MUSLIMS IN BIRMINGHAM, UK

Background Paper for COMPAS, University Of Oxford

By Dr Tahir Abbas

Senior Lecturer, Director, Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Culture, University of Birmingham

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1. Introduction

This paper explores the economic, political, social, and cultural positions of the Muslim population of Birmingham, UK. The analysis is largely based on secondary official data in an attempt to characterise the socio-demographic features of the Muslim profile in Birmingham. The paper aims to present a helpful and up-to-date contextualisation in relation to the group of interest. First, there is an analysis of the processes of migration and settlement to the city from former New Commonwealth countries and new migrants from Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa. Second, there is an examination of the economic context of ethnic minorities and Muslims in the city, exploring the demographic profile and charting the experiences in education, the labour market, health, and housing. Third, there is a descriptive analysis of important media events in 2005, which were important for Muslims in the city but also for others in the area. Finally, the conclusions summarise salient concerns relating to debates about what it is to be Muslim, British and a minority in the current context. These refer to both the structural and material realities of deprivation, but also concerns about cultural and religious discrimination.

This background study was commissioned by COMPAS as part of the '**Muslims and Community Cohesion in Britain'** project funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). Further details on this project can be found on the COMPAS website: http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/research/migration_management.shtml

2. Migration and settlement

Initially, the British South Asian Muslim diaspora was located in textile towns and other heavy engineering regions in the North, the Midlands, and the South East. It was relatively absent in the service sector economy and in newer industrial settlements. Anwar (1996) found that the type of work available to Pakistanis in the North of England not only determined incomes but established the areas in which they settled, the schools their children attended, as well as how they interacted with the indigenous population. Housing was in obsolescent condition and better homes were unaffordable – largely because of low incomes and the limited availability of mortgages. In Birmingham, migrants initially settled in the 'zones of transition', which were vacated by more mobile Britons in 'white flight'. Subsequently, these areas became more impoverished with new employment created elsewhere and in other economic sectors (Rex and Moore 1967; Owen and Johnson 1996). Currently, ethnic minorities in Birmingham are concentrated in various inner city areas, forming a 'middle ring' (Rex and Tomlinson 1979; and see Figure 3). The 1991 Census showed that second and third generation South Asians were inclined to live in the same geographical locations as parents (Phillips 1998), where Robinson (1996) argues this to be a function of the youth wishing to continue

the religious and cultural traditions of the generation before them as well as a result of negative experiences found in the labour market (PIU 2002).

The religion question was asked for the first time in the 2001 Census. Although a voluntary question, ninety-two per cent of the population gave a response. Muslims accounted for 14.3 per cent of the city's population (140,000), with Pakistanis numbering just over 104,000 (74% of Muslims in Birmingham). Although it is the seventh highest Muslim population as a proportion of a British city, it is twice as large as the single highest concentration of Muslims outside of London. In April 2001, nine per cent of all 1.6 million British Muslims and 16 per cent of Britain's entire Pakistani population of 658,000 were found to be in the city of Birmingham (ONS 2005).

Although the vast majority of Birmingham's 140,000 Muslims are defined as Pakistani (74%), the 'Pakistanis' in Birmingham predominantly originate from the Mirpur district of Azad Kashmir and the surrounding areas, including Attock, Jhelum, and Rawalpindi (Figure 1 below). A number of British Pakistanis also come from districts in Northern Punjab (Pakistan) but have largely settled in the de-industrialised inner cities to the North (Werbner, 1990), or in the South East of England. Before immigration, many Azad Kashmiris lived and worked in rural areas. 'Mirpuri' families were usually extended with up to three generations living in a single household, with men working on small land-holdings or in specialist craft-work, while women maintained domestic order and looked after livestock. Families lived in close proximity to each other and were knowledgeable of each other's affairs. Shaw's (2000) socio-anthropological study of a Pakistani community in Oxford shows how among rural-origin migrants from Northern Punjab the village-kin network found in the sending regions has remained relatively intact as part of adaptation to Britain.

Figure 1. British South Asian Muslim sending regions in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir

Source: Shaw, 2001: 317.

As mentioned above, Pakistanis do not necessarily comprise a single homogeneous religio-ethnic group; there are Punjabis, Kashmiris, Pathans, Sindhis and Blauchis who are all Pakistani. Religiously, Birmingham's Pakistanis are Barelvi, Tablilghi, Deobandi, Hanifi or Jamaat-e-Islami in the main, which are all variants of Sunni Islam (Robinson, 1988). Most of the Azad Kashmiris are Barelvi and Hanifi. A proliferation of Mosques is sign of a definitive commitment to the development of Islam in Britain and the teaching of younger Muslims the practices of the religion. Specialist goods and services outlets such as Halal butchers, Madrassas (Qura'nic schools), grocers, restaurants, takeaways, jewellers, bookshops, and Urdu-Arabic audio/video retail outlets are familiar sights in the concentrated ethnic enterprise economies that many live and work in.

Although in the immediate years after the end of the Second World War South Asians and African-Caribbeans from former New Commonwealth countries came to the 'motherland' in search of work and better opportunities, in recent periods it has been groups from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa who have migrated to the city of Birmingham. In particular, over the last five years Somalis, who have often come to Birmingham via stays in Holland, Denmark and Sweden, number approximately 8,000 people and are of different generations, genders, and tribal

allegiances. The decade proceeding 'the war on terror', which began in 2001, refugee groups from Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina have arrived and settled within the city. There are around a thousand Bosnians who left the country in three ways. The first emerged in 1992-93 under a programme called *Governmental 1000*. Second, there are about 2,000 Albanian asylum seekers and refugees in the West Midlands, mainly from Kosovo. The Ethnic Albanian Community Association was formed in 1998. Finally, about 4,000-5,000 Kurdish asylum seekers and refugees live in Birmingham, the vast majority from Iraq. Birmingham has also become home to many young Iranians (Dick 2004). In general, new Muslim migrant groups have settled in parts of city where current second and third generation South Asian Muslim groups tend to be found.

3. Economic and Social Infrastructure

Birmingham is Britain's second city. Up until the 1960s, the West Midlands region, with Birmingham at its centre, was one of the fastest growing in the country. Its strength lay in a strong manufacturing base in vehicles, material manufacturing and engineering (Hausner 1986). During the 1970s and 1980s, however, the region suffered severe industrial decline. The city of Birmingham was of one of the most dramatically impacted. Unemployment rose much faster than new jobs were being created, with some wards in the inner cities particularly affected. It is only recently that the expanding service sector has begun to make an impact on the local economy, creating employment and, as a result, developing the fortunes of the city. It is clear that the effects of de-industrialisation, technological investment and the internationalisation of capital and labour have left a distinct impression on some parts of the city.

Birmingham has seen many ethnic minorities settling within it during the post war period. Referred to as the city 'purposively ghettoising' ethnic minorities, Sparkbrook has become a largely Pakistani area, the Handsworth area is the Caribbean centre of Birmingham, with the Soho area overwhelmingly Indian (Rex 1987). The city is also significant as it is the place where the late Enoch Powell made his 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1968. Over time, the city has been repeatedly used as a location for academic study in the field of race relations research (Rex and Moore 1967; Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Ward 1983), and remains an important test case for the future of race relations in British society (Back and Solomos 1992).

Local demographic profile

The 1991 Census found that Birmingham contained seven per cent of all ethnic minorities in Britain. Twenty-two per cent of the city's population was of ethnic minority origin, with nearly twice as many South Asians in comparison to African-Caribbeans. Birmingham Pakistanis constituted the largest single ethnic minority group comprising seven per cent of the total population of the city. The 2001

Census confirms these trends. It shows that 30 per cent of the population are ethnic minorities. The largest ethnic minority group is Pakistanis comprising just over ten per cent of the total population of the city. Table 1 shows the population profile of the city of Birmingham in 2001.

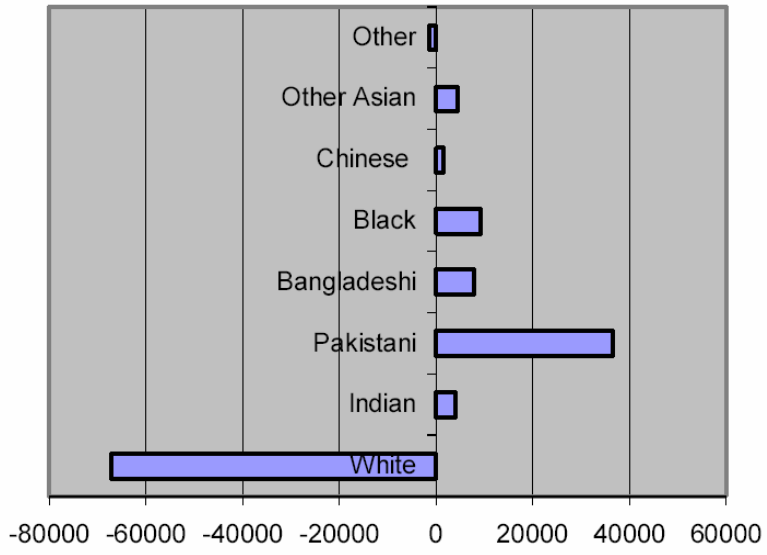
Table 1. Birmingham Residents by Ethnic Group (2001 Census)

Ethnicity	Men	Women	Total
White British	308,848	333,297	641,345
White Irish	14,476	15,991	31,467
White Other	7, 124	7,470	14,594
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	7,478	8,166	15,644
Mixed White & Black African	692	754	1,446
Mixed White & Asian	3,212	3,095	6,307
Mixed White & Other	2.213	2,336	4,549
Asian or Asian British Indian	27,341	28,408	55,749
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	52,260	51,757	104,107
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	10,330	10,509	20,836
Asian or Asian British Other	5,542	4,544	10,086
Balck or Black British Black Caribbean	22,140	25,691	47,831
Black or Black British Black African	3,110	3,096	6,206
Black or Black British Black Other	2,595	3,200	5,795
Chinese	2,527	2,579	5,106
Other Ethnic Group	3,178	2,931	6,109
Total	473,266	503,821	977,087

Source: Crown Copyright, 2001

Figure 2 below highlights the absolute change in the ethnic minority population in Birmingham. As can be seen, there has been a particular rise in the numbers of Pakistanis. This is both as function of high birth rates but also specific within-in group marriage practices. The Muslim and ethnic minority numbers have been increasing whilst at the same time the number of white groups have been diminishing.

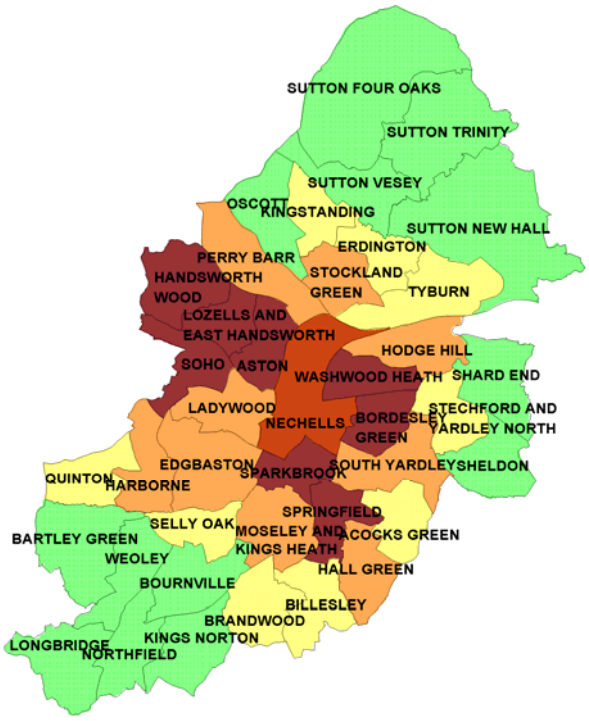
Figure 2. Changes in the ethnic minority population in Birmingham, 1991-2001



Source: Migration Watch, 2005

Figure 3 shows the ethnic minority concentration in the city. It confirms that many of the city's ethnic minorities are found in the older, de-industrialised areas around the city centre, known as the 'middle ring'.

Figure 3. Ethnic minorities in Birmingham based on ward profiles in the 2001 Census

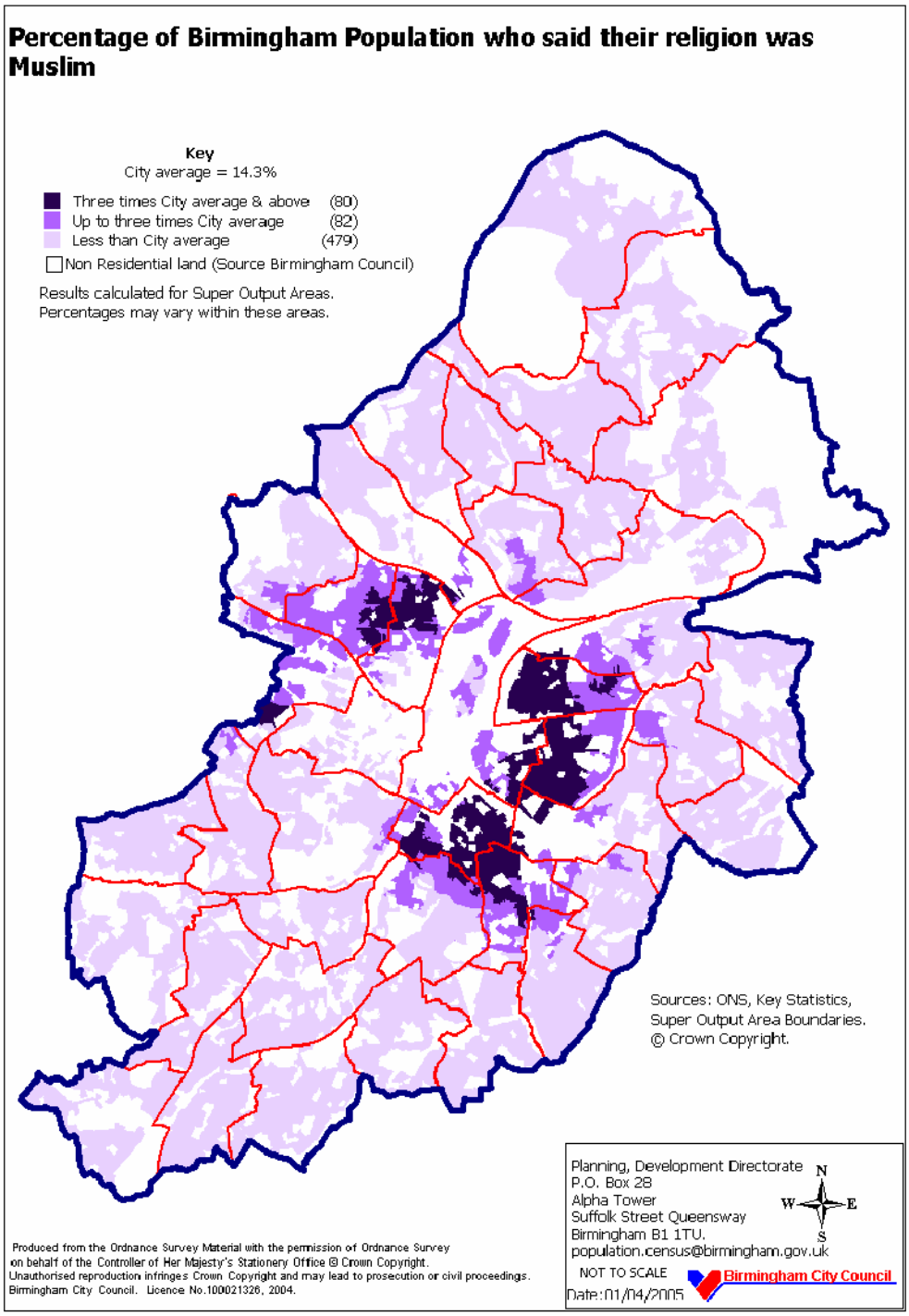


Key	Ethnic minorities
	Below 10.0%
	10.1% to 20.0%
	20.1% to 40.0%
	40.1% to 60.0%
	60.1% and above

Source: Birmingham City Council (2005)

Figure 4 below highlights the profile of Birmingham's Muslims. It is possible to see the concentrations of how one in seven of the population of the city lives.

Figure 4. Muslim religious profile



Source: Birmingham City Council (2003: 21).

In 2001, there were an estimated 23,318 ethnic minorities in Sparkbrook, representing an estimated 82 per cent of all people in the ward and there were an estimated 27,477 ethnic minorities in Small Heath, representing an estimated 78 per cent of all people in the ward. This compares with an average of 34 per cent in Birmingham as a whole, 14 per cent within the West Midlands Region and 13 per cent in England and Wales. From 1991 to 2001, the change to the ethnic minority population can be seen in Table 2 below. There have been significant increases in the ethnic minority population of the two wards, far in excess of the average of the region or the country as a whole. Although there is no primary research to support this, it is apparent from conjectural evidence that 'marriage migration' and high birth rates are impacting on this growth. Furthermore, the process of white flight continues unabated, giving the impression of rapid increases to the ethnic minority population, when in fact it is also because of equal if not more white people actually emigrating from the city.

Table 2. Changes to the ethnic minority profile of Sparkbook and Small Heath based, 1991-2001

Ward	1991	2001	Net balance of change in ethnic minorities percentage
Small Heath	59.6%	75.0%	15.4%
Sparkbrook	66.6%	77.9%	11.3%
Birmingham	21.5%	29.6%	8.1%
West Midlands Region	8.2%	11.3%	3.1%
England and Wales	5.9%	9.1%	3.2%

Source: 2001 Census

If we focus our attention on to two wards in the city, namely Sparkbrook and Small Heath, it is possible to see some specific change to economy and society that is relevant in relation to a discussion of the Birmingham Muslim experience. Table 3 below profiles the ethnic minority populations of each of these wards. Small Heath and Sparkbrook are predominantly South Asian Muslim.

Table 3. Ward profiles of Sparkbook and Small Heath based on 2001 Census

Ward	Sparkbrook	Small Heath	Birmingham
White	22.1	25.0	**70.4**
Asian Indian	5.7	4.1	5.7
Black Caribbean	7.4	3.8	4.9
Mixed Heritage	4.6	2.6	2.9
Asian Bangladeshi	**10.3**	**8.7**	2.1
Asian Pakistani	**40.5**	**50.6**	10.6
Black African	1.2	0.9	0.64
Chinese	0.6	0.2	0.52
Total population	23,318	27,477	977, 087

Source: 2001 Census

Labour market positions

Birmingham's unemployment rates were varied significantly between different ethnic minorities in the 1991 Census. Unemployment amongst 'Black-African' and South Asian men was nearly double that of white men. Unemployment among South Asian women was more than three times that of white women. The highest rates of unemployment were among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, with 35 per cent of Pakistani men and 45 per cent of Pakistani women, and 42 per cent of Bangladeshi men and 44 per cent of Bangladeshi women unemployed. At the time of the 1991 Census, the average unemployment rate for the city of Birmingham was 14 per cent. South Asian unemployment rates were up to three times the norm for the city. Furthermore, the 1991 Census confirmed Bangladeshis were the least likely to own a motorcar and the most likely of any group to experience household overcrowding [in relation to family size, Bangladeshis averaged six, Pakistanis five and Indians four] (BEIC, 1993).

At the end of September 2003, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3 per cent for the West Midlands as a whole. In Birmingham it was 7.8 per cent (10.5 per cent men, 4.1 per cent women). Table 4 shows that in wards with greatest ethnic minority numbers unemployment rates are up to three times higher. It is clear from this evidence that ethnic minorities, given also that many of these areas are also Muslim specific, experience higher unemployment rates in comparison to the citywide average, and especially when compared with white people.

Table 4. Unemployment in selected Birmingham wards, September 2003

Ward	Men (%)	Women (%)	Total (%)
Aston	29	10	22
Handsworth	26	9	19
Ladywood	23	7	16
Nechells	22	11	18
Small Heath	18	9	14
Soho	22	8	16
Sparkbrook	26	12	21
Sparkhill	17	9	14
Washwood Heath	17	9	14
Birmingham	11	4	8

Source: Birmingham Economic Information Centre, 2005

There remains strong reason to suggest the extent of racial discrimination in the labour market. For example, 'Black-African' males tend to be well qualified but also experience high unemployment rates. Similarly, the unemployment rates for ethnic minorities in the top four social classes are on average more than twice that of white groups for the population of Britain as a whole (PIU 2002).

Self-employment positions

Considerable research attention has focused on explaining the factors that contribute to ethnic minority entrepreneurship (Rath 2000). There is continuing debate on the apparent advantage afforded by the 'cultural' resources of particular ethnic groups, the extent to which discrimination 'pushes' minorities into self-employment, and the capacity of ethnic minorities to seize market opportunities (Ram et al. 2000). Often these debates acknowledge that the manner in which labour is managed is important in accounting for the viability of the enterprise. For example, studies in the 'culturalist' tradition emphasise the cohesiveness of familial work relations (Werbner 1990); whilst more structurally informed accounts stress exploitative work regimes that provide the material base for 'successful' ethnic minority businesses (Phizacklea 1990).

The type of ethnic minority entrepreneurial activity found in the city of Birmingham is largely concentrated in declining economic sectors or in those areas of economic activity where large capital is dominant. For example, African-Caribbean and South Asian groups tend to operate in lower-order retailing or in the independent restaurant sector. Firms are also characterised by an over reliance on family labour, for which growth can often emerge as a hindrance. Organisations such as Black Business in Birmingham and the Institute of Asian Business act as generalist bodies aimed at specific ethnic minority business development interests. There are also facilities offered by the City Council, e.g., through Enterprise Link, Business Link and the Birmingham and Solihull Learning Skills Council, which provide assistance to would-be entrepreneurs as well as more specialised assistance in relation to ethnic minority enterprise development. These initiatives have helped in some way but more targeted projects for various disadvantaged communities are still absent.

Educational achievements

In January 2000, figures from the local education authority showed that over 40 per cent of Birmingham's entire school intake is children from ethnic minority communities. Currently in Birmingham, 52 per cent of school leavers are from ethnic minority groups. Population forecasts for the next 10 years show the white population of the city falling by some 70,000; but the population of ethnic minority communities rising substantially – 10,000 each for the Indian, African Caribbean communities and 60,000 for the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities.

Issues in relation to the educational achievements of African-Caribbeans and South Asians have been found to be important since groups arrived and settled in the city since the 1960s. Although, from 1982 Birmingham City Council has been committed to a strong antiracist, equality of opportunity perspective (Coles 1997), there remain, nevertheless, noticeable differences between different ethnic groups and genders, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Pupils Gaining 5+ A-C Grades at GCSE, in Birmingham, 1998-2003

Ethnic Group	1998 (%)	1999 (%)	2000 (%)	2001 (%)	2002 (%)	2003 (%)	Change 1998-2003 (%)
African Caribbean Boys	13	20	19	17	25	28	+15
African Caribbean Girls	28	30	31	34	39	43	+15
Bangladeshi Boys	28	31	30	27	43	43	+15
Bangladeshi Girls	36	40	42	50	52	58	+22
Indian Boys	40	43	49	49	57	67	+27
Indian Girls	50	55	61	65	69	73	+23
Pakistani Boys	21	26	27	31	33	37	+16
Pakistani Girls	31	32	41	42	44	50	+19
White Boys	34	33	36	39	41	45	+11
White Girls	44	45	45	50	52	54	+10
All Boys	30	32	34	35	39	44	+14
All Girls	42	44	47	48	51	54	+12
Total	36	38	41	41	45	50	+14

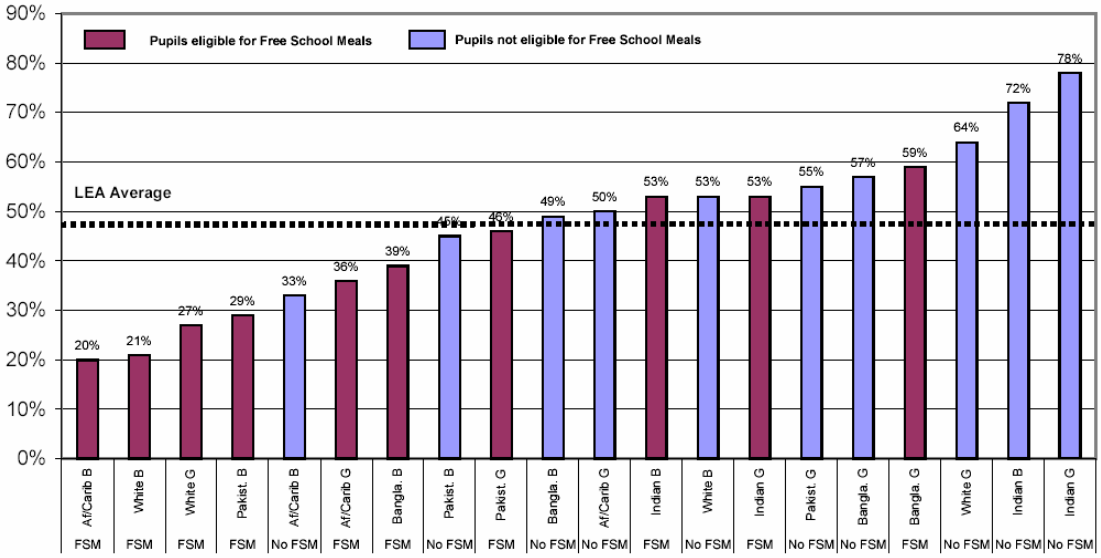
Source: Birmingham City Council, 2005

Table 5 shows that the difference between successful and unsuccessful groups has been diverging in recent years. The performance of young South Asian women has improved most and young South Asian men fallen greatest. Overall, the performances of all groups have been continuously improving, however.

Given the levels of social and cultural capital that people possess, as well as social class, it is not surprising to discover that the middle class ethnic minority schoolchildren living in affluent areas with parents in professional occupations perform considerably better than those parents who are unemployed and live in inner city areas (Abbas 2002a). The issue of gender is less important in the current period, as all young ethnic minority women are performing better than their male counterparts, although in relation to young South Asian Muslim women issues of patriarchy and the operationalisation of certain inhibiting religio-cultural norms and values limit the opportunities of a number (Abbas 2003). How teachers perceive ethnic minority children suggests that they have, for the most part, accepted how important education is as a tool for upward economic and social mobility. Some parents are sometimes over-eager for their children to perform, but lack the necessary 'capitals'. In many educational settings, ethnic minorities are the overwhelming majority and teachers ensure their services embrace the diverse, multi-faith, ethnic minority school pupils and college students that enter their institutions as well as they can (Abbas 2002b; 2004).

All the same, it can be seen from figure 5 how social class remains an important factor in relation to educational outcome. With the exception of African-Caribbean and Pakistani boys and where ethnic minority and South Asian Muslim groups are not receiving free school meals, performance is about the LEA average. This does suggest there are cultural factors in play in relation to these groups, which impact on performance. They may well emerge from either the home or the school or are perhaps, in reality, a combination of the two. Strong schools compensate for deficiencies within the home in the same way as home may well do in relation to the school.

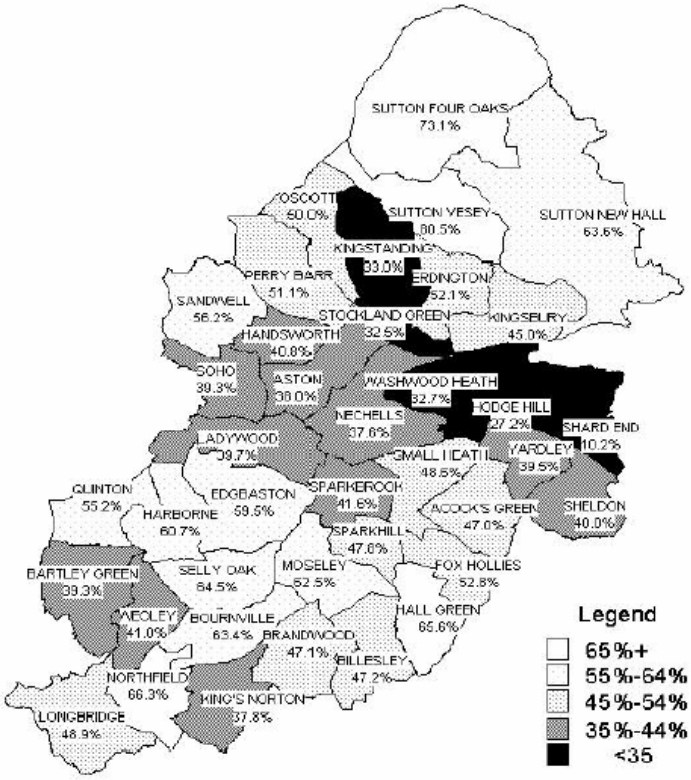
Figure 5. GCSE 5+ A-C by ethnicity, gender and free school meals



Source: Birmingham City Council, 2005

Figure 6 below shows the relationship between location and education. It is apparent the poor areas in the north of the 'middle ring', which contain high concentrations of established South Asian Muslim groups fair least well.

Figure 6. GCSE 5+ A-C by ethnicity, gender and free school meals in Birmingham



Source: Birmingham City Council, 2005

In an attempt to compensate for the disadvantage ethnic minorities experience in education, community groups have attempted to re-address the educational imbalance through supplementary education. In the case of African-Caribbean groups this involves holding additional booster classes at the weekends. In the case of South Asians, communities are organised along religious and cultural lines and often school-based education is coupled with added religious and linguistic teaching and development, invariably through after school hours schooling and private tutoring. With two state-funded Muslim schools now in Birmingham, there is now an acceptance of the need for faith-based schools to support this community's aspirations.

Health issues

Existing research shows that ethnic minorities suffer from adverse health conditions disproportionately greater than the ethnic majority populous. For example, infant mortality is high in African-Caribbean and South Asian communities (Britton 1989). Government research has shown that South Asians are more likely to suffer from heart disease, diabetes and tuberculosis (Debelle 1994). It is generally accepted that these ailments are a function of the deprived social and economic realities experienced by many ethnic minorities (Ahmad 2000; Johnson 1994).

There is also research evidence to suggest that racism is a reason for the limited health services that ethnic minorities receive, for example, ethnic minorities have been found to wait longer for certain treatment (Fenton 1989). In terms of employment within the health services a clear pattern does emerge. Apart from ethnic minority doctors finding it difficult to gain promotion or to work in more lucrative fields of medicine (Anwar and Ali 1987), it is also found that British ethnic minority applicants experience discrimination when making applications for medical degree courses in the first instance (Esmail et al. 1996). In relation to more senior management positions, there is a clear bias towards recruiting white candidates for chairs to health authorities and hospital trusts.

In Birmingham, it is apparent that life expectancy is higher in white wards compared to those containing high proportions of ethnic minorities. The Asian Stroke Support Association in Handsworth, the Bangladeshi Youth Council in Aston and the Birmingham Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Centre in Ladywood are notable examples of organisations in this area of activity that work to ensure the needs and concerns of variously disaffected ethnic minorities. Health inequalities nevertheless persist and in the current climate of the increasing marketisation of the health services, ethnic minorities continue to be negatively impacted.

Housing conditions

Based on an analysis of the 1991 Census Birmingham housing patterns, it was found that owner-occupation was highest among Pakistanis (78 per cent). There appears to be a cultural preference on the part of Pakistanis to own their homes somewhat analogous to other groups in their social class. In addition, 28 per cent of white residents lived in local authority housing in comparison to 11 per cent of Pakistanis in the city. It is worth noting that 33 per cent of Pakistani and 42 per cent of Bangladeshi households were classified as over-crowded (Anwar 1996; BEIC 1993). Housing was important for ethnic minorities when they first arrived from the sending regions. Although there have been some improvements in the housing conditions of ethnic minorities, particularly since the 1980s, there are still many who are more likely to live in poorer housing (Modood et al. 1997). Ethnic minorities are also more likely to experience difficulties with mortgage payments (ONS 1996).

In October 2003, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott MP, set aside more than £359m for housing in the West Midlands. The aim of the funding injection was to regenerate deprived urban and rural areas, increase demand for housing where it is low, create more affordable housing and deal with poor quality housing. The money is also being used to provide homes which meet ethnic minority housing needs and deal with issues related to 'asylum seekers and refugees'. Housing associations, advice lines and help agencies exist to stress the different and important housing needs for different ethnic minority groups. The services provided by community and voluntary sector organisations in the city tend to involve assisting individuals with housing applications. The Ashram Agency in Sparkbrook and the Bengali Tenants Association in Handsworth are noteworthy examples of organisations working in this area.

Mosques in Birmingham

Birmingham Central Mosque is not the oldest mosque in Birmingham but it was the first purposely constructed in the city. Between January 1990 and October 2002, Birmingham City Council processed approximately 300 planning applications relating to Muslim religious buildings (including mosques and madrasas), compared with 245 relating to Christian buildings (including churches and church halls), 55 relating to Sikh Gurdwaras, and 12 relating to Hindu Mandirs. The data in Table 6 shows that there are some notable disparities in planning decisions for places of worship of different faith groups in Birmingham. Only 56 per cent of applications relating to mosques and madrasas gained approval. In contrast, 82 per cent of Christian building applications relating to and 71 Gurdwara applications were either 'approved' or 'approved temporarily'. The rates at which applications were refused show a quarter (24 per cent) of all applications for mosques and madrasas were refused. This compares with 9 per cent of applications for Christian buildings and 11 per cent relating to Sikh Gurdwaras (Gale 2005).

Table 6. Planning decisions for Birmingham Muslim, Christian and Sikh sites of worship, 1990-2002

Decision	Religious groups		
	Muslim (%)	Christian (%)	Sikh (%)
Approved	144 (49)	181 (74)	34 (61)
Refused	71 (24)	22 (9)	6 (11)
Invalid application	23 (8)	7 (3)	2 (4)
Approved temporarily	22 (7)	19 (8)	5 (9)
Withdrawn	21 (7)	15 (6)	6 (11)
Deferred	6 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Other	7 (2)	1 (0)	2 (4)
Total	294 (100)	245 (100)	55 (100)

Source: Birmingham City Council Planning Department, Register of Planning Applications – Gale (2005: 1171)

4. Media profile concerning Sparkbrook and Small Heath

In 2005, there were two incidents of specific media interest in relation to Sparkbrook and Small Heath. One was the general election of 2005, particularly the significant gains made by Salma Yaqoob of the Respect Party over Roger Godsiff of the Labour Party. The other concerned the high profile arrests of one of the 21/7 would-be London bombers, Yasin Hassan Omar, found in a house in Small Heath. Both of these issues are relevant not just to Muslims but to others in the area too.

Born in Bradford but raised and living in Birmingham, Salma has proven to be a remarkable icon not only for Muslim women, but for Muslims and activists throughout the country. Salma is a prominent anti-war activist and Respect's co-founding member. Being a mother of three boys has not stood in the way of her campaigning for positive change in her local community and beyond. According to the 2001 Census, there are some 40 constituencies where Muslims comprise at least 10 per cent of the population. In one, Birmingham Sparkbrook and Small Heath, they number half the residents in the parliamentary constituency, some 57,000 people. With a total of 10,498 she came second with 27 percent of the vote in Birmingham's Sparkbrook & Small Heath constituency in the May 2005 General Election. She cut Labour's once-solid majority of 16,246 to only 3,289, a 24 per cent swing towards her anti-war ticket.

Yasin Hassan Omar was arrested on 27 July for the failed 21 July attack on London. The search took on even greater urgency as signs emerged that the three suspects who remain at large may have more explosives and may attempt to strike again. According to news reports, acting on a tip from a neighbour of Omar, heavily armed police carried out a dawn raid on a house in the Small Heath area of Birmingham, 120 miles northwest of London, and used a Taser stun gun to capture him. Omar was apparently alone in the house at the time and was carrying a backpack when he was arrested. Members of Britain's bomb squad, some dressed in armoured suits, were pictured live on British television entering the home after police evacuated 100 nearby residences in a quiet, Muslim-dominated neighbourhood of Birmingham. On August 6 he was charged with four criminal charges: on or before 21 July, conspiracy with others unknown to murder passengers on London transport system; on 21 July, attempted murder of passengers on the London transport system; on or before

21 July, conspiracy with others unknown to cause explosions likely to endanger life or cause serious damage to property; on 21 July, unlawful and malicious possession of explosives with the intent of endangering life or causing serious damage to property.

5. Discussion: Ethnicity, Islam and being British

Muslim communities have remained concentrated in the inner city areas of older towns and cities in the North, the Midlands, and the South. It is an indicator of how they have not benefited from the levels of mobility enjoyed by other migrant communities, and of their inability to move out areas which are facing high levels of social tension and economic deprivation through direct discrimination, racial hostility and cultural preference. Birmingham is typical of many of the challenges faced by Muslims across the country. Roughly one-in-seven of the city's inhabitants are Muslim and their unemployment rate is three times that of the overall city levels. The experience of Birmingham's Muslims brings into focus the fact that economic opportunities have tended to bypass Muslim communities, even when other communities have prospered. While other cities with large Muslim populations, such as Bradford, are trapped in economic decline, Birmingham's economic performance has been favourable despite the decline of its manufacturing and engineering sectors. The city is undergoing successful regeneration and this has begun to attract a successful service (retail) and commercial sector. Nevertheless, these opportunities have largely evaded most Muslims and may have even entrenched some of the barriers they face. While the indigenous population has moved out of inner city Birmingham through 'white flight', South Asian Muslims have failed to move beyond the inner city areas which they originally migrated to.

As is the case with all communities, the performance of Muslim children in the UK holds the key to tackling poverty in the future. It is particularly important in view of the fact that one third of all British Muslims are under the age of fourteen. However, the figures for educational achievement are as bleak as those relating to the labour market. Sixty nine percent of all Muslim children are living in poverty and, as such, they are exposed to a wide range of risk factors: overcrowded accommodation, inadequate housing and the fact that carers are likely to be unemployed, very low paid, or are having to bring up children alone (19 per cent). Because a higher proportion of Muslim fathers lack formal education and work as semi-skilled manual workers they don't have the tools to ensure that their children are being properly served by the education system, even when, as research shows, Muslim parents do aspire for their children to achieve higher levels of education. Role models are also lacking as most adult Muslim women do not have paid employment outside the home and older siblings will tend to be unemployed.

Inevitably Muslim children are served by less effective schools because they live in less well off neighbourhoods. Furthermore, they are handicapped by higher levels of prejudice which tends to

affect the level of care they receive within the education system. For example, qualitative studies have found that teachers tend to view the problems facing their Muslim pupils exclusively in cultural terms and will commonly identify 'excessive in-marrying' or a lack of desire to integrate with dominant society as the drivers for the underachievement of their Muslims pupils. As a result, many fail to identify the structural issues which may affect the children's performance in the classroom. It is hardly surprising then that Muslim children underperform in the education system, with only 40 per cent achieving five GCSE passes against 64 per cent and 73 per cent of Indian and Chinese respectively. Staggeringly, 36 per cent of all British Muslim children are leaving school with no qualifications at all and a fifth of 16-24 year-old Muslims are unemployed.

Although government policy aimed at improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged should have a significant impact on Muslims, current poverty alleviation strategies are not tailored to meet the needs of Muslims. Because anti-poverty strategies rely heavily on getting women into work, it is coming up against the inability of women to work within the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, either because of lack of appropriate skills, opportunities or because of the unwillingness of women with family responsibilities to work outside the home. Muslim women have the lowest employment rate of any group in the UK labour market. But there is also another problem in relation to the government's current anti-poverty strategy. Despite the mounting evidence of deprivation, Muslims are still not identified as a target when it comes to disadvantaged groups. There are significant gaps in the collection of data according to faith (data continues to be collected according to ethnicity), particularly in the key area of education. Finally, discrimination is inevitably impacting on the willingness of Muslims to engage with government policy. Studies continue to reveal that ethnic Muslims face the highest levels of discrimination in key areas, including the labour market and in the criminal justice system. Surveys show that job candidates with Muslim names are the least likely to secure interviews, and there is evidence to demonstrate that Muslims are among the most likely targets of stop and search operations since the introduction of anti-terrorism legislation. But the most disturbing evidence of an increasing Muslim alienation from the state is in their low levels of trust in the police and the criminal justice system.

It is not then a surprise that Muslims have low levels of engagement when it comes to state driven initiatives and reflect the greatest tendency to meet their needs through self-sufficiency, a strategy which has so far proved ineffective and is unlikely to significantly improve the position of the Muslim community. At the same time, the development of certain trends in separatism and extremism among some minority sections of the Muslim community could further increase the marginalisation of Muslims, and contribute to even more tension. Exacerbated by a sensationalist mass media and the statements made by political figures, the perceptions of Muslims by majority society continue to be negatively tainted. In the context of growing economic and social inequality,

global instability and lower levels of trust in state services, failures to address the barriers faced by Muslims will lead to a serious deterioration in community relations.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Alessio Cangiano and Dr Hiranthi Jayaweera for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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