Race, space and fear:
imagined geographies of racism, crime, violence and disorder in Northern England

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This paper describes and analyses the wider mechanisms, processes and contexts of the riots that took place in Northern UK cities and towns in the Summer of 2001. It examines these events and the imagined fears that aided the hardening of boundaries between violently opposed groups. It is noted that a long-term entrenchment of various forms of racial discrimination and racist violence in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley areas was connected to the long-term economic decline of the textile industry. Localised deindustrialisation, it is argued, generated a community discourse of nostalgia and cultural decline that was articulated via twin motors of race and ethnicity. As a result geographical concentrations of fear, risk and insecurity aided the likelihood and intensity of racist violence and disorder.

Introduction

The immediate events leading to the serious public disorders that took place in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in Spring and Summer 2001 appeared to be a confused series of well publicised violent 'racist' clashes and attacks against people and property involving Asian and white young people. The context was a climate of fear and rumour within Asian communities that the British National Party and/or the National Front were going to march into Asian areas despite banning orders authorised by the Home

Secretary. The National Front had visited Oldham from all parts of the country to demonstrate their 'support of the white population against racist attacks', and the relative electoral success of the British National Party in Oldham and Burnley seemed to affirm significant support for ideological racism (Clarke 2001). The overall effect was to alert many Asian and white young people to the possibility of being attacked and the need to defend themselves and in some cases attack others.

This article describes and analyses the wider mechanisms, processes and contexts of these events and imagined fears as well as the specificity of the places in which the events took place, and casts a critical eye over recent reports that attempt to understand the disorders and propose policy solutions captured by the term 'community cohesion'. The article notes that a long-term entrenchment of various forms of racial discrimination and racist violence in the areas effected by the recent disorders is connected to the long-term economic decline of the textile industry generating a community discourse of nostalgia and cultural decline seen through the prism of race and ethnicity. Secondly, it argues that geographical concentrations of fear, risk and insecurity predict the likelihood and intensity of racist violence and disorder and that these fears arise from the level of general crime and violence, the degree of ethnic concentration and segregation, and perceived and real relative deprivation among contiguous and non-contiguous areas that are perceived ethnically. Thirdly, it is argued that declining housing markets within Northern textile towns trap residents in area-based ethnic and class immobility in ways that concentrate and heighten imagined geographies of fear, ethnic conflict and resentment.

In addition, it is empirically demonstrated that these arguments about how concentrations of fear, risk and insecurity by ethnicity and social class are linked to racist violence and ethnic segregation by comparing the common social, economic and demographic features of Oldham, Bradford and Burnley. An example of the geography of racist fear found in textile towns drawn from my study of young people living in Keighley, West Yorkshire completes the empirical case studies. Moreover, this paper critically examines the subsequent reports about their causes. The concluding discussion asks whether ethnic separation amounts to segregation and whether policy responses to the

disorders encapsulated in the term 'community cohesion' have coherence and meaning (Back, 1996).

Antecendents

The proximate causes of public disorder in Northern textile towns need to be balanced with local histories of entrenched racial and ethnic enmity that have characterised these towns. The longevity of resistance to racial discrimination, racist harassment and violence particularly towards British Pakistanis and Bangladeshis from the 1950s to the 1990s provides an important backdrop to the recent disorders (Pearson 1976; Webster 1994, 1995, 1996). This history can be said to occupy three overlapping phases. The first phase involved resistance to racial discrimination in the workplace through strikes by Asian workers from the late 1950s to the late 1970s (Race Today Collective, 1986). The second phase began in the early 1980s and involved politically organised Asian young people defending their areas from incursions by far right organisations (Independent Black Collective, 1986; Race Today Collective, 1986). The third phase began in the 1990s and has produced a marked increase in the reporting and/or recording of racist incidents involving Asian on white attacks (Fitzgerald, 2001; Webster 1995, 1996). Racist hostility has been a normal, everyday, continuous intergenerational feature of the historical experiences of the original migrants and subsequent generations, although a shift has occurred from focus on workplace adult discrimination to a focus on young people's defence of territory.

One illustration of this historical memory and legacy is Pearson's (1976) account of racial violence as a response to the decline of the cotton industry and its occupational culture in a North East Lancashire town in the 1950s and 1960s. A sort of economic rationality provided the basis of suspicion and hostility towards Asians although this was not restricted to workplace issues. A defensive white community discourse associated economic decline and the collapse of the cotton industry with the arrival of Pakistani migrants who were said to depress wages. A much broader reading of the textile industries decline in the 1950s led to a situation were 'cars toured the streets calling for the banning of Asian imports' (Pearson, 1976: 60). Conflict between locals and migrants centred on perceived competition in the areas of housing,

women and girls, and jobs which were said to lay the grounds for 'Paki-bashing'.

Another illustration of community disharmony was the arrest in Bradford in July 1981 of twelve young Asian men on charges of conspiracy to manufacture petrol bombs. The 'Bradford 12' as they subsequently became known were acquitted in April 1982, having spent eight months in prison, on grounds of 'self-defence' as they claimed to be defending the Asian community from threats by far right organisations to march through an Asian area (Race Today Collective, 1986; Independent Black Collective, 1986). Grounded in the Asian Youth Movement (AYM) of the late 1970s and 1980s, in places like Bradford and Southall 'self defence' subsequently became a *leitmotif* of Asian young people faced with racist violence (Southall Rights, 1981; Strategic Management Unit, 1996, 1997a, 1997b). An important difference between then and now is that the AYM was a politically sophisticated organisation that sought and won alliances with white anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations. The recent disorders seem apolitical and lack formal organisation being more a reaction to perceived white hostility where ethnic identity becomes strengthened or weakened, benign or malign, according to its construction and reception by others (Wardak, 2000).

Race, space and fear

The disorders in Northern textile towns overwhelmingly involved young Asian and white men. Expressions of public disorder and violence among young people are a function of their different and closer relationship to public space and locality compared to adults. They experience a higher rate of everyday violence and crime than adults, although this varies according to age, gender and ethnicity, and therefore possess a heightened fear of certain places or people and this influences where they can go and what they can do (Suttles, 1968; Loader, 1996; Anderson et al., 1994; Webster, 1995, 1997, 2001; Pain, 2001). At the same time young people also 'stand-in' and act as proxy for wider adult anxieties and fears.

In multi-ethnic situations worries about violence and crime become heightened by an anticipation and actuality of racist abuse and violence even though 'racially motivated' violence is rarely the sole or even the most important factor

inducing fear among young people. Although racist violence can become pervasive in specific circumstances and structural conditions it forms part of a mixture of fears about general crime and violence (Desai, 1999; Webster, 2001). One of the circumstances in which an intensification of racist violence takes place is when a 'perpetrator community' of young people and adults ignores, colludes or condones it while not directly involving themselves in violence (Sibbitt, 1997). In this sense perpetrators become a proxy for wider concerns and anxieties about race and ethnicity within a community. The conditions and existence of racist violence are contiguous within multiply deprived areas that concentrate and segregate Asian and white populations by ethnicity and social class.

These area-based fears are why the disorders occurred near to or at the boundaries of predominantly Pakistani and Bangladeshi areas at the interface where minority and majority populations contest meeting and living space (Cantle, 2002; Denham, 2002). This spatial patterning of racist fear works so as to 'colour-code' areas in terms of ethnic 'ownership', which determines who may or may not enter, producing 'neighbourhood nationalism' (Cohen, 1993, Hesse, 1992; Webster, 1995, 2001; Werbner, 1991). Racist attacks are most likely to occur at the symbolic boundaries or borders of 'colour-coded' neighbourhoods defended from perceived and real threats from without whilst reinforcing ethnic and racial identity within (Barth, 1969; Suttles, 1967, 1968; Wallman, 1986). Borders define for each group 'us' and 'them' and yet they are contested, ambiguous and porous at the boundary where ethnic 'ownership' and 'belonging' is negotiated (Wallman 1978, Donnan and Wilson 1999). Boundary and area are not fixed as perceptions change and certain individuals cross boundaries. Their effect however is to symbolically confirm, hasten and compound ethnic concentration, separation and segregation.

The probability and intensity of racist violence within an area is linked to its general level of crime and violence, its degree of ethnic concentration and segregation, and racialised perceptions of relative deprivation. In situations of cumulative relative deprivation all risks are heightened whether of racist harassment, violence or crime, but racist hostility joins with other factors such as the availability and affordability of housing, in trapping ethnic and social groups within a new form of poverty, that of geographical immobility (Hope, 2001). Northern British Pakistanis and Bangladeshis

populations in particular are increasingly spatially concentrated and segregated in socially excluded areas faced by violence, crime and public disorder. As Modood (1992, 1997) has argued social exclusion affecting 'Asians' needs to be disaggregated, and that the real divide in terms of economic success and social mobility is between Indians and Sunni Muslims (primarily of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin). Bangladeshi and Pakistani populations live in some of the most multiply deprived and ethnically and socially isolated communities in Britain. On the one hand ethnic concentration and segregation offers relative safety and protection from racist violence *within* areas, while on the other the paradoxical effect of racist hostility *without* is to concentrate and segregate, which racists then point to as *de facto* justification for segregation (Webster, 1996). The objective demographic, economic, housing and social conditions that constrain the choices of people living in poor areas that limit their mobility also serve to emphasise the advantages of supportive social networks and local knowledge. Objective disadvantages transform into subjective assets among both adults and young people.

While adult 'community leaders' have been accused of encouraging a mythical and separatist ethnic identity to enhance their own prestige and power some young British Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people have mobilised local social networks to resist racist abuse and violence, defend areas from the incursions of far right organisations and their supporters, and in some cases have attacked whites perceived to be racist and some who are not (Ouseley, 2001; Webster, 1997). When this spills over into public disorder situations the police become targets because they are perceived to be symbols of white authority. Although belonging to a minority this criminality reinforces within the police perceptions of Asian young people as a 'suspect population' requiring control rather than protection (from racist violence and crime). Indeed the Police Report and inquiry into the Burnley disorders argued that drug related criminality within an Asian and a white group rather than racism sparked the disorders (Clarke, 2001).

Some commentaries have focused on the notion that Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities promote cultural separation from white communities, that they inhere in a homogenous 'Muslim' identity and that they suffer from 'Islamaphobia'. For example Cantle (2002) asserts that

'Asians' are nostalgic to return to their country of origin, which displaces attempts to develop common values of citizenship in a 'modern multi-racial Britain'. Yet this myth of return is increasingly that, a myth. The desire to stay is reflected in impressive socially, symbolically and architecturally permanent fixtures such as Mosques, retail outlets, restaurants and community centres. This colonisation of space through communal effort establishes status and permanence. The very permanence of these outward signs of Islam that most worry Islamaphobes also serve to assert pride and hoped for posterity and prosperity, and among young people a sense of belonging somewhere despite or because of the risks associated with 'going out' and 'living outside'. Whether or not the supposed 'Islamisation' of inner areas leads to 'Islamaphobia' it is evident that 'Islamaphobia' is simply coded racism, in the sense that it permits a denigration of people whilst denying that this is racism.

Northern textile towns: an economic, social and demographic sketch

It is important to state from the outset that wherever they live British Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations share distinctly deprived conditions compared to the majority and other minority ethnic groups. In most respects Pakistanis and Bangladeshis living in Oldham, Bradford, Burnley and indeed Keighley share similar demographic, socio-economic, cultural, housing and health characteristics as those living elsewhere (Jones, 1993; Mason, 2000; Modood, 1997; Mason, 2000). They are disproportionately concentrated in inner urban areas where private sector housing predominates (Ratcliffe, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 2001; Modood et al. 1997; Karn and Phillips, 1998). They are much more likely to be unemployed, economically inactive or in poorly paid manual work than the general population (Karn, 1997; Modood, 1997; Ratcliffe, 1996b).

Nevertheless there are some general features and conditions found in northern cotton and woollen textile towns that influence the situation facing British Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities living in these towns. The origins of these parlous conditions lie in economic history and settlement patterns. Migration of male workers beginning in the 1950s and 1960s from the poorer areas of Mirpur, the

Punjab, Kashmir and Syhlet to the textile industry left workers surplus to the requirements of the local labour market after the collapse of the British cotton and woollen textile industries from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s due to globalisation. Since then local adjustments and adaptations to economic change seen in the growth of the service sector have largely bypassed Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations. The vulnerability of these predominantly manufacturing areas to economic recession has particularly affected relatively unskilled and unqualified young people and people from ethnic minorities. This is because the new service industries of retailing and finance, place a premium on language and social skills and qualifications (Segal, Quince and Wickstead Limited, 1992).

In terms of settlement patterns early migrants from Indian, Pakistan and Bangladesh were likely to solve their housing needs by buying cheap, run-down inner city houses, especially in the northern textile towns where this type of property became increasingly available and plentiful. These processes were to help entrench long-lasting patterns of residential, labour market and social segregation, systematic housing disadvantage and social and geographical immobility particularly among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Bangladeshis in particular have suffered disadvantage due to their later arrival compared to other groups (Butterworth, 1967; Mason, 2000; Smith, 1989). This historical tendency toward segregation and racial exclusion in employment, housing and leisure, seen for example in the practice of placing whites on day shifts and Asians on night shifts, has led to perceptions of ethnic difference that are less amorphous, more visible, striking and contrasting than are found in larger more multicultural cities (Cantle, 2002; Fevre, 1984).

Indeed the physical landscape and communication features of many textile towns, especially those located in valleys bordering the Pennines, has encouraged among their inhabitants the maintenance of a staunchly separate identity, characterised by a relative *insularity* and parochialism (Vertovec, 1992). Outlying white estates built on windswept valley tops are referred to as the 'white highlands' overseeing the older inner town and ethnicised valley bottoms, creating a spatial symbolism of hierarchy and binary opposites of high: low, us: them.

These contrasts of physical geography have their counterpart in the supposed contrast of Muslim community

solidarity and white out-migration. On the one hand there is a high degree of communal (Mirpuri/ Punjabi/ Sylheti) solidarity, and relative lack of factionalism between Mosques and Muslim Associations, compared to larger cities, partly due to common socio-economic, geographic, kinship (*biraderi*) and caste (*quom*) provenance (Vertovec, 1992). On the other hand, these towns show evidence of 'white flight' or 'fright' from urban to outer areas at a rate greater than would be expected from the national tendency of general population movement from urban to outlying and rural areas.

In comparison to the majority white ethnic population as a whole and the different minority ethnic groups, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population has been increasing at a faster rate, since this population is younger and thus contains a higher proportion of people of child-bearing age (Jones, 1993; Mason, 2000; Modood, 1997; Owen, 1992). However this is particularly marked in textile towns due to their later arrival, with most women and children joining their husbands and fathers during the course of the 1970s and 1980s (with Bangladeshis undergoing the process more recently). This much lower age structure compared to other groups could have two interrelated consequences. Firstly, that there are significant numbers of young men concentrated in inner areas of towns and cities about to hit the peak period of offending (Fitzgerald 2001; Webster 1997). However it is important to note that this rise in the *numbers* of Asian young men offending in particular localities does not mean that there will be a rise in the *proportion* that offend compared to whites. Secondly, there are proportionally more relatively poorly qualified Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people seeking work than there are similarly poorly qualified white young people. Finally, the seeming increasing residential concentration and segregation of British Pakistanis and Bangladeshis within Northern towns it has been suggested is simply a 'natural' outcome of people choosing to live in the same area because they share a common background. However it is a myth that Asians simply choose particular areas to live and own houses.

Ratcliffe (2001) argues that the reality is more likely to be a series of historically inherited constraining factors on housing options, such as gender, household structure and family reunion (see also Peach and Byron, 1993; Karn, 1997; Ratcliffe 1997). Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities nationally have not 'chosen' a marked deterioration in their

housing conditions giving rise to stress, chronic ill health, poor living conditions and high levels of overcrowding (Ratcliffe, 2001). Besides the whole notion of 'choice' seems compromised by evidence of early racial discrimination in the housing market and in council house allocation by means of ring fencing by estate agents and length of residency as a condition of local authority housing allocation. More often than not Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are simply priced out of housing choices (Cantle, 2002; Modood, 1997; Ritchie 2001).

Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley: concentration and segregation?

Local economies

Oldham, Burnley and to a lesser extent Bradford remain low skill, low wage economies in which manufacturing still accounts for around a third of jobs, compared to only an average of 18% nationally (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 1996). Yet manufacturing has been in long-term decline and this has had a disproportionate effect on unqualified young people, people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin and people living in inner areas (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 1988, 1997; Clarke 2001; Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Police, 2001). Although the long-term decline of the textile industry, and the devastation of manufacturing industry in the 1980s affected whites and Asians, among Asian adults their relatively poor command of English, lack of transferable skills and often poor health, made them particularly vulnerable to the effects of recession, when the only alternatives were service sector employment. Paradoxically, although recovery in the 1990s was partly predicated on new investors being attracted by low labour costs, this again seemed to bypass the Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Police, 2001).

Perhaps what is striking about Oldham, Bradford and Burnley is the *relative* deprivation found within them. There is a juxtaposition and transparency of deprivation and affluence between often-contiguous neighbourhoods within relatively small bounded areas while the comparison between inner areas and outlying white estates is often perceived in terms of ethnicity rather than poverty. These towns contain

wards, which are among both the most multiply deprived and the least deprived in the country where areas of greatest deprivation are inner area wards having significant South Asian populations and white local authority estates (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 2000). In Oldham the proportion of people living in a multiply deprived area is 7% of whites, 50% of Pakistanis and 60% of Bangladeshis (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Policy Unit, 1993) and in Bradford the percentage of each ethnic group who live in areas of 'multiple stress' are as follows: whites (14.2%), African-Caribbean (42.7%), Indian (25%), Pakistani (53.2%), Bangladeshi (81%) (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 1997). The overall pattern found in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham is clearest in Oldham where Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are concentrated in four wards having the highest level of joblessness in the Borough (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Policy Unit, 1993, 1994) and of all ethnic minority communities throughout Britain, Oldham's Pakistani community is second only to Oldham's Bangladeshi community in the level to which it is concentrated in particular areas. Nevertheless it could be argued that outlying white estates also suffer multiple deprivations and are similarly concentrated and segregated by social class and white ethnicity (Johnston, 2000). The economic implications of demographic change in Bradford as elsewhere are that projections of population and age structure for the period 1991 to 2011 suggests that the percentage of residents who are working or seeking work will decline by 7.5% among whites and increase 55% among Pakistanis and 62% among Bangladeshis, whilst employment opportunities are declining and narrowing (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 2000).

Housing

There are a number of factors that have to be considered in deciding whether, to what extent and why there appears to be increasing ethnic residential segregation and concentration within Bradford, Oldham and Burnley. Despite lack of available land for new housing developments and high levels of housing stress in inner areas, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis fear social isolation, crime and racist harassment in outlying social housing, especially local authority housing (Modood, 1997; Ratcliffe, 2001). In any case as Karn (1999) noted, even if Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were to apply for council housing it is of little use when there is an inadequate supply

of larger houses. Similarly, the main constraint on moving further afield through owner occupation is unavailability of affordable larger dwellings, although there is a paucity of larger dwellings that can accommodate the extended/joint household among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in inner city areas. Finally, although '…over half of Bradford's South Asian [Muslim Pakistani and Bangladeshi] marriages involve overseas partners' (Simpson 1997:104), which given overcrowding may have led to the break-up of extended families, these moves will tend to be within existing or contiguous areas of ethnic concentration, because of the support and protection these offer to less resourceful and more vulnerable overseas marriage partners.

Many of the Asian contributors in Ratcliffe, (2001) study of Bradford made explicit reservations about the adverse impact of white working class culture, attitudes and behaviour, on the behaviour of younger Asian people. But they were prepared to consider moving to more diffuse smaller estates or social housing in or near what are perceived to be upwardly mobile white middle class areas. Among Asians, neighbourhood preferences were not simply a matter of the ethnic composition of the area, but that social class was important as well. They aspired to live with 'decent people' (Ratcliffe, 2001: 52). Among whites, the same views were expressed in terms of estate reputations. Intrinsic qualities of areas and the houses within them are the key issue rather than ethnicity. Nevertheless all groups including whites in the study had strong attachments to their local area. In the end though, Asian's negative images of white working class housing estates easily over-rode their doubts about inner city overcrowding and problems. Although there is evidence of a greater flexibility in spatial terms and likely outward movement by younger generations who are less concerned about closeness to 'community', these are likely to be to better areas contiguous with current Asian concentrations to maintain closeness to 'family'.

Burnley in particular faces a housing crisis in its inner areas whereby low demand for obsolescent private housing where currently 4,000 houses stand empty, has resulted in a decline of house values in some areas to as low as £1,500-£2,000 precipitating huge negative equity (Clarke, 2001). While minority ethnic communities are experiencing household growth while trapped in owner occupied smaller, older property, white demand for social housing estates has

been falling because of demographic and wider social changes leaving people trapped in 'sink estates'. These twin processes of collapse in the local housing market and increasing vacancy rates trap people in areas of spiralling physical and environmental decline. Meanwhile these areas become racialised in the sense of being perceived as exclusively belonging to one or other ethnic group. The housing crisis is said to have compounded these ethnic divisions and enhanced the competition between areas for scarce resources.

White 'fright' and 'flight'

Bradford, Oldham and Burnley are experiencing a net loss of their white population through out migration while their relatively young minority ethnic communities are growing. Most marked is the proportional growth of the 15-24-age cohort of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 1997, 2000; Simpson 1997). For example, in Bradford the 16-24 year Pakistani and Bangladeshi age cohort doubled between 1981 and 1996 compared to a 27% decline in the numbers in this age cohort among whites and blacks (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 1997). In Oldham the pace of demographic change means that currently, around one fifth of 13 to 19 year olds are from minority ethnic communities and by 2010 this figure is projected to be one quarter (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Policy Unit, 1999a, 1999b). The key factors driving this change are those found in Bradford: firstly, out-migration of white people from Oldham; secondly, higher birth rates within the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities; thirdly, the young age composition of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities (so that proportionally more people are of an age where they are marrying and having children); finally, in-migration through family reunion and marriage to people from South Asia.

The movement of whites from inner to outer Bradford, and from outer Bradford to the more rural and wealthy parts of the District, contrasts with the financial and social constraints to geographical mobility placed on the growing Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations that remain within the inner city (Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 1997). This has resulted in a growing polarisation between overcrowded housing and unemployment in the inner city and other areas.

Education

In Oldham 95% of Bangladeshi adults (aged 25-49) who are not in full-time education did not have any qualifications. A mere 2% are qualified at 'A' level and above, compared to 9% for the Borough as a whole. Similarly 44% of white pupils attained 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE in 2000, compared with 23% of pupils of Pakistani ethnic origin and 27% of pupils of Bangladeshi ethnic origin (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Policy Unit, 1999b). Wards with a significant Asian presence are among the bottom twenty most educationally deprived in the country, although such deprivation is found also in some overwhelmingly white areas (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Police 2001). It should be noted however that educational deprivation among Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people is somewhat offset by the fact that they are more likely to stay on at school longer and go on to further education.

Overall Pakistani and Bangladeshi men and women aged 16 and over are disproportionately likely to be under qualified, unemployed, and long term unemployed compared to whites. They are also more likely to suffer from some of the highest rates of poverty in the Borough, and experience a very high level of overcrowding because of a combination of large families and limited availability of suitably sized, affordable, housing (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Police, 2002). Again the context of their geographical concentration and their particularly youthful population compounds segregation, particularly in Oldham's primary schools, with some schools in central Oldham, Bradford and Burnley almost entirely containing children from a single ethnic group.

Crime and violence

Concentration and segregation in Oldham exists alongside high levels of crime and especially violent crime. According to Oldham's *Crime and Disorder Audit* the rate of recorded crime is concentrated in certain areas (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Policy Unit, 1999a, 1999b). In addition the areas with the highest rates of disorder are similar to those with the highest rates of crime. These areas also have the highest rates of unemployment and social and economic disadvantage. As Hope (2001) argues, poor areas carry a disproportionate burden of the risks of crime. Of particular note is the prevalence and increase of violent crime where

Oldham has the third highest crime rate for violence against the person in Greater Manchester (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Police, 2001).

Racist violence

Against national trends, the biggest proportion of recorded racially motivated offences in Oldham since 1994 have been violent ones. Oldham also consistently has the highest rate of these incidents of all ten local authority districts in Greater Manchester, with over one third of all offences occurring in the Borough. According to Oldham's (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Policy and Partnerships Division, 2001) *Social Exclusion Audit*, between 1998/99 and 1999/2000, the level of reported racist incidents increased by 56%, and Greater Manchester Police (2000) recorded a 91% increase over the previous year, and that the Oldham Division recorded the largest number of racist incidents in Greater Manchester, a fifth of the total.

Oldham stands out in other respects compared to other police divisions in Greater Manchester. According to officially recorded racist incident statistics, 62% of *victims* were white whereas in every other division the majority of victims were Asian. Significantly however 72% of repeat victims were Asian and twice as many *perpetrators* were white than were Asian compared to Manchester as a whole where 87% of perpetrators were white. The issue in Oldham seems to be the willingness of whites to report incidents against them they perceive as racist and identify the *suspect* as Asian (GMP, 2000). More recently, during the last twelve months, of incidents recorded, half of victims were white and half Asian, but of these those involving violence recorded 60% of victims as white and 40% as Asian. The overall effect is a perception among whites of a rising trend in violent attacks upon them by groups of Asians particularly in certain areas seen as 'no go areas' for whites, just as there is also a perception among Asians that certain housing estates are 'no go areas' for members of their community.

As a consequence, the 'colour-coding' of areas is reinforced and their actual or symbolic segregation becomes a *de facto* feature of everyday life for both Asians and whites. The report to the Home Secretary into the Oldham disorders pointed to a long record—spanning eight years—of racial tension between some elements of the Pakistani, Bangladeshi and white populations, which is manifested in harassment,

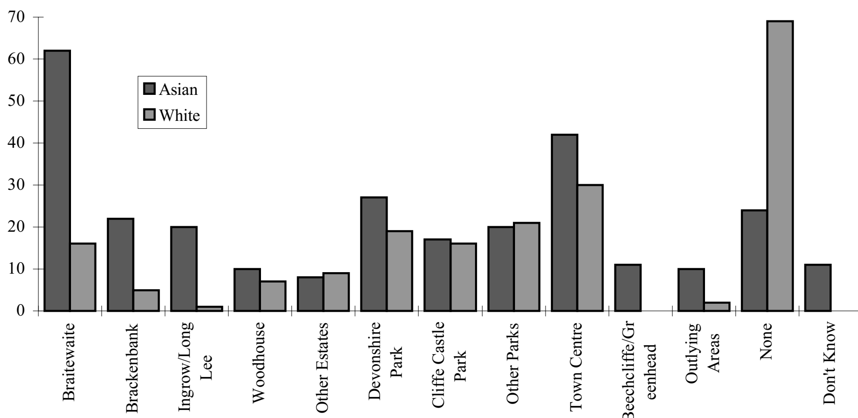
street violence and disorder (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Police, 2001).

Young people and fear

The fourth case study of Keighley, a textile town in West Yorkshire, although it did not suffer disorders in the summer of last year, illustrates the degree to which young people share a perceived geography based in fear. It uses a different sort of data to that reported for Bradford, Burnley and Oldham based on my self report survey of a 7% sample of white and 10% sample of Asian 13-19 year olds living in the town (n=412). Young people were asked whether they had been victims of crime and racist abuse and violence and whether they had perpetrated such acts. In particular they were asked about where incidents had occurred and to identify places they feared or avoided and say why they feared or avoided these places. It was hoped that a perceptual map of fear would emerge that could be compared with the actual location of incidents to see if perceptions and actuality converged or diverged. The detailed findings can be found in Webster (1995).

Young people, both Asian (of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin) and white, reported to the survey that they had experienced very high levels of victimisation with over a third having been victims of some crime. However what was remarkable was the extent to which they had experienced personal violence with 37% of Asians and 62% of whites saying this had happened to them. Young people's contact with crime, both as perpetrators and victims was a routine experience and the fears and anxieties occasioned by such incidents were reflected in young people's 'fear of crime' and the ways in which they identified crime as a 'problem'. When asked about their locality, crime followed by unemployment was seen as particularly serious problems by a large proportion of those interviewed. Although both white and Asian young people reported high levels of worry about crime and becoming victims of crime, Asian young people were particularly worried. Most marked was a lack of mobility and movement of Asians in terms of going out compared to whites, and the large number of Asians identifying specific places they avoided compared to a large number of whites who were unable to identify any areas they avoided for fear of being a victim of crime. White estates, some parks and the town centre are all mentioned as places

Graph 1
Areas avoided after dark: Asians compared to Whites (frequency)



where there was, in effect, a curfew placed on Asian young people. Further, the main reasons cited for avoiding these areas were fear of being attacked and racial harassment. White young people in their turn stated areas they avoided for fear of crime but generally felt much less restricted in their movements than Asians. Focusing on specific areas that Asians and whites avoided after dark, Chart 32 (Webster, 1995) presents a stark picture of the extent to which this geography of fear is racialised.

Graph 1 indicates that whites and Asians mirror one another's fears by areas perceived as 'belonging' to one ethnic group or the other. Reading the graph from left to right, Braithwaite, Brackenbank, Ingrow and Woodhouse are all white estates, frequently and unsurprisingly mentioned by Asians as places they avoided. At the time of the survey Braithwaite was generally perceived as having a reputation for high levels of violence and crime, and its particular reputation among Asian young people included it being perceived as a major source of perpetrators of white racist violence. Significantly, Ingrow, a smaller estate having a better reputation in respect of violence and crime, was perceived too as a major source of violent racism among Asians. Parks were seen as places of danger for both Asians and whites, partly because they lack adult surveillance and because their ethnic use and 'ownership' remain ambiguous

and contested, but mainly because they separate or border colour-coded areas and are cited by young people as primary locations for racist violence, often involving quite large groups of young people. For example, both Devonshire and Cliffe Castle parks adjoin what are perceived to be 'Asian' areas, and have been sites of major skirmishes between groups of white and Asian young people. Devonshire Park has since become a park widely perceived as 'belonging' to Asians. After comparing these perceptions of places with the actual location of incidents and where victims and perpetrators lived there was found a remarkable congruence between perceptions from fear and the probable danger or likelihood of becoming a victim of violence. Young people's imagined fears and their actual victim experiences coalesced in a strikingly racialised geography. It is likely that these subjective evaluations and objective judgements based on place are confirmation, medium and outcome of the 'objective' data about concentration and segregation presented above.

Community cohesion and segregation?: Official responses to the Bradford, Oldham and Burnley disorders

Since the disorders in the spring and summer 2001 a number of reports/inquiries have been published that attempt to identify the conditions and causes of the disorders, proffer policies designed to tackle these and prevent the recurrence of disorder (Cantle, 2002; Clarke, 2001; Ouseley, 2001; Ritchie 2001). They also provide a basis for analysis of the wider issue of community cohesion.

The 'Bradford Race Review' carried out by Sir Herman Ouseley set the agenda for how the disorders came to be understood. Ouseley (2001: 1) suggests that there are growing divisions along race, ethnic and social class lines noting 'the very worrying drift towards self-segregation' in a city that apparently 'now finds itself in the grip of fear'. The report pointed to particular areas of concern such as middle class, 'white flight' out of the city leaving behind an underclass of relatively poor whites and minority ethnic communities, the existence of self-styled and unrepresentative 'community leaders' who encourage segregation and fear to maintain their power base, widespread perceptions of ethnic favouritism in access to resources encouraged by regeneration

processes that are divisive as one area competes with another in the deprivation stakes, perceptions of the inner city as exclusively Muslim and the prevalence of Islamaphobia in schools and the wider community.

Meanwhile it is felt that Asian young men in gangs remain untouchable and the police are believed to collude via non-intervention in relation to inner city drug sale and use on the street, and underestimate the extent to which 'low level' persistent offences and harassment creates fear of crime and lack of public safety. But the overall theme of the Ouseley Report is that of growing ethnic segregation partly fuelled by 'self-segregation' based in fear of racist harassment and violent crime, and partly by the promotion and protection of identities and cultures.

While Asians perceive increasing racist and ethnic hostility, seen in the annual doubling of reported racist attacks in Bradford, whites perceive minority ethnic leaders as advocates of segregation. Secondary school admission policies and catchments have brought about 'virtual apartheid' (West Yorkshire Police, 2000: 13). The report concludes that local leaders have historically been 'reluctance to challenge the perceived norms of allowing social and economic programmes to develop along self-styled cultural and faith-dominant tracks that have fuelled the drift towards segregation, the formation of ghettoes and comfort zones.' (West Yorkshire Police, 2001:18)

Ritchie (2001), Clarke (2001), Cantle (2002) and Denham (2002) concur that ethnic communities do not mix because of 'self-segregation' and separate educational, employment, social and cultural networks leading to polarisation, ignorance and fear. According to Cantle (2002) it is the combined impact of such 'choices' at every level, whether they are constrained or not, that leads to complete isolation from other communities. Denham (2002) identifies the most important factors in shaping the conditions that gave rise to the disorders many of which reflect the current argument. My disagreement is a matter of assumption and emphasis rather than in the range of factors identified by the reports.

Overall the reports take a race relations approach—whether and why majority and minority groups choose to live together or separately, get on together or not—rather than an approach that emphasises race and class. It is not that race or ethnic relations are unimportant in creating myth

and rumour leading to mutual ignorance and misunderstanding clearly they are. It is that the official reports pay insufficient attention to the influence of long-standing local racism on the outlook of Asian and white communities and structural constraints on 'choice'. Somehow Asian communities are blamed for their own entrapment because they 'choose' self-segregation rather than that their choices are constrained by way of disparities in income, wealth, housing options, fear of crime and racist violence.

The solution to the fragmentation and polarisation the reports find is seen in terms of encouraging 'community cohesion' which involves 'groups who live in a local area getting together to promote or defend some common local interest' (Forrest and Kearns, 2000: 13-14) which as the discussion thus far shows is more likely to encourage rather than discourage segregation. As Ferlander and Timms (1999: 70) argue 'social cohesion requires that participation extends across the confines of local communities, knitting them together into a wider whole.' This tension between a particularistic and potentially exclusive community cohesion and universalistic and potentially inclusive social cohesion seems unresolved in policy discourses.

Discussion and conclusion: race and the geography of fear

A high degree of growing ethnic residential concentration within Britain's Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities does not necessarily predict that there is a high degree of 'segregation' (Mason 2000: 87-88). The issue is one of how demographic and geographic patterns are socially perceived and processed. At what point does geographical concentration turn into social segregation, and how is this to be measured? Does area level aggregate data tell the whole story? Isn't it still the case that the more obvious patterns of segregation characteristic of the United States where 70 to 90 percent of urban residents live in ethnically homogeneous neighbourhoods do not seem to have occurred in Britain? For example, although outdated, according to the 1991 Census figures the highest concentration of ethnic minorities was in the London Borough of Brent at 49%. Yet there is a significant concentration at a more local and street level, which administrative, ward and enumeration district data obscures. There is a real

danger of drawing racist inferences from apparent demographic and geographical concentration and/or segregation. One version of this type of thinking implicit in the reports described above is that concentration and segregation is self-chosen on racial, ethnic or cultural grounds, a view strenuously challenged by this paper. Another might be that Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities (and poor white communities for that matter) inherently lack those 'cultural' and other qualities that have apparently served other ethnic community's mobility so well. A connected and perhaps more explicitly racist view is that separate and independent development is a natural outcome of ethnic difference. The paper rejects these views, although geographical separation can become interpreted as an indicator of cultural separation and segregation, where life experiences are seen as sharply different (Bauman, 1998; Young, 1999, 2001).

Nevertheless in places like Bradford, Burnley and Oldham a municipal rhetoric of 'multiculturalism' ignores the reality of biculturalism, and the evidence suggests that in relation to Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations there *is* a strong tendency towards concentration exacerbated by segregation and the ethnically 'defended neighbourhood' (Suttles, 1967, 1968), but that this is a response to white racist hostility. This tendency for the minority ethnic population and particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin populations to become more spatially concentrated, is heightened by the ability of the white population to move from large cities and older industrial areas to smaller towns and rural areas (Brown, 1984; Owen 1992). Whether this movement is understood in terms of 'aspiration', 'flight' or 'fright', whites leave in their wake some of the most multiply deprived ethnic communities in Britain, communities that paradoxically share their 'aspirations' but not the resources necessary to realise them.

As always we should be cautious about drawing parallels with the United States but the consequences of residential segregation in the American context are strikingly put by Walker (2000: 70): 'for a white person living in Detroit, an estimated 93 percent of the "potential" contacts with other people will involve other whites. For African Americans, 80 percent of the potential contacts will involve other African Americans.'

As Young (2001) points out, American writers like William Julius Wilson (1987) have famously portrayed inner city Black

'underclass' areas as places of disorder and incivility, populated by a culturally alienated underclass sharing lifestyles and aspirations completely at odds with the cultural mainstream of American society. This portrayal is amply echoed in recent media coverage of the disorders in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, found in headlines such as 'the ghettoes of the north', 'alienated Asian youth' and 'no-go areas'. The assumption in both academic and popular accounts is that Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim culture is different from, and alternative to 'mainstream' British life. But as Ratcliffe's (2001) study shows the predominant housing aspirations among *both* whites and Asians about where to live identify areas characterised as being among 'decent people', having good quality housing and local amenities, and low levels of crime and violence, regardless of their ethnic composition. So, we should not draw too hasty and negative conclusions from apparent segregation (Putnam, 2000).

Ethnographic studies such as Carl Nightingale's (1993) account of the black ghetto of Philadelphia, and Philippe Bourgois' (1995) account of Puerto Rican crack dealers in East Harlem, New York City, both concluded that 'ghetto' culture is paradoxical in the sense that the alienation of its members is fuelled by their over identification with and endorsement of mainstream American culture, which fuels their anger. It is their bouncing off the conventional values found in the mass media and consumer market, which triggers their frustration (Webster 2001). Again Jock Young's (1999: 86) insight that rather than being a repository of alternative values, the ghetto has 'a *surfeit* of American values', which are internalised as rage and desperation, may well apply to Britain's Pakistani and Bangladeshi as well as poor white populations living in multiply deprived areas (Johnston, 2000). This is how 'relative deprivation' is *felt*.

The notion of separate or segregated cultures assumes separate homogeneous 'communities', but as my qualitative study of white, Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people showed their adaptations to experiences of racist violence, crime, poverty and the problem of safety were highly variable as were their 'cultural' identities (Webster, 1999). For example among Asian young people what I called 'experimenters' and 'ethnic brokers' regularly crossed cultural repertoires and racial divides. The same can be said of white young people living in poor areas (Johnston, 2000). We should be cautious about assigning a too segregationist

consciousness to white and Asian working class young people, and not underestimate the extent to which these groups share leisure spaces. Boundaries or borders are regularly crossed, and are overlapping, ambiguous and blurred and the language spoken on each side is remarkably similar (Young, 2001). In any case and notwithstanding claims of cultural segregation, at a more mundane level, a certain degree of residential concentration or segregation can have positive advantages in providing social support and in helping cope with crime and violence, as well as offering local economic advantages (Johnston, 2000; Mason, 2000; Robinson 1989).

There remains however the possibility that northern textile towns will see and are seeing high levels of ethnic conflict and racist violence. In a study of two inner London Boroughs, one in South London the other in East London, Wallman (1986) asked why one area had high levels of entrenched racism and the other low levels. Her intriguing answer was that the two areas had contrasting and very different 'local styles' or social context. She concluded that 'the more closed and homogenous the local structure, the sharper the recognition of ethnic difference on the one hand, and the less flexibility and resilience of the local economy on the other' (Wallman, 1986: 242). In the racist area residence, work and leisure overlapped among the same people, and the people who control information about jobs tend to be the same as the gatekeepers for housing and leisure opportunities. This meant that newcomers had to breach housing, work and leisure boundaries simultaneously to become accepted. In contrast, people living in the less racist area were less dependent on local networks and resources, and had ties, friendships and connections outside. In other words when local relations are not linked with systems outside in the same way, ethnic groups are more likely to remain distinct. Many of the criterion Wallman applies to predict high levels of racism—dominance of manufacturing, narrowed employment opportunities, low levels of travel to work outside the area, highly localised and controlled access to leisure and other resources, the predominance of an insular nationalist working class (evidenced in the long-standing threat of 'international competition' to the British textile industry)—are all strikingly present in northern textile towns.

The evidence reviewed, whether of area based multiple deprivation, housing choices, levels of racist and other

violence, crime, and finally of ethnic concentration and segregation generates situations of fear, defensiveness and retaliation against very real and imagined threats. The simultaneous existence of these factors and their combination and concentration in small areas is likely to predict heightened ethnic awareness and enmity, whether shown by the increasing willingness of whites to report threatening encounters with members of minority ethnic groups as racist in places like Oldham, Bradford and Burnley, or as seen in recent disorders involving Asian and white young people. Nevertheless these fears are imagined in the sense that poor minority and majority ethnic groups share far more than what separates them, that is a common and disproportionate experience of the risks associated with crime, violence and relative deprivation.

Policy discourse evokes community and social cohesion as a panacea. However if the notion of 'social cohesion' is to have any import on the conditions and causes of disorder in Northern textile towns it must jettison its neo-liberal legacy wherein it was defined largely in economic terms—by the imperatives of capital investment, the search for work, debilitating and unregulated globalisation, liberalisation policies, *ad hoc* urbanisation and centralising states—and be made to refer instead to the moral regulation of social relations that give rise to social solidarity within and between groups.

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