Locational Disadvantage: How much does ethnicity really matter?

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Abstract

This paper discusses the need to move away from ethnicity-centred approaches to area deprivation, and presents an alternative approach to the development of area-based initiatives to poverty alleviation. It draws on the findings of a Barrow-Cadbury Trust funded research project[1] looking at young adults' experiences of deprivation and disadvantage in four Birmingham wards, two of which are majority minority inner city neighbourhoods and two predominantly white areas further away from the city centre. Exploring the interconnections between place, deprivation and population structure in the areas, the paper argues that the ethnic composition of the population may be a less influential factor than the focus of current public discourse indicates.

Introduction

Wards with large minority ethnic populations tend to score higher on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)[2] than predominantly white wards. The reasons for this are multiple, complex and interconnected, including historical and cultural factors, as well as racism and discrimination, which have worked to reduce upward economic mobility. Yet focus on high levels of deprivation in inner city majority minority areas has led to deprivation and poverty being discussed largely as 'minority ethnic' issues. At the same time, the perceived threat of 'ethnic clustering' on social cohesion has attracted attention away from attempts to identify the underlying reasons for severe deprivation in majority minority as well as predominantly white neighbourhoods, and identify the parallels between these areas.

Children born to disadvantaged parents, regardless of their ethnicity, are likely to grow up to be more disadvantaged than their peers born to more privileged households. While the likelihood of being born to disadvantaged parents is higher for minority ethnic groups - for a variety of reasons such as parents' migrant backgrounds, insufficient language skills, low income, inadequate housing, and discrimination – the disadvantage suffered by the British-born children of non-white or migrant parents may not be qualitatively very different from the disadvantage

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[1] This paper draws on research that was originally conducted for the Barrow Cadbury Trust by a team including Alex Fenton, Sanna Markkanen and Anna Clarke from the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research, and Peter Tyler from the Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge.

[2] The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is produced by central government (CLG: 2008). It provides a measure of the relative degree of deprivation experienced in small areas – around 33,000 in England. Although it is heavily weighted to the prevalence of income poverty and unemployment, it also tries to reflect the experience of other forms of deprivation, such as inadequate housing, crime and low educational attainment.

suffered by underprivileged white Britons. The responses needed to address disadvantage in majority minority areas may therefore not be radically different, with the exception of special measures directed at international migrants.

The paper looks at some of the measures needed to reduce disadvantage in highly deprived majority minority wards, suggesting that an adjustment in focus may be necessary. Overemphasising the role of ethnicity and presuming high levels of homogeneity between and within majority minority areas can work to thwart efforts to understand and address the root causes of deprivation. Although solutions must be tailored to take into consideration the characteristics of a specific area and its population, the prevention of intergenerational transference of poverty should be at the core of all area based initiatives as well as measures taken to address poverty across Birmingham. *Majority* minority areas can be highly diverse, and the measures seeking to alleviate disadvantage in these areas must address the needs of *all* disadvantaged groups in order to avoid causing additional problems by generating ill-feeling amongst the residents.

The paper begins with a brief description of the research methodology and the case study areas for the empirical research that informs this paper. This is followed by a brief overview of the history of urban deprivation in Birmingham, with special emphasis on the interconnections between ethnicity and deprivation. Drawing on statistical evidence, empirical research findings and existing literature, some of the key factors contributing to higher rates of deprivation amongst Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) populations and the cycle of deprivation are discussed with reference to the case study areas. Ethnicity, migration and the cycle of deprivation are themes that run throughout the paper, forming a discussion about the importance of distinguishing ethnicity from migration and the need to avoid overemphasising the role of ethnicity.

The research

Methodology

The questions that the research sought to illuminate are complex and difficult to disentangle, and no single method would have sufficed to investigate them. A combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques was used, including:

- Analysis and mapping of historical and current data on population, housing, migration and work;
- Selection of four case study areas, which were visited and observed over time;
- Semi-structured life-history interviews with around 50 young adults across the two case study areas. All of the resident interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim;
- Interviews with around 30 stakeholders in the public and voluntary sector, some with city-wide responsibilities, others with specific knowledge of the case study areas;
- Desk-based research on the history, housing, and migration in Birmingham.

The case study areas

Case studies were initially carried out in two deprived majority minority inner-city wards, Sparkbrook and Nechells. To better understand the dynamics of deprivation in majority minority neighbourhoods, and the extent to which the issues in these areas are radically different from deprived areas with largely white British population, two additional case studies were carried out in predominantly white more suburban parts of Birmingham, Kingstanding and King's Norton. Together these four case studies provide a context for exploring the experiences of deprivation, and how areas differ or resemble each other beyond what is measured in official statistics. The selection of case study wards was made based on variations in population composition, employment and housing across Birmingham. Table 1 below shows the ethnic composition of the resident population in the case study areas.

Table 1: Population by ethnic group in case study areas

		Kings Norton	Kingstanding	Nechells	Sparkbrook
	Residents	23,515	24,945	27,969	31,485
	Ethnic group	%	%	%	%
White	British	89.24	85.77	38.22	16.42
	Irish	2.81	3.41	3.46	2.22
	Other White	1.31	0.76	1.85	1.50
Mixed	White and Black Caribbean	1.77	1.58	3.71	2.03
	White and Black African	0.24	0.06	0.24	0.18
	White and Asian	0.50	0.50	1.18	1.17
	Other Mixed	0.34	0.30	0.97	0.85
Asian or Asian British	Indian	0.50	1.70	4.03	6.28
	Pakistani	0.26	0.76	21.81	44.46
	Bangladeshi	0.09	0.23	6.37	8.42
	Other Asian	0.13	0.16	1.84	5.67
Black or Black British	Black Caribbean	1.86	3.43	11.19	6.17
	Black African	0.45	0.19	1.32	1.17
	Other Black	0.21	0.43	1.49	0.76
Chinese or other	Chinese	0.14	0.56	1.37	0.76
	Other Ethnic Group	0.14	0.15	0.95	1.92

Source: Census 2001

Lying south and east of the city centre, Sparkbrook is well connected to the central retail and employment district by a large number of bus routes, but the character of its streets and people are highly distinctive. The fieldwork area is centred around Stratford Road, a long and busy shopping street with many small businesses, including a number of retail outlets, which cater primarily to the wider area's South Asian population.

Sparkbrook has a long pedigree of sociological study and policy concern. Rex and Moore's pioneering study (1967) captures a moment in the area's history when it was home to indigenous Birmingham white working-class as well as considerable numbers of Irish, Caribbean and Pakistani economic migrants. At present, the largest ethnic group in Sparkbrook is Pakistanis, while some households of other backgrounds – and pubs and shops catering to them – also remain. The area has received a high number of new migrants as well.

Nechells, which lies a similar distance to Sparkbrook from the city centre, has quite a different feel. It is divided into distinctive neighbourhoods, and the fieldwork was conducted mainly in North Nechells (or St Clements – "to the posh people" as one informant told us). This part of Nechells is surrounded on three sides by industrial and commercial sites, and the tower blocks of Bloomsbury, to the south. Connections to the city centre are much less convenient than in Sparkbrook; a single bus service, which runs every half an hour in the evenings, serves the main street. Local services are also much more limited than in Sparkbrook – aside from a large Chinese food supermarket, the area has only a few general stores, pharmacies, and take-aways. Compared to the part of Sparkbrook where fieldwork took place, renting from the council or a housing association is much more common. In terms of ethnicity, the population is highly diverse, including people of white British, Caribbean, South Asian and African descent. Many of the young people interviewed were of mixed heritage, often the result of unions between local Birmingham women and Caribbean men who migrated to the UK in the 1960s.

Kingstanding and the three estates new deal for Communities (NDC) regeneration area in King's Norton resemble Sparkbrook and Nechells in terms of deprivation as measured by the IMD, but have small minority ethnic populations. Large areas of both Kingstanding and King's Norton were originally developed as social housing, and both wards remain predominantly residential to this day. In spite of their similarities, these two wards also differ from one another in many aspects including accessibility, population density, and recent and ongoing regeneration activity.

Kingstanding has high deprivation rates throughout the ward. Although located outside the inner city, it has excellent transportation links to the centre and a layout that divides it into four separate neighbourhoods. Kingstanding was largely undeveloped until the Housing Committee's decision to build municipal housing in the area to ease the city's housing shortages in the 1920s. Because land in the area was plentiful, the new houses were generously proportioned, and had both front and back gardens. Traditional terraced housing was intentionally avoided in favour of more spacious design. Unlike many inner city areas such as Sparkbrook, that historically housed large numbers of middle class home-owners, the early residents of Kingstanding were almost exclusively council tenants. Diversification of tenure types in the area, especially in neighbourhoods such as North Kingstanding, has emerged as a result of private purchase of council properties.

Unlike Sparkbrook, Nechells and Kingstanding which are deprived throughout, King's Norton is divided into fairly well-to-do and highly deprived areas, primarily in the three estates NDC regeneration area east of Redditch Road, where the fieldwork took place. A great deal of municipal housing was built in this area in the 1960s and 1970s, and this part of King's Norton now has an IMD index similar to those of the other case study wards and other inner city areas. Unlike any of the other case study areas, King's Norton developed around a historical village on the edge of countryside. The houses are laid out following the Radburn pattern, with gardens, parks and cul-de-sacs.

Using empirical data for theory development

Whilst the study was designed to provide new and robust findings, it was, in some parts, exploratory and tentative, and the conclusions presented in this paper are a work in progress. The decision to restrict the empirical research to young adults aged 16-35 was made partly to focus the research and improve its generalisability, and partly because early adulthood can be seen as a key life stage for social and spatial mobility. While the conclusions presented in this paper are inspired by the findings of

the empirical research amongst the young adults in the four case study areas, the paper is also drawing on existing literature and statistical evidence. Unlike the empirical evidence from resident interviews, the statistical data used to support, clarify and provide background is not restricted to any specific age group.

Deprivation and ethnicity in Birmingham

The roots of urban deprivation in Birmingham have been extensively explored elsewhere (references), and it is beyond the scope of this paper to try to summarise all of them here. The purpose of this section, instead, is to provide a brief overview of some of the issues that are deemed most relevant for the purposes of this paper.

The Historical Roots of Urban Poverty in Birmingham

Birmingham's population and city boundaries expanded rapidly at the end of the nineteenth century as its manufacturing industry grew. The central area of Birmingham had large numbers of workshops and factories intermingled with the closely packed courts and back-to-back houses. Areas surrounding the city centre had somewhat better terraced housing, housing artisanal families, while the professional middle classes were moving out of the city centre to new, exclusive areas such as Edgbaston and Moseley (Cherry 1994).

From the outset, some areas such as Nechells housed the poor urban working class; others, such as Sparkbrook, later came to be areas of cheap private housing. From the interwar period onwards, the municipal authorities were highly active in developing new public housing on the city's suburban fringes in areas like Kingsbury, Kingstanding, Shard End and Longbridge (Cherry 1994). The standard of these houses was considerably better than those available in the inner city at the time (Chinn 1994). As the sixties and seventies progressed, however, many of these inter- and post-war council estates were used to house the families displaced by the slum clearance (add Kingstanding ref) and began to show considerable social stress, as can be seen in the existence of clusters of deprivation further away from the city centre today.

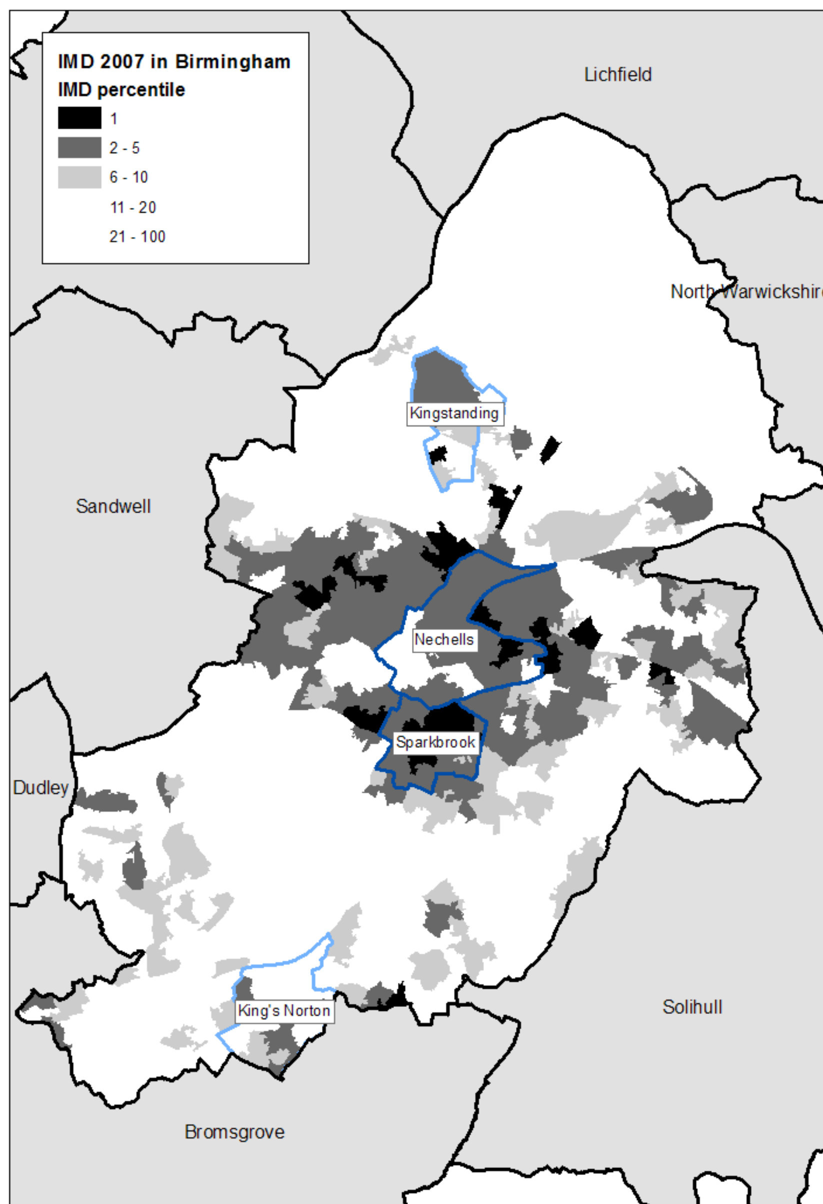
Alongside the building of new estates on the city's fringes, the authorities undertook considerable intervention in some of the inner-city "slums", such as Duddeston and Nechells, demolishing and rebuilding with houses and high-rise. Sparkbrook and other surrounding areas saw more limited activity. By the time of this study, some parts of Nechells have been built, then twice demolished and redeveloped in barely a hundred years. However, much of Sparkbrook, Kingstanding and King's Norton are as first built.

In the light of a historical overview, the poorer neighbourhoods in Birmingham can be categorised broadly into three types. First are the inner-urban areas such as Nechells, which were developed with low-quality housing for the industrial working class, and subsequently regenerated, rebuilt and redeveloped over time. The second category consist of inner-urban areas like Sparkbrook, which were originally built to meet the needs of a more affluent fraction of the working population but have since then come to serve the needs of these least able to afford private housing. In the third category belong the suburban municipal estates such as Kingstanding and parts of King's Norton which, as council accommodation became increasingly the resort of only those most in need, have come to house growing concentrations of disadvantaged households.

Measuring poverty and deprivation in Birmingham

Mapping the IMD for Birmingham produces a striking pattern, as seen in the map below (Illustration 1). All of the grey areas of the city are within the 10% most deprived in England, while those in the darkest shade are among the 1% most deprived. As the map illustrates, the city centre is surrounded by an unbroken ring of highly deprived areas, spanning the wards of Ladywood, Sparkbrook, Small Heath, Washwood Heath, Nechells, Aston and Soho. It is worth noting, however, that high levels of deprivation can also be found outside the inner city, in areas bordering the city's boundaries.

Illustration1: Deprivation in Birmingham



Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2007

As a ward, King's Norton was ranked the 20th most deprived in Birmingham by the 2007 IMD, a long way behind Sparkbrook (3rd), Nechells (4th) and Kingstanding (8th). However, Super Output Area (SOA) level data, which allows the identification of small pockets of deprivation within an authority, reveals that wealth is unequally distributed within King's Norton. Some parts of the ward, mainly the areas east of Redditch Road (three estates NDC regeneration area), have IMD similar to the deprived parts of the inner city, placing them amongst the most deprived 5% in England.

Unlike Sparkbrook and Nechells, which both have comparatively low economic activity rates (<50%), Kingstanding has an economic activity rate similar to that of Birmingham's average. King's Norton's economic activity rate, on the other hand, is above the city average (63% compared with 60%, in 2001), although SOA level variations within the ward are significant. In both Kingstanding and King's Norton, women's economic activity rates are roughly similar to that of the Birmingham average. In addition to economic activity rates being higher in Kingstanding and King's Norton, these areas have significantly lower unemployment rates than Sparkbrook and Nechells (Table 2). This could be reflecting differing population composition of the areas and different reasons for high deprivation in terms of the relative effect of in-work poverty, worklessness and economic inactivity.

Table 2: Unemployment rates (2001 and 2008) for case study wards

	(2001)	(2008)	Change (2001-2008)
King's Norton	8.6	7.0	- 1.6
Kingstanding	11.3	10.7	- 0.6
Nechells	20.3	20.2	- 0.1
Sparkbrook	20.5	18.9	- 1.6
Birmingham average	**9.5**	**8.2**	**- 1.3**

Note: Rates based on economically active population.
Source: 2001 values from Census (values for 2004 wards calculated by ONS), Bimingham City Council (2005). 2008 values from BEIC/ONS (May 2008).

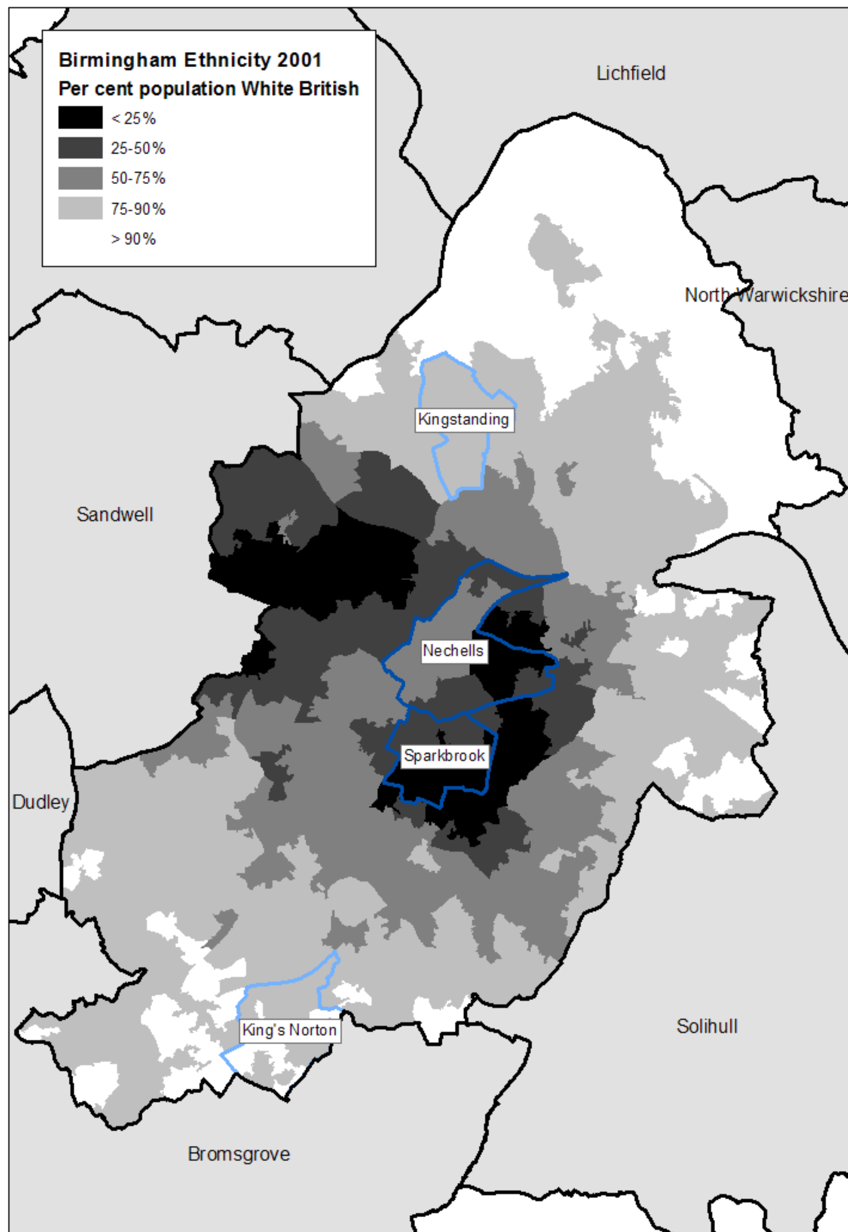
Comparison of statistics on work deprivation data (the proportion of working-age adults out of work through unemployment or ill health) in 1991 and 2001 indicates that the relative position of wards and areas in Birmingham changed little over the decade. The thirteen wards with the highest rates – the most deprived third in the city – were the same in 1991 and 2001. While work deprivation rates generally fell across Birmingham (as across the country over the same period) the proportion of people out of work increased in many inner urban wards. Areas of suburban deprivation, on the other hand, did considerably better.

Intensification and concentration of deprivation and poverty in much of the inner city during the recent decades indicates that the measures taken to address deprivation in inner urban areas have not produced the desired outcomes. This may be due to insufficient allocation of resources, poor design, or both. Understanding the reasons behind the persistence of poverty and deprivation in these areas, nevertheless, is a pressing concern if poverty and disadvantage are to be alleviated in the nation's most deprived areas.

The 'race' divide

As demonstrated by Illustration 2 (below), minority ethnic populations are concentrated predominantly in inner-urban areas, which coincide with the most deprived areas of the city shown in Illustration 1 (above).

Illustration 2: The distribution of white British population in Birmingham



Source: Census (2001)

As illustrated in Table 3 (below), non-white minority ethnic populations, with the notable exception of Indians, are much more likely to live in deprived areas in Birmingham than white Britons. The propensity to live in deprived neighbourhoods is particularly high amongst Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

Table 3: Area deprivation and population by ethnic group in Birmingham

	% of Birmingham's population	% living in most deprived* areas	% of most deprived areas' population
White British	65.6	30.5	49.8
Irish	3.2	37.5	3.0
Indian	5.7	38.2	5.4
Pakistani	10.6	77.2	20.4
Bangladeshi	2.1	85.5	4.5
Black Caribbean	4.9	60.4	7.3
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	1.6	56.5	2.2

* Most deprived quintile in England (as measured by IMD)
Source: Census 2001; IMD (2004)

As the table above shows, Birmingham's deprived areas were already 'majority minority' in 2001. Given the age structure of the city's BME populations, it is possible that the population composition in Birmingham's most deprived areas has grown even more non-white since then. The greater likelihood of non-white people living in poor neighbourhoods may be largely explained by their lower socio-economic standing. With the notable exception of Indians, BME populations are more likely than white Britons to live in poverty (Kenway and Palmer 2008). The lower socio-economic standing of BME groups is likely to be the result of a combination of factors, such as higher unemployment, lower skill levels and earnings (Wadsworth 2003; Family Resources Survey 2002-2005), fewer dual-income households (Berthoud 2005; Peach 2006), migration, and past and present discrimination.

When looking at the interrelationships between ethnicity and poverty in urban areas such as Sparkbrook and Nechells, however, it is important to bear in mind that although the areas remain poor and largely populated by minority ethnic groups, there is little evidence to suggest that the ethnic composition of the population is the key explanatory factor in this. As one author puts it "ethnicity is not a theory" (Fenton 2003:180).

Reinforcing deprivation – racism and "cultural issues"

The most significant one of the ethnicity-related explanations is the role of racism and discrimination. Although legislative measures have prohibited racist and ethnic discrimination since 1976, discrimination has not been altogether eradicated. Covert, indirect and subtle discrimination continues to affect the employment and career development opportunities of non-white people (Berthoud 2000; Carmichael and Woods 2000; Heath and Cheung 2006). At the same time, even those who do not feel that discrimination is directly affecting their future prospects may suffer the consequences of the racist discrimination and institutional racism that their parents faced. More recently, the intensification of Islamophobia following 9/11 and the 2005 London bombings has potentially had a negative impact on the employment prospects of young Muslims, which form a significant proportion of the population in Sparkbrook. Although the seriousness of racism should not be dismissed, it is likely that racism and discrimination are effecting young BME populations more severely in the form of inherited disadvantage dating back to when discrimination was legal and (more) widely practiced.

The most influential 'cultural' issue affecting BME residents' incomes is often believed to be the high prevalence of single earner households, which national statistics suggest is more common amongst certain ethnic groups. While amongst some ethnic groups this is largely due to cultural preferences regarding household composition and the organisation of family life, in others the key explanation is high prevalence of lone parenthood.

A low level of economic activity among Muslim women adds to the poverty of Muslim households by reducing the number of dual earner households (Dale *et al.* 2002; Platt 2002). The single earner household pattern is particularly prominent amongst foreign-born Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, who comprise a significant proportion of Sparkbrook's population, and may become less significant as the educational profile of the (especially British-born) South Asian women changes (Dale *et al.* 2002). Another issue affecting mainly Muslims, however, is the refusal of some strict Muslim parents to let their daughters pursue their educational aspirations, or an insistence on early marriage, possibly to a foreign spouse. Both of these practices are reportedly more common amongst Muslims than other groups, and function to prevent young Muslim girls from achieving the kind of education that would enable them to establish a career and access higher income. When discussing cultural issues such as this one, however, it is essential to remember that 'Muslims' do not form a heterogeneous group, or an 'ethnic group' for that matter. Many Muslim women are in fact actively encouraged by their parents to educate themselves, while some girls from non-Muslim backgrounds find themselves pressured to an early marriage. Moreover, both lone parents and single earner households are common also amongst white Britons who live in deprived areas, reducing the significance of 'cultural' factors leading to high prevalence of single earner households amongst BME populations.

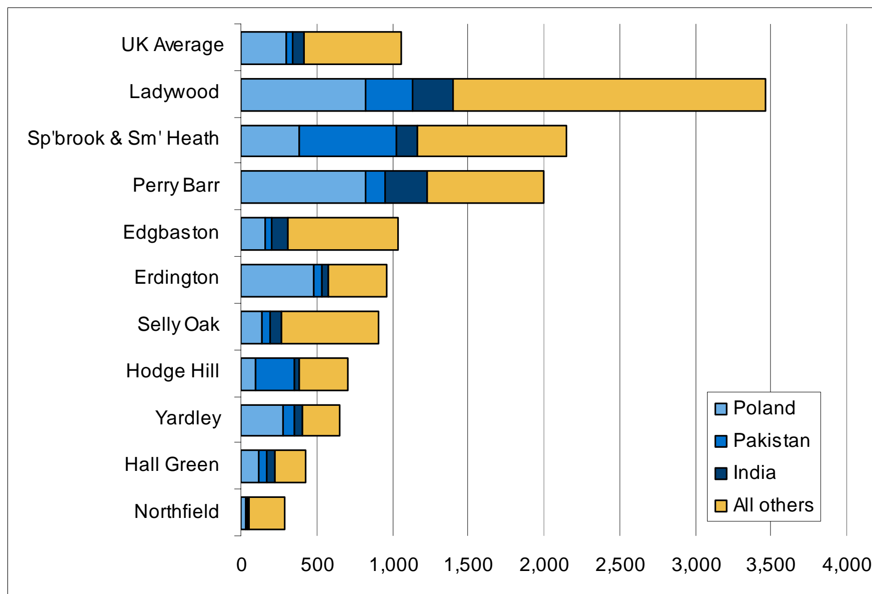
Overall, many of the issues that are frequently cited with reference to poor neighbourhoods, such as disaffected, unemployed, young black men with low levels of formal education, are not really related to ethnicity or skin colour. Instead, the likelihood to become disaffected can be said to be roughly similar for all boys who grow up in overcrowded conditions, attend underachieving schools, and encounter drugs and violence from an early age, regardless of skin colour or ethnicity. It is largely for historical reasons that some of the neighbourhoods that are today most deprived in the country are also largely non-white. Factors such as worklessness, lack of education, resources and aspirations, overcrowding and poor living conditions that function to keep poor neighbourhoods poor affect youth in deprived predominantly white neighbourhoods as well as deprived majority minority neighbourhoods.

High migration areas

International Migration

As Illustration 3.5 shows, the poorest areas in Birmingham, such as Ladywood (including Nechells) and Sparkbrook/Small Heath, receive exceptionally high numbers of international immigrants. The impact of this large-scale international in-migration on the areas' population structure and economy is significant (see also Simpson *et al.* 2008).

Illustration 3: International in-migration to selected Birmingham wards 2005-2007



Source: HMRS National Insurance Registrations (2005-2007)

A considerable proportion of the new migrants to Sparkbrook are Polish and Pakistani, while the Nechells area in Ladywood has received notable numbers of migrants from both Poland and sub-Saharan Africa. The economic and social integration of new migrants demands resources and services, many of which are not readily made available by the Local Authority, and must therefore be met by voluntary organisations that often operate on limited budgets. The limited availability of English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) training and difficulties that immigrants experience in accessing it were amongst the key issues highlighted by stakeholders who were interviewed during the course of the research. Health-related problems amongst the new migrants were also seen to exert pressure on the local healthcare providers.

Although many new migrants choose majority minority areas because they have friends and family there (Ballard 1994), others may well be more attracted by the cheap housing or availability of private rented properties. Anecdotal evidence collected during the course of the research suggests that Muslim migrants are drawn to Sparkbrook by the area's large Muslim community and the fact that services, such as Halal butchers, are readily available. Comparatively cheap housing was cited as a major pull factor for new migrants, even though anecdotal evidence suggest that this is rarely of very high quality. Attempt to save money in housing expenses is believed to contribute to high levels of overcrowding in areas such as Nechells and Sparkbrook.

In addition to the need to provide services to new migrants and the pressures of population growth, these areas are affected by the poor labour market position of many new migrants. As well known, new migrants' employment prospects are frequently negatively affected by poor knowledge of the English language, low levels of education and skills, or education and skills that are not recognised or in demand in the UK (Modood 1997 and 2003; Shields and Price 2002; Mason 2003; Phillimore and Goodson 2006; Dustmann *et al.* 2007; Dickens and McKnight 2008), leading to high levels of unemployment and low incomes. Because the scale of international in-

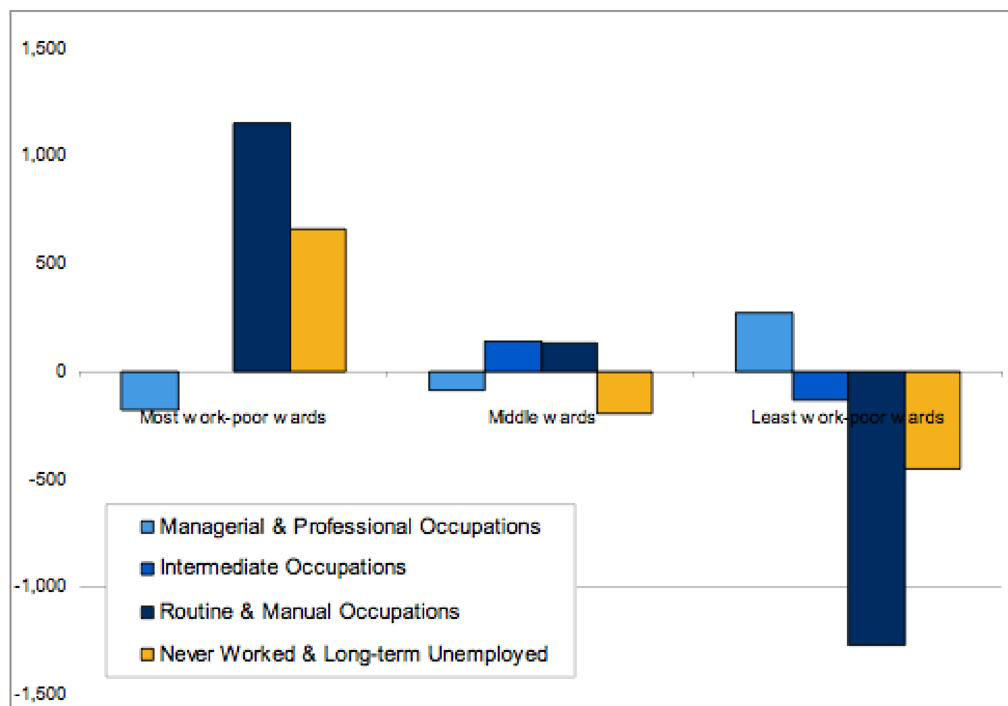
migration to Nechells and Sparkbrook, it has a remarkable impact on the statistics relating to unemployment and poverty in the area.

Out-migration

Statistical evidence (Labour Force Survey 1995-2005) reveals that ethnic differences in educational attainment levels are significant for the population as a whole, but less so when only people born in the UK are included, suggesting that the educational profile (and incomes) of BME groups are changing as British-born people with minority ethnic backgrounds have better qualification levels than their immigrant parents (see also Clark and Drinkwater 2007). If the spatial concentration patterns of BME population remained unchanged as the characteristics of these populations change, we would eventually see prospering of the currently fairly disadvantaged areas that have high concentrations of minority ethnic populations.

One common assumption is that certain areas remain poor because of low population mobility, i.e. the same (poor) people continue to live in those areas, unable to get out of poverty. In reality, however, some deprived areas have relatively high levels of population mobility, but the characteristics of the in-migrants may differ from those of the out-migrants. Statistical data looking at migration within Birmingham reveals some evidence suggesting that at least part of the continued prevalence of poverty in inner city neighbourhoods results from the net out-migration of those with better-paid, higher-status employment, and in-migration of those with fewer skills and those without work. The chart below shows the net movement of people into the most deprived, average and least deprived group of wards in Birmingham in 2000-01.

Illustration 4: Net migration by social class, Birmingham Ward 2000-2001



Source: Census (2001) Migration Statistics

The leftmost group, consisting of the most deprived wards, shows that migration contributed to a net increase in the numbers of people who were employed in manual work, and those who had never worked or were long-term unemployed. Over the same period the same deprived wards were net losers of people in professional and managerial occupations; the trend is for better-paid, better-qualified people to leave these places to move elsewhere in Birmingham. The opposite pattern is observed in the least-deprived wards, places like Edgbaston and Moseley; professional people are moving in, whilst those in the least economically advantageous position are moving out.

While the reasons for this may be complex, the net effect of this is clear; even if individual households in poor areas are able to improve their circumstances, the aggregate level of poverty in the area may improve much less, as better-off households leave and new poor households move in. When residents who are doing well move out and are replaced by incoming flows of new international migrants, the changes in the ethnic composition of the population in terms of white/non-white divide may not be significant. When established residents with steady jobs are replaced by international migrants whose labour market position is likely to be precarious, however, the statistical impact is considerable.

From migrants to Britons

The factors that are most likely to negatively affect migrants' employment prospects leading to low income should, at least in principle, affect only the people who migrate from one country to another. In reality, however, the lives of migrants' children may well be severely affected by their parents' disadvantaged socio-economic standing in the same way that the lives of their white British counterparts born to poor families are: the cycle of deprivation aggravated by the spatial concentration of the most deprived in areas where the children are exposed to a number of other disadvantages, especially in terms of the quality of schooling (Barnes *et al.* 2006), in addition to financial hardship.

Although the impact of the actual migration process is likely to be insignificant for the people often referred to, somewhat questionably, as the 2nd or 3rd generation migrants, the life chances of British-born children of migrant parents may still be compromised by the immigrant parents' lack of knowledge regarding the language and the British society, or experiences of past discrimination. Perhaps the most notable cause for disadvantage faced by the British-born offspring of migrant parents, however, is the cycle of deprivation, whereby disadvantaged position common to migrants is passed on from one generation to the next due to the inability of disadvantaged parents to provide their children with the tools that would enable them to improve their socio-economic standing. In the case of BME populations this disadvantage may well be largely attributable to past discrimination, dating back to when discriminatory practices were legal and common. This cycle of deprivation and disadvantage that follows, however, is qualitatively similar to that found amongst white Britons in predominantly white deprived areas.

The cycle of deprivation

The reasons that the same neighbourhoods and the same regions have high poverty rates relative to others over time are much discussed and debated (for e.g. Whelan *et al.* 2003; Pacione 2004; Vaughan *et al.* 2005; Lawless 2006; Bailey and Livingston 2007), and this paper does not attempt to add to that discourse. Instead, in line with the purposes of this paper, this section briefly discusses two of the most fundamental

issues that featured heavily in the interviews with residents and stakeholders, and can be seen to contribute to the cycle of deprivation and low achievement in deprived areas.

Education

As already noted, the availability and/or quality of work in and around deprived neighbourhoods is often low. In these circumstances, decent qualifications – at least basic school-leaving certificates – could be important to facilitate entry and advancement in the labour market. Local schools are crucially shaped by the composition of the surrounding area, and in turn affect the life chances of those that pass through them.

In Nechells, Kingstanding and King's Norton, a large proportion of the interviewees had been expelled or transferred during secondary school, and some had not completed GCSE-level exams as a result. The resident interviews painted a picture of a highly disrupted secondary school environment, unable to provide a satisfying challenge to able pupils or control the disruptive behaviour of the less focused. The peer culture at the secondary school was seen to discourage achievement.

Considering the context in which the schools operate, this is hardly surprising. Under resourced and under or poorly staffed, the schools in deprived areas are often struggling to meet the national requirements. Interviews with stakeholders and residents alike give anecdotal evidence suggesting that it is not altogether uncommon for schools to, under pressure, succumb to desperate measures, such reduced timetable or asking poorly performing students to leave at Christmas to improve the school's GCSE results. Needless to say, the students subject to these measures, taken to improve the schools achievement records, pay the price by often finishing school without any qualifications or with qualifications that do not reflect their ability.

Of course, not all schools in poor areas are of poor quality or inclined to resort to desperate measures. Individual pathways through the educational system are also strongly determined by the family and other social networks. One big problem, however, appears to be that young people growing up in deprived areas have limited access to people who have high levels of education. Moreover, while young people depend heavily on their parents information regarding their options, the ability of parents who are uneducated, overworked, lacking English language skills or all of the above are often ill-advised to provide appropriate guidance for their children.

Stigma, discrimination and lack of self-confidence

Some residents and stakeholders in all of the case study areas felt that the area had a poor reputation, which coloured outsider's perceptions of people who lived there, possibly affecting people's employment prospects outside the area. Low aspirations and lack of self esteem were also identified by most of the key stakeholders in all case study areas. This issue was perhaps most clearly manifested in young people's desire to stay in or near the area and their reluctance to venture further away in search of employment or to access education. Very few of the young people who were interviewed for the purposes of this study had been to university or wished to do so. Instead, most of those who were in training or expressed a desire to access training in the future, aimed for NVQ level 2 or 3 qualifications. Most of the young men, especially in Kingstanding and King's Norton, had an alternative plan in the (what they perceived to be highly likely) instance that they would fail to achieve their most preferred option.

Recognising growing diversity – breaking the 'cycle of deprivation' with tailored measures

At a first glance, BME residents in deprived inner city neighbourhoods and white Britons living in the fringes of the city may appear to have little in common with each other. The evidence collected during the course of this research, however, reveals some striking similarities between the four case study areas and their residents.

Moving beyond Race and Ethnicity?

Deprived areas such as Nechells and Sparkbrook are not ethnic enclaves as much as ethnically diverse areas much populated by new migrants as well as people who, for one reason or another, are unable or unwilling to more prosperous areas. According to Simpson (2007), non-white people are more likely to move away from ethnically diverse areas than their white counterparts, indicating that the attachment of minority ethnic residents to these areas is not the primary factor that prevents them from leaving. Statistical and qualitative evidence collected during the course of this research generated similar findings. Census migration statistics show that the net result of migration within the city is for non-white minorities to move away from the areas with the highest minority populations, and regardless of their ethnicity, young people frequently expressed wishes to live in a more prosperous area. Although the reasons that pull people to these areas and constrain their ability to move away may be partly related to the areas' ethnic composition and ethnicity related reasons on a household level, ethnicity-focussed initiatives to improve the areas are not viewed favourably by the community representatives.

One of the key reasons behind community representatives' dislike towards ethnicity-focussed initiatives was the meaninglessness of the existing ethnic categories, and the exclusionary force of such initiatives. As one community representative remarked, many problems in deprived areas are not restricted to members of one specific ethnic group, but rather affect a cross-section of residents regardless of their ethnicity. Generalisations about ethnic groups are becoming meaningless and inaccurate as diversity within minority ethnic groups increases and growing numbers of minority ethnic households migrate to more prosperous, often predominantly white, areas. The overall population composition is also changing. Growing numbers of young people classified as 'minority ethnic' are of mixed heritage, British-born, or both, and do not fit comfortably into any of the ethnic categories. Amongst the British-born, the importance of ethnic identity is fading. Although ethnicity may form one aspect of identity, it is not necessarily the most central one, and other identities may be regarded more important. Moreover, ethnicity may not be the only reason why minority individuals are disadvantaged and/or face discrimination. Factors such as class, gender or disability function to disadvantage people from minority groups as well as the majority. Equality initiatives are increasingly focusing on diversity and inequality more broadly, and this development is welcomed in ethnically diverse areas.

In policy and service design, ethnicity should be clearly distinguished from migrant status, as more and more non-white people in the UK are British-born and growing proportion of immigrants are white. New migrants who were not recruited directly from abroad tend to be disadvantaged in comparison to established residents regardless of their ethnicity. Although racism and discrimination are likely to affect non-white migrants more than their white counterparts, factors such as limited language skills that have a major influence on employment prospects and labour market position require measures that target all new migrants rather than some specific 'ethnic' groups.

Addressing the ‘cycle of deprivation’

Existing literature and the empirical data collected in the course of this research suggests that a number of factors come together to reinforce disadvantage for those living in particular places. At the same time, other factors are working to concentrate people of all kinds of ethnic backgrounds in less advantaged situations in certain parts of the city, placing a disproportionate strain on public and welfare services there while at the same time reducing demand for private sector services. The availability of affordable housing, together with poorly performing schools and reputation as ‘rough’ areas, functions as a filtering effect to ensure that few of the new arrivals in these areas are people who are in a position to genuinely ‘choose’ where they wish to live. Sparkbrook, Nechells and King’s Norton have all at times in the past suffered from low housing demand and empty housing stock that no-one wanted to live in. Anecdotal evidence suggest that, at times like this, housing was allocated to the people with high level of housing need, often accompanied with high overall level of need, creating concentrations of high need households in already deprived parts of the city. Consequently, these areas tend to have high concentrations of people with exceptionally high levels of need and, coupled with schools that are often lacking resources and staff, an environment in which the needs of the residents are not addressed in a way that would be required to break the cycle of deprivation.

Although both Sparkbrook and Nechells now experience strong demand for affordable housing of all tenures from recent international migrants as established residents, these areas remain deprived. This is partly due to the role of both Sparkbrook and Nechells as reception areas - popular among new migrants, but net losers of internal migrants. Because the characteristics of the incoming residents do not match with the residents who move away, and the more stagnant population is constrained by the areas’ poor infrastructure and limited opportunities, these areas see little development. To view areas such as Sparkbrook and Nechells exclusively as reception areas for incoming migrants, however, is dangerous, because it draws attention away from the needs of the more stagnant segment of the resident population. While attention needs to be paid to the needs of new international migrants and the impact they have on certain areas (Simpson *et al.* 2008), it is important to remember that the new migrants do not account for 100% of the population in need in these areas. The remaining segment of the population may be largely classified as ‘BME’, but the extent to which their disadvantaged position can be directly linked to migration is debateable. It is possible that measures attempting to alleviate disadvantage amongst new migrants will not meet their needs, and migrant-focussed initiatives will need to be supplemented with other measures directed at more established populations. While it is essential that the needs of the new migrants are identified and addressed, these measures alone will fail to improve deprived areas with highly diverse populations.

Interestingly, and perhaps unexpectedly, the experiences of white British residents in Kingstanding and King’s Norton resemble those of established BME residents in Sparkbrook and Nechells, suggesting that the everyday lived experience may be influenced less by ethnicity than worklessness, low income, quality of schooling, lack of opportunities, and the dangers of falling into the ‘wrong crowd’. Even if the underlying reasons for disadvantage between white Britons in Kingstanding and King’s Norton and BME residents in Nechells and Sparkbrook vary, there are two things that most of them have in common: disadvantaged parents and deprived surroundings. In order to focus on the prevention of intergenerational cycle of deprivation, it would make sense to focus less on ethnicity and more on the possible ways of preventing intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Conclusions

To assume that the ethnic composition of the population in majority minority areas somehow explains the high levels deprivation in these areas is to oversimplify the issue. In order to understand the different causes of high levels of deprivation amongst England's minority ethnic populations, and to develop effective measures to address this issue, it is important to distinguish BME populations from migrants and move away from interchangeable use of these terms. People classified as 'minority ethnic' are increasingly British-born and/or have at least one parent who is white and/or British-born. In terms of identifying causes and solutions for concentrated deprivation, it is crucial to avoid generalisation and consider the limited level of homogeneity that the terms 'BME', 'majority minority', or even any one ethnic category such as 'Pakistani' implies. Deprived areas, even ones with an identifiable 'majority, are likely to have heterogeneous disadvantaged populations comprising international migrants as well as a mixture of white and non-white British-born persons.

Overemphasis on ethnicity can lead to assumption that all majority minority areas are populated almost exclusively by migrants or people belonging to the minority ethnic categories, and that the causes of deprivation in these areas are radically different from those affecting deprived white neighbourhoods. Such distortions, in turn, may lead to a policy and service delivery designed to address issues that do not exist in these areas, or may not be the most crucial causes of deprivation and disadvantage. As long as the disadvantage is not a direct result of immigration (such as poor language skills), or ethnic discrimination, the ethnicity or 'race' of the residents may be a less crucial consideration for the design of effective service delivery. While 'cultural' issues may remain relevant in certain areas to an extent that they should be incorporated in the service design and delivery, this is not a case for all majority minority areas and to assume so may work to divert the focus of the interventions away from the most crucial issues. The all encompassing term 'BME' refers to an increasingly diverse group of people, including growing numbers of British-born children of British-born parents. Whereas some retain strong cultural or religious beliefs and practices that influence the nature of the most suitable ways of delivering services in certain areas, BME 'status' does not automatically indicate the presence of a 'cultural' factor or a migration past that would conveniently explain the disadvantage.

There is a need to look beyond the ethnic profile of an area, and make informed decisions based on the overall characteristics of the population in these areas, without forgetting that disadvantage comes in many forms and can be caused by a number of (often interrelated) factors. Ethnicity is but one of these variables, and often not the most important one, for example, in comparison to the cycle of low achievement. This is not to say that ethnicity no longer matters, or that discrimination on ethnic grounds would no longer be a serious issue. While ethnicity most certainly still shapes people's experiences, it does not define them. The life chances of young people of BME origins in Britain's most deprived areas appear to be influenced *more* by other factors, which may not be that different from the constrains affecting their white British counterparts.

The key issue that needs to be addressed in deprived areas to improve the residents' life chances, regardless of the ethnic composition of the population, is the cycle of deprivation and disadvantage. Even if measures taken to address this issue do not result in significant improvements in the local area statistics - which may well be the case especially in areas that have high levels of both in and out-migration - they can nevertheless be influential in improving the life chances of individuals living in these

areas. Although an argument can be made to support measures to improve the outlook and quality of housing available in deprived areas to encourage people who are in a position to choose to live in there, it may be even more crucial to focus on the people and ensure that regardless of their ethnicity, fewer children growing up in these areas will have their choices restricted and futures determined by their parents' disadvantaged position.

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