'Black' organisations are often made in assimilative tones demanding a further enforcement of the principle of racial equality, for example, the demand by a group for black representation on juries to redress the effects of racial prejudice: 'The vast majority of black defendants face juries who are often ignorant bigoted and blatantly hostile to the defendant before a trial even begins.' Another example of a 'Black' group's claims relates to the effects of racial inequality in the judiciary: 'Blacks are over-policed and fed into a criminal justice system, where they are less likely to get bail, more likely to be acquitted but, if convicted, likely to get longer sentences than whites'. A large number of the demands made by 'Black' organisations,

and particularly the middle-class organisations, are made as part of an assimilative strategy, but one which demands an extension of the current state and society practices, and a more radical implementation of racial equality as a set of outcomes. In this sense, the demands also have a strong acculturative dimension, as they radicalise the concept of racial equality from its watered down official meaning to the basis of a collective identity of rights for 'black' minorities – i.e. 'black politics' in the proactive sense.

Before discussing 'Muslim' claims, however, I first look at another group, 'Other Indian subcontinent' minorities, that appears in the last column of table 6, and which has been constructed by combining those claims made by Asians with those made by the Indian subcontinent national and ethnic origins: Sikh, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian and Bengali. In contrast to 'Muslim' groups, just under three quarters (72.3%) of the claims made by 'Other Indian-sub' groups were in the integration politics and anti-racist/xenophobic politics fields, and only 12.8% referred to cultural diversity/group politics. This indicates that groups from the Indian subcontinent which do not identify themselves in the public domain as Muslim, are in an intermediary position between 'Blacks' and 'Muslims.' Of course, some of these groups will actually be Muslims - e.g. the Pakistanis and the Bangladeshis. The important point to make therefore is that the field of demands relating to cultural diversity in the British context, are predominantly concerned with the position of Islam within British society. We have already mentioned that the Muslim religion is the one that is least recognised by the cultural pluralism of British race relations politics, whereas special recognition is given to Jews and Sikhs on the basis of 'ethnicity'. When religious inequality is not the issue, however, minorities from the Indian subcontinent have similar demands relating to integration and anti-racism as other minorities. Indeed that just less than half (46.7%) of the claims by the 'Other Indian-sub' group were in the anti-racism/xenophobic field, indicates that this section of society is active in demanding more measures against racial abuse and violence, and thus to be better provided for within the rubric of British race relations politics. According to our definitions, this is indicative of an acculturative rather than a dissociative strategy. As some of these demands are made by Muslims, this again goes against an explanation that there is something intrinsic to Islamic religion that creates militancy. In fact, what we see here is evidence for the strategic use of self-identification by Indian subcontinent minorities when entering the British public and political domain, that has been pointed out by other authors (Werbner 1991).

Finally, if we turn to the claims that were made by Muslims for special group rights related to the recognition and protection of cultural differences, we find that about four tenths of Muslim claims are of this type, which gives some credence to the multicultural thesis that minorities mobilize principally for 'cultural rights' (e.g., Kymlicka 1995). About half of the demands related to special provision of religious instruction in schools, including both demands within the existing framework of schooling, and more rarely, demands for state support of separate Islamic schools. In most cases such claims were made as a demand for an extension of the privileges attributed by the British state in supporting Roman Catholic and Jewish schools. For example, in one case a Muslim accused Trafford Council of 'discrimination' for paying fees for Roman Catholics to attend an independent Catholic school but not for his daughter to attend an independent Islamic school. When one looks at the language in which such claims are constructed, however, it soon becomes clear that the vast majority of them are made in acculturative rather than dissociative terms. For example:

‘Muslims (have) the right to withhold that part of their taxes used to finance denominational schools for Jews and Catholics’. Even a British ‘headscarf case’, a much cited example among multicultural theorists, has acculturative rather than dissociative tones: ‘there was nothing in the school rules about scarves when we went there. The rules were amended last year to specifically exclude headscarves... We are not fanatics or fundamentalists. We just want the right to continue our education.’

There is evidence in the sample of a couple of examples of fundamentalist claims, which challenge the authority and are incommensurable with the aims of the British state, but even among the Anti-Rushdie demands, the vast majority expressed the demand for an extension of cultural pluralism to include Islam on a parity with the religions of other minority groups, for example: ‘The case will point out the common ground between Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In many past blasphemy cases ...protection was afforded to the Old Testament, which was essentially Judaism.’ Like most of my other findings, this once more indicates that the ‘problem of Islamic minorities in Britain’ is much more a product of the inconsistencies -in word and deed- of the opportunities with which British race relation’s policies confront minorities, namely racial equality, than the unwillingness of the Muslim population to be part of British society.

## **Conclusions: Cracks in the British Race Relations Pot?**

When entering mainland Europe, the British system for integrating resident minorities presents itself as a 'success story', both leading politicians and elite minority activists from bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality, see fit to lecture the 'Europeans' on the virtues of British Race Relations. This affection of leading majority and minority Brits for the quirky and idiosyncratic system of race relations is often justified on the basis that 'it works', and if it works for Britain, then why could it not also work for Europe? Such was the logic behind the retreat of British minority organisations from the European Migrants' Forum and the setting up of an alternative organisation the Standing Conference on Racial Equality for Europe (SCORE) (see Favell 1998). Even when they get off the Eurostar in Brussels, British minority activists support only 'one nation cultural pluralism', and that one nation is Britain. Judged by internationalist aspirations, the establishment of SCORE was undoubtedly an own goal for minorities, but perhaps what it demonstrates more than anything is a point which is the lynch-pin of the political opportunity approach defended here, namely that British minority political activism is very much the product of British race relation's politics. It therefore becomes pertinent to focus on the national context, and ask to what extent the political mobilization by different minority groups can be seen as an affirmation or contradiction of a system for incorporating minorities that is founded on the principle of 'racial equality'.

A first general point which came from the analysis is rather self-evident, namely that minorities with full formal citizenship rights face fewer barriers of access to the political system, and have a more favourable set of discursive alliances in the political field, than those without, such as political refugees and asylum-seekers. Among the political parties, the Labour Party came out clearly as an ally for both resident minorities and refugees/asylum-seekers, whereas the Conservative Party took up an especially anti-asylum-seeker position. This indicates that the Labour party plays a special role in representing minority interests, however, the degree of co-optation is not sufficient enough to make autonomous political mobilization by minorities unnecessary. On the contrary, minority organisations and groups are the most 'visible' actor within British migration and ethnic relations politics.

Regarding the resident minorities in Britain, the most important findings are drawn from a comparison of the political mobilization by the two main macro-categories for communities, African-Caribbeans and those from the Indian subcontinent. Here I have argued that the range of strategies which are expressed in aspects of the political mobilization by minorities are best explained contextually by political opportunities, as outcomes, unintended consequences, and negative feedbacks, from the peculiar hybrid of assimilationism and limited pluralism on the basis of 'racial equality' that has been the hallmark of the dominant integrationist thinking of British elites since the 1960s. The evidence from the minority mobilization in the 1990s is that certain aspects of the Race Relations system are due a fundamental overhaul.

The inconsistencies, which are produced by the application of the principle of 'racial equality', have in fact structured an inequality of opportunities facing the two main groups. 'Black' groups and organisations, by which we primarily mean African-Caribbeans, mobilize along racial lines, use an assimilative identity and conventional action forms, and target the state bodies with claims which appeal to the principle of redress for racial discrimination. Overall, this can be seen as a direct response to the



institutional and discursive channels of access which extends from the political system to racial minorities. However, an important caveat should be inserted here, which is that most of the 'Black' organisations which had the resources to make their autonomous demands 'visible' in the public domain, were in fact 'middle class' minority organisations of lawyers and politicians. The relative absence of more grass roots 'Black' organisations -such as the Panthers UK- suggests that the incorporation on middle-class, upwardly mobile African-Caribbeans, may be to the structural disadvantage of the majority of African-Caribbeans, an aspect of the process which has been referred to as 'minorization' (Rath 1991). One might even argue that as British integration policies have provided rights for redress to minorities -through courts, industrial tribunals- as individuals rather than as groups, that one outcome of this assimilationist approach has been to militate against autonomous community-based collective action by the minority group -'Blacks'- which has used the more assimilative strategy.

In contrast to the African-Caribbeans, minorities from the Indian Subcontinent politically mobilized along lines of race, religion and national and ethnic origin as 'Asian', 'Muslim', 'Sikh', 'Bangladeshi', 'Pakistani', 'Indian', and 'Bengali'. Taken at face value, this in itself may be taken as evidence that opportunities which are extended by the political system along racial lines do not encompass sufficient scope for incorporating minorities from the Indian Subcontinent. The most visible political mobilization among these minorities was by 'Muslim' groups. These are highly autonomously organised, using predominantly conventional action forms, mobilize with a religious identification, and although they have difficulty in targeting their demands toward state bodies and institutions, they primarily make demands for an extension of the state concept of racial discrimination -that includes other minority religious groups- to Islam. Although the 'Muslim' groups face more restrictive channels of institutional and discursive access to the political system than 'Black' groups, the overwhelming majority of demands were addressed within the language of discrimination relevant to the national context, and many groups identified themselves as British Muslims. This shows that the large proportion of group demands for cultural rights made by 'Muslims' are better explained by the existence of a political context which does not acknowledge 'religious equality' for all minority groups - the opportunity structure approach - rather than the 'essentialist' argument that has saliency both in popular anti-Muslim sentiments, and among multicultural theorists (e.g. Young 1998), that demanding particularist group rights is an explanatory feature of minority mobilization in contemporary societies. That some minority organisations mobilized as Pakistanis and Bangladeshis rather than Muslims, indicates that Muslim mobilization is a strategic choice in the British context.

On the other hand, the persistence of minority collective self-identification and organisation that runs counter to that which is optimal according to the national system of political integration -as 'Muslims' or by national or ethnic origin instead of as the acknowledged racial group 'Asians'- could be interpreted as exposing the limitations of a national level 'top-down' political opportunity approach. At least, it makes clear a point that is now established within the social movement tradition (see McAdam, McCarthy and Zald eds. 1996), namely that the research object is to explain the *interaction* between the political -institutional and discursive- opportunities, on one side, and the 'mobilizing structures' and 'framing processes' of the movement organisations, on the other. It is therefore consistent to explain the high level of autonomous political mobilization by British 'Muslims' as less of a

'homeland hangover' or cultural trait, and more as an outcome of opportunities in the British political context, only when the resource mobilizing potential of minorities is taken into account as a 'bottom-up' intervening variable which can shape their interaction with the determining framework of British politics.

Whereas the Indian subcontinent groups find it difficult to define themselves as a single homogeneous 'race', they nonetheless, as a post-colonial minority, find sufficient resources of legitimacy in their Britishness to demand a space for themselves within national politics. The attempt by Muslims to make their demands for religious equality compatible with the language of racial discrimination, is evidence of such 'framing processes' where the minority demands its place within British politics. Paradoxically, the political exclusion experienced by Indian Subcontinent –and especially Muslim- minority groups facing the assimilationist pressures of a system, which provides 'racial equality' for individuals, is at the same time a resource base for their collective self-organisation and political mobilization as a community 'group' against this perceived injustice. This is a contrast to the African Caribbean community which, as we have seen, is relatively fragmented as a group and its middle class co-opted as individuals into the system. By comparison, Indian subcontinent minorities lack such opportunities for racial assimilation and elite co-optation, but have a higher level of community cohesion and solidarity -a 'mobilizing structure'- which are resources for making autonomous demands in British politics. In this sense, the relative exclusion of Indian subcontinent minorities from the Race Relations system makes them a more pro-active autonomous collective actor within British politics, but this does not necessarily make them more influential, such outcomes are of course dependent on the reactions of political elites to their demands.

One of the important overall findings, is that contrary to the popular belief which is often expressed by the ethnic majority in Britain -its 'Islamophobia' (Modood 1997)-, the strategies of minorities from the Indian subcontinent have a strong acculturative rather than a dissociative dimension in relation to British society. Indeed, it is quite plausible that if the British state framework for racial discrimination were to grant acknowledgement of the Islamic faith as an 'ethnic' minority among Britons - in the same 'ad hoc' way as it has did for Sikhs and Jews, unconcerned by conceptual purity or clarity - then there may still be some future mileage in the 'old' formula for British Race Relations. Academics, of course, seldom favour such pragmatic solutions, and would be more likely to prefer to do away altogether with the straightjacket of a cultural pluralism defined along racial lines, in favour of a more multicultural solution. However, as such decisions will be taken by the political establishment, and be legitimated in the specifics of the national political discourse, perhaps British pragmatism is the most that British minorities can hope for.

Clearly, full validation of such hypotheses requires a more detailed organisational and actor-level analysis. This raises a general methodological point, that the type of national level analysis presented here should not be taken as a competitor of, but as complementary to, other types of research. It presents a first national contextual setting and set of indicators in which to position more detailed and qualitatively textured local, group, or individual level studies. Academics need to find ways of gaining empirical information on the important relationships of minorities to political settings, and the approach defended here can serve as a base-line indicator from which to define case studies in a way that their findings can be related back to the general level of significance.

At present many case studies have tended to use a journalistic rather than a social scientific logic, by interpreting the whole social problem through a single event, rather than relating the single event to a causal explanation of the general social problem. Key policy events such as the publication of the Macpherson report do not occur by chance, nor is their significance limited to the single event -the Stephen Lawrence Affair- or the myopia and ephemeral volatility of media attention. Such important political events, that at the surface appear as a 'rite of passage' in British Race Relations, have structural causes at the level of social relationships which can be traced to the contradictions in the British system of Race Relations. The same point can be made about the Rushdie Affair, where it was the official state non-recognition of Muslims within the British political framework, and reactions to this by both the majority and minority ethnic groups, rather than the single event which was -as the data here shows- of lasting political importance. The benefit of the political claims-making approach is that it gives a national level overview of the fault-lines of political conflict over migration and ethnic relations that are rendered visible by collective action in the public domain. One is effectively looking at the political demands voiced by the relevant actors through data that is retrieved from an important context of interaction between the state, ethnic majority and minorities - the public domain.

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\* Includes additional 18 cases relating to 'Homeland Politics'

Valence score:

-1 = anti-minority/racist; 1 = pro-minority/anti-racist; 0 = neither pro- nor anti-minority/racist











\* First or second named actor



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\* Includes all asylum-seekers, even cases where a national or ethnic label was also given

+ Category includes national or ethnic groups from Indian subcontinent: 'Sikhs', 'Bangladeshis', 'Pakistanis', 'Indians' and 'Bengalis'

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\*Includes 'Black and Asian' case too.

Valence score: -1 = anti-minority/racist; 1 = pro-minority/anti-racist; 0 = neither pro-  
nor anti-minority/racist

