

Black Minority Ethnic Concentration, Segregation and Dispersal in Britain

Deborah Phillips

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Summary This paper examines the post-war migration and settlement in Britain of black minority ethnic groups originating from countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the West Indies. The processes underlying the pattern of minority ethnic concentration and segregation over the past four decades are reviewed and provide a framework for interpreting the uneven pattern of deconcentration and dispersal evident over the past 10–15 years. The paper draws on evidence from the labour market and the housing market to argue that there are forces for both minority ethnic inclusion and exclusion from competition for economic rewards and social status in Britain. These forces, it is argued, produce different outcomes for different groups and a variable experience within minority ethnic groups according to generation, gender and class. A picture of fragmented social and spatial change emerges, with those of Indian origin in particular following a different trajectory from other black minority ethnic groups.

Introduction

A pattern of black minority ethnic¹ settlement characterised by residential concentration, segregation and deprivation is now well established in Britain. Although this distinctive geography is largely a product of post-war migration, black settlers have a long history in Britain; small clusters of Africans and Indians emerged in port areas such as London, Liverpool and Cardiff as early as the 1800s (Fryer, 1984). These settlements were, however, extremely localised so the day-to-day experience of most people living in Britain at that time was a white one. The Victorians nevertheless held some clearly developed images of ‘race’, colour and ethnic difference, which were rooted in colonial relations with South Asian and West Indian countries. The largely negative stereotypes

associated with ‘uncivilised peoples’ in far-off lands were to prove powerful constituents of 19th-century racist ideologies, which have survived, albeit in a modified form, into the late 20th century (Barker, 1981; Gilroy, 1987).

The mass migration of black minority ethnic groups to Britain from the New Commonwealth (India, Bangladesh and the West Indies) and Pakistan began in the 1950s. Their arrival in Britain formed part of a widespread movement of labour from less developed, economically depressed countries to the advanced industrialised nations of western Europe (Castles, 1984). Expanding industrial economies, threatened by labour shortages at home, were eager to tap cheap, mobile labour forces abroad, often exploiting

former colonial ties. Direct recruitment programmes provided a catalyst for the flow of workers to Britain, first from the West Indies, then from India and Pakistan, and later from Bangladesh (Peach, 1968; Robinson, 1980). This rapid international movement of labour was curtailed with the first of many post-war immigration controls in 1962. Since then, dependants, particularly of South Asian immigrants, and refugees have sustained the flow of black minority ethnic newcomers, although overall black immigration has now declined substantially (Salt, 1996). There is now a net out-migration of Black Caribbeans as some return home for retirement.

According to the 1991 Census, the minority ethnic population now stands at 3 million—5.5 per cent of the total population. Their prominence in political and academic debate and in media coverage nevertheless outweighs their population size. The persistence and, controversially, the desirability, of minority ethnic segregation from both a white and a black minority perspective, has been an enduring theme (Smith, 1989) and reflects the salience of 'race' as an important social and spatial divider in Britain. The potential for black minority ethnic mobility in general and desegregation in particular raises contentious issues about minority ethnic choice (in terms of housing, neighbourhood, lifestyle and work), socioeconomic advancement, and social and cultural integration.

This paper examines the post-war phenomenon of black minority ethnic group migration and settlement in Britain from countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the West Indies. The paper begins by looking briefly at the processes underlying the pattern of minority ethnic concentration and segregation over the past four decades and then goes on to examine the uneven pattern of deconcentration and dispersal evident over the past 10–15 years.

The paper argues that there are forces for both minority ethnic inclusion and exclusion at work, although these produce different outcomes for different minority ethnic groups. It also identifies a variable experi-

ence within minority ethnic groups by generation, and along the lines of gender and class. The emerging picture is thus one of fragmented social and spatial change, with those of Indian origin in particular following a different trajectory from other black minority ethnic groups.

Post-war Settlement: Patterns and Processes

The Early Post-war Period

The status of the New Commonwealth immigrants upon arrival in Britain was shaped by the material and ideological circumstances of their migration. Ex-colonial ties between the sending and receiving countries governed the immigrants' expectations of Britain and underpinned the indigenous population's overwhelmingly negative response towards the newcomers. Early accounts of black minority settlement speak of blatant hostility and exclusion, which set apart the new immigrants socially and denied them access to scarce resources, such as good jobs and decent housing (Desai, 1963; Daniel, 1968; Hiro, 1971).

The immigrants' material conditions upon arrival reflected their role as a replacement population, in terms of both jobs and housing. The black newcomers found work in low-status, poorly paid occupations which held no attraction for white workers, thereby producing a racialised division of labour (Miles, 1982). The search for accommodation produced similar divisions and a segmented housing market emerged in many cities (Smith, 1989). Poverty and hostility forced the immigrants into poor private rental accommodation and the worst of the owner-occupied housing in the declining inner cities. Access to public housing was generally denied (Burney, 1967). By the 1960s, white suburbanisation served to reinforce the emerging pattern of racial segregation. The government did nothing to intervene in the discriminatory processes operating in either the job or the housing market in these earliest days. Their inaction reflected the widely held belief that immigrant welfare was not deserv-

ing of resources and that ethnic clusters would naturally disperse over time (Williams, 1989; Smith, 1989). Hence, racial concentration and segregation became an established feature of both work and home life for the newcomers.

This early pattern of settlement produced a distinctive geography at both the regional and the intra-urban scale. Regional concentrations of minority ethnic groups emerged within the metropolitan areas, such as London and Birmingham, and in the smaller industrial towns of the East Midlands and North West England, particularly those associated with textiles (for example, Leicester, Blackburn and Rochdale). This uneven distribution mirrored the restricted range of employment opportunities open to the migrants upon arrival and was subsequently reinforced by chain migration, which gave rise to clusters of immigrants of similar local and regional origins. At the local level, a pattern of inner-city clustering, overcrowding and housing deprivation was reproduced throughout most of the immigrant reception centres (Rose *et al.*, 1969; Lomas and Monck, 1975).

The early distribution of the black minority ethnic population was thus a reflection of the prevailing social, economic and political conditions at the time of migration, although cultural factors were also important in shaping the character of particular minority ethnic communities. Ethnic sorting, based on cultural and religious ties, reinforced the initial patterns of ethnic clustering produced by the direct recruitment of labour from specific localities within India, Pakistan or the West Indies. Thus, places like Leicester and Southall (West London), with their established Indian communities, became a magnet for East African Asian refugees (of Indian origin) and Punjabi Sikhs respectively, while Pakistanis were attracted to Bradford and Birmingham, and Black Caribbeans to places like Leeds, Luton and London (Peach, 1996a). Such centres have subsequently played an important role in maintaining the distinctive social, cultural and economic life of the minority ethnic

groups and to a certain extent still anchor these populations in these areas.

The combined forces for minority ethnic clustering produced an early pattern of black concentration, segregation *and* deprivation. This has had long-term repercussions for the pattern of minority ethnic settlement. First, the poor living conditions of the immigrants reinforced the perceived marginality of the black minority ethnic groups; an image which has proved difficult to dispel despite recent socioeconomic advancement. The association between 'race' and deprivation, rather than poverty and deprivation, was readily made. Secondly, the pattern of clustering at both the regional and the local scales was to provide a legacy of disadvantage for the minority ethnic population in terms of both employment and housing opportunities in years to come. Many minority ethnic households were to find themselves trapped in marginal urban areas in regions of industrial decline.

Consolidating Early Patterns

By the late 1960s and the 1970s, new forces were at work. Structural changes in employment, the introduction of race relations legislation and changing patterns of institutional exclusion all helped to shape the pattern of racial segregation. These contextual changes were paralleled by developments within the minority ethnic communities themselves; the immigrant ideal of the brief sojourn abroad gave way to the reality of long-term residence, largely from economic necessity. This accelerated the process of family reunion and community consolidation and gave rise to different minority ethnic housing and employment demands.

These changing dimensions of minority ethnic life gave rise to often countervailing forces for concentration, segregation and dispersal. The introduction of race relations legislation, designed to address both direct and indirect discrimination, was a significant development. This legislation, which culminated in the 1976 Race Relations Act, served to curb the worst excesses of racial exclusion and improved minority group rights as citi-

zens in gaining access to resources such as jobs, housing, health, education and social services. It has, however, by no means eradicated racial discrimination, particularly in its most powerful institutionalised form (Phillips, 1987). Nor has it freed black minority groups from the fear and effects of racial harassment. This section therefore argues that the overall picture by the beginning of the 1980s was one of modest minority ethnic gains in terms of both housing and employment, but also of continuing minority ethnic disadvantage compared with whites.

The most notable improvements in housing access came with the opening up of the local authority sector to minority ethnic applicants in the late 1960s. This brought some minority ethnic deconcentration, particularly amongst Black Caribbeans previously living in the private rental sector. However, this tenure shift was not generally accompanied by the dispersal of the group, except during the era of the illegal dispersal policy operated by Birmingham City Council (Henderson and Karn, 1987). Minority ethnic applicants were offered a very limited range of local authority housing options, which brought them a disproportionate share of poor accommodation on the least popular estates (Smith and Whalley, 1975; Parker and Dugmore, 1976; Henderson and Karn, 1987). In 1974, for example, a national survey revealed that 69 per cent of Black-Caribbean council tenants were living in sub-standard accommodation in poor areas compared with 28 per cent of white tenants (Smith and Whalley, 1975).

Family reunion brought some shifts within the owner-occupied sector, although racial exclusionary practices by private market institutions (such as building societies and estate agents) ensured that most moves were limited to private exchanges within the established inner-city areas of minority ethnic residence at the bottom end of the market (Sarre *et al.*, 1989). The political climate of the time did little to erode these segregationist tendencies. Political debate had become highly racialised, with 'immigrants' being constructed as a problem in terms of their

numbers, visibility and the location of their settlement (Miles and Dunlop, 1987; Smith, 1989). Smith points to the segregationist effects of central government policy, arguing that

nearly every major decision relating to the housing environment of post-war Britain directly and cumulatively (if seemingly inadvertently) contributed to a racially iniquitous division of residential space (Smith, 1989, p. 105).

Thus, although the 1970s brought wider housing options than the 1950s, major differences in the housing standards and distribution of the black and white populations remained. The former were twice as likely to live in inner-city terraced property than whites, and to suffer disproportionately high levels of overcrowding—for example, 35 per cent of Asians were overcrowded compared with 3 per cent of whites (Brown, 1984). Black homelessness was also growing.

Cultural forces were also at work to preserve the ethnic cluster. Interviews with Asians living in central Leicester in the late 1970s indicated that nearly 90 per cent of the respondents still strongly endorsed the principle of ethnic segregation from the indigenous population for social and cultural reasons (Phillips, 1981). This was especially important for the culturally exclusive Muslim population. However, the Asian minorities' reasons for wanting to live within the confines of the ethnic territory went beyond the cultural, with over one-quarter stressing the importance of clustering for reasons of safety as well. The fear of racial attack remains a pervasive force for clustering.

The early pattern of settlement therefore remained remarkably stable. Population growth brought expansion into adjacent areas but no significant relocation. Thus, in 1981, Peach *et al.*, remarked upon

the stubborn persistence of ethnic residential segregation despite the cycle of dispersal and assimilation traditionally expected by academics and policy makers alike (Peace *et al.*, 1981, p. 21).

The continuing association between minority ethnic concentration and deprivation was of particular concern. Disadvantage arising from exclusion in the housing market was reinforced by the weak position of the minority ethnic groups in the labour market. Although race relations legislation had blurred the early racial division of labour, deep inequalities in the workplace market persisted (Brown, 1984). While some Asians opted for self-employment in marginal business ventures (Aldrich *et al.*, 1981), most black minority workers remained over-represented in low-status, poorly paid manual employment. For example, the 1982 PSI survey (Brown, 1984) found that 43 per cent of Black Caribbeans and 53 per cent of Asians working within the manufacturing sector in Britain were employed in semi-skilled or unskilled work compared with only 17 per cent of whites within this sector. This in part reflected the low skills and qualifications of the newcomers, but was also directly attributable to a sustained pattern of racial discrimination in the changing space-economy of the 1970s. Industrial restructuring, particularly of labour-intensive industries, brought massive job losses in the manufacturing regions of Britain. The minority ethnic groups, who had once sustained these industries with their cheap labour, were major casualties; a consequence of their early geography. Thus, while unemployment rates in Britain rose by 38 per cent during 1972–81, the black minorities experienced an increase in unemployment of 325 per cent. As structural change combined with racialised notions of deserving and undeserving competitors for employment in times of shortage, the black workforce found themselves increasingly marginalised.

Unemployment stimulated some inter-regional mobility amongst the minority ethnic groups. Indians and Pakistanis, for example, used community contacts to migrate in search of work (Robinson, 1992), a strategy which directed them to existing regional concentrations of their group rather than into new territories. Black Caribbeans in contrast proved relatively immobile, hampered by limited transferable skills in the newly re-

structured economy and the locational inertia associated with council tenancies. The result was that, despite significant changes in the distribution of the population as a whole at this time, the regional distribution of the minority ethnic population, like the local, remained remarkably static (Robinson, 1992).

Concentration and Segregation in the 1990s

The labour market and housing market position of the minority ethnic groups in Britain is now significantly different from those of the 1950s. There are real signs of advancement for some minority ethnic group members, although this must be set in the context of continuing disadvantage. We are now beginning to see a diversity of experience, which reflects racial, ethnic, class, generational and gender differences. The opportunities and barriers faced by minority ethnic groups now intersect more closely with those experienced by the white population, so that it is no longer salient to talk about patterns of advantage and disadvantage simply following 'race' lines.

These developments have been accompanied by some significant spatial changes, most notably a loosening of ties (voluntary and imposed) to particular (usually inner-city) locations associated with the minority ethnic groups. There are, however, still strong continuities in the geography of minority ethnic settlement, which reflect persistent inequalities in housing, employment and other spheres.

Some of our best evidence for this pattern of continuity and change comes from the 1991 Census, which has given rise to a wealth of research on ethnicity (Coleman and Salt, 1996; Peach, 1996a; Ratcliffe, 1996; Karn, 1997). These studies indicate that the geography of minority ethnic settlement at the *national* scale has still not changed substantially since the 1950s. There have, however, been some important spatial changes at the *local* level. This has taken the form of settlement expansion into areas adjacent to

the ethnic cores and, on a smaller scale, there is some evidence of minority ethnic suburbanisation.

The National Pattern

An analysis of census data over the 1981–91 period reveals that, despite the relatively rapid growth rate of the minority ethnic population, there has been a remarkably low level of minority ethnic spatial redistribution across the country (Rees and Phillips, 1996). There has thus been a growing metropolitan concentration, with ethnic communities in regions such as Greater London (which now accounts for 45 per cent of Britain's ethnic population), the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire increasing their share of the ethnic population. This process of consolidation reflects continuing white out-migration from the ethnic cores, household expansion and new household formation within established ethnic communities, and some in-migration of newcomers from outside the UK. Owen and Johnson (1996) confirm the picture of stability in their detailed analysis of change in the Midlands over the 1981–91 decade. They conclude that while segregation levels in the region appear to have declined slightly over this period, overall there has been "continuity and surprisingly little change" (p. 266).

As might be expected from this pattern of stability, inter-regional mobility rates for minority ethnic groups are relatively low compared with the white population (Champion, 1996; Robinson, 1996). The only exception appears in the case of the peripheral and more sparsely populated regions of Britain (where minority ethnic populations are under represented). Here, minority ethnic out-migration exceeds that for whites (Champion, 1996). The long-established patterns of regional ethnic concentration are thus reinforced.

The pattern of inter-regional and inter-urban moves made by the minority ethnic groups over the 1981–91 decade largely reflects changing employment opportunities for this population. There is evidence, for

example, of some movement of the Pakistani population away from the smaller declining textile towns of Lancashire, where they are disproportionately represented amongst the unemployed, to Greater Manchester. The propensity to migrate does, however, vary between minority groups and across generations. Champion (1996), for example, has highlighted a particularly low level of regional mobility for Black Caribbeans during 1990–91, a position which is little changed from that of the 1980s. This has implications for the potential economic advancement of a group which is becoming increasingly distant from the growth sectors of the restructured economy (Cross, 1989; Robinson, 1992). As in the 1970s, Pakistanis are still relatively mobile (although decreasingly so), driven by the search for employment in the manufacturing sector. This has not, however, resulted in a deconcentration of this group, but rather an exchange of households between core areas of Pakistani settlement in the conurbations of West Yorkshire and the West Midlands.

Important generational differences in the propensity to migrate are, however, emerging. As Robinson (1996) has demonstrated, British-born Black Caribbeans are more mobile than their parents' generation and show signs of moving beyond the conurbations. British-born Indians and Pakistanis have also shown a greater tendency to move to Greater London than their parents, although most circulate between existing communities in the conurbations. New geographies may therefore be in the making, but to date, the national pattern has proved remarkably stable.

Localised Change

Of great interest given the general stability of the pattern of minority ethnic settlement over the decades is the evidence for the beginnings of localised suburbanisation. This is by no means a trend confined to the past decade. Indeed, Ward and Sims (1981, p. 218) reported some "very slight evidence of black suburbanisation" in Birmingham in the

1970s. Similarly, Phillips (1983) documented the beginnings of a movement of Indian households from central Leicester to the higher-status suburb of Oadby in the early 1980s. Recent analysis of migration flows shows that there has been a similar trickle outwards from most of the major conurbations (Champion, 1996). While much of the movement is highly localised, there is also some evidence of longer-distance relocation outside the urban areas. This is exemplified by the movement of minority ethnic groups from inner to outer London and from Greater London to Essex (mainly of Black Caribbeans) and Surrey (mainly Chinese and South Asians).

The most significant deconcentration tendencies for the minority ethnic population in recent years has been documented for Greater London. Here, movement from inner to outer areas is as evident for minority ethnic groups as for whites, although the minority ethnic population's moves involve shorter distances. In 1990–91, net out-migration was evident from inner London boroughs such as Brent (for South Asians) and Hackney and Lambeth (for Black Caribbeans), while Harrow, Redbridge (South Asians) and Enfield (Black Caribbeans) gained minority ethnic populations. The scale of the changing geography of the Indian population in London is highlighted by Rees and Phillips (1996), who have calculated that the Indian population of Redbridge and Harrow has increased by more than 80 per cent over the 1981–91 decade, double the national average for that group. Outer London as a whole was found to have experienced a 64 per cent increase in its Indian population.

Some caution must be exercised, however, in interpreting the changing ethnic geography of Greater London. It is not clear to what extent the inner to outer London movement represents a spillover effect rather than relocation and/or dispersal. Also, while such a trend does point to the propensity for an improvement in housing conditions for the groups involved, evidence suggests that *within* outer boroughs, minority ethnic

groups still tend to be overrepresented in the worst housing (Phillips, 1997; Ingram, 1996). For example, over two-thirds of the South Asians living in Redbridge have clustered in five southern wards, adjacent to the inner London borough of Newham (Ingram, 1996). This concentration coincides with the most deprived areas of housing in the borough. In contrast, South Asians are significantly underrepresented in the more prestigious northern wards of Redbridge.

Peach's (1996b) analysis of segregation indices over the 1961–91 period confirms the trend towards modest deconcentration and dispersal of the minority ethnic population in Britain over time. However, Peach also highlights a diversity of segregation experiences. While Black Caribbeans have been characterised by decreasing segregation levels, partly as a result of their movement into the council sector in the 1970s, some South Asian groups have become more segregated and together South Asians achieve "a majority position in a number of wards" (Peach, 1996b, p. 233). The settlement patterns of particular South Asian sub-groups are, however, highly differentiated: Indians emerge as the least segregated group and Bangladeshis the most.

The process of deconcentration and, more particularly, suburbanisation, has thus been selective, both in terms of its social characteristics and its geography. While Indians and British-born Black Caribbeans are well represented amongst the spatial pioneers, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are virtually absent. The rapid growth of the latter two predominantly Muslim minorities over the 1981–91 decade has been largely characterised by a consolidation of their pattern of inner-city residence. This reflects the low socioeconomic status and high unemployment levels of these groups (Peach, 1996a; Green, 1997), religious ties to the centralised ethnic community and its facilities, and—in the case of the substantial Bangladeshi population in Tower Hamlets—the restricted structure of housing opportunities open to them through the council (Phillips, 1986).

Generational differences also play a role

in selecting those most likely to contribute to the deconcentration process, with the British-born generation showing the greatest propensity to behave as spatial pioneers (Robinson, 1996). British-born heads of households are more likely to be living outside London and the south-east than the first generation of migrants. They are also better represented in areas with lower ethnic populations than the older generation, particularly if they are of Indian origin. The pioneering spirit of the British-born generations is, however, not unexpectedly mediated by the effects of social class and education. As Sarre *et al.* (1989) found in Bedford, while some young Indian and Black-Caribbean *middle-class* households were locating in the predominantly white suburbs in the late 1980s, most of the British-born generation were living in, or adjacent to, the inner-city ethnic cores.

Geographically, the deconcentration and suburbanisation process is a largely local phenomenon, mainly confined to the metropolitan areas associated with established minority ethnic settlement. Significantly, minority ethnic groups are virtually absent from long-distance migration flows in and out of rural Britain. Cornwall, for example, receives large numbers of migrants from London, but the flow is entirely white (Champion, 1996). Broadly speaking, the black minority groups in Britain are still overrepresented in the poorest urban locations and are likely to live in some of the most deprived housing (Owen and Johnson, 1996; Karn, 1997). This is clearly illustrated by Owen and Johnson's (1996) analysis of the geography of minority ethnic concentration in the Midlands, where 9 per cent of whites were found to be living in prosperous rural areas, compared with only 1 per cent of the black minorities. Minority ethnic groups were also underrepresented in the affluent suburbs; for example, 36 per cent of whites lived in such areas compared with 10 per cent of Black Caribbeans and 5 per cent of Pakistanis. The socioeconomic progress of the Indian population within the Midlands was, however, evident by their higher representation in the wealthier suburbs (20 per

cent of the group). Meanwhile, 37 per cent of the minority ethnic groups remained in the inner cities of this region (60 per cent of Bangladeshis) compared with only 9 per cent of whites.

There are thus clear signs of mobility, but it is constrained. Certain geographical spaces, either by design or by default, are perceived as (or dedicated as) out of bounds for minority ethnic groups. Just as in the early post-war years, these spaces tend to coincide with the suburbs, the high-status residential areas and the rural.

Evaluating Dispersal Tendencies

A changing geography of ethnic settlement at the local level is thus emerging, albeit slowly. But what of the processes that underlie the change? And what of the social, economic and cultural factors that contributed to the 'stubborn' pattern of residential segregation observed by Peach in the 1980s?

This section examines more closely the characteristics of those involved in deconcentration, suburbanisation and dispersal and looks at the institutional framework which both enables and constrains the process. The picture is one of a fragmented minority ethnic experience, with increasing opportunities and empowerment for some, but not for all. It is an experience which varies according to social class, generation, gender and location.

Socioeconomic Progress

Assumptions of structural assimilation, characterised by socioeconomic advancement, are integral to models of minority ethnic group desegregation and dispersal (Ward, 1982). The expectation is that, as structural assimilation occurs, the spatial distribution of the minority ethnic population will converge with that of the general population, bringing a spatial sorting based on social class rather than ethnicity or 'race'. It is a process often correlated with the demographic maturity of the minority ethnic population, as successive generations enter the workplace with better

Table 1. Structure of male employment, Great Britain, 1991 (percentages)

Occupation	Black				
	White	Caribbean	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi
Corporate managers	12.3	4.7	7.4	4.9	3.2
Managers	7.0	3.2	14.6	14.4	16.5
Professionals	9.4	4.1	13.6	7.4	6.2
Associate professionals	7.9	7.5	6.2	3.6	2.0
Clerical/secretarial	6.6	8.3	9.2	6.4	3.2
Skilled manual	23.4	26.2	16.4	13.1	8.6
Personal services	6.0	8.0	2.7	3.9	44.6
Sales	4.5	2.8	6.4	7.5	2.3
Machine operators	14.3	21.5	15.8	28.6	4.5
Unskilled manual	7.6	10.8	5.4	7.0	5.2
Other	1.0	2.9	2.2	3.3	3.6

Source: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (Crown copyright).

educational credentials than their parents. There is also an assumption that some minority ethnic acculturation will have facilitated the process of advancement (Gordon, 1964).

The 1991 Census indicates that some black minority groups are now well represented amongst the higher-status occupations (see Table 1). Indian men show an occupational structure very similar to that of white men, with well-qualified workers just as likely to hold professional or managerial posts as whites. Black Caribbean men, however, are still significantly underrepresented in the higher occupational classes. Although they are well represented amongst skilled manual workers, about one-third of Black Caribbean males are employed as machine operators or in unskilled occupations. Meanwhile, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men are significantly underrepresented in skilled manual jobs and in professional occupations compared with whites. In general, there is a smaller disparity between black and white female employment patterns compared with men's, although this is largely accounted for by the smaller proportion of women in the professional, managerial and employer category (Jones, 1993).

This fragmented picture of occupational advancement correlates well with the changing local geographies of settlement for the Indian and Black-Caribbean population, and the locational inertia of the Pakistani/

Bangladeshi groups at the urban scale. The housing status of minority group owner-occupiers, amongst whom Asians are particularly well represented, also clearly follows class lines. Managers and professionals in each minority ethnic group are the most likely to own detached or semi-detached fully centrally heated houses, although the association is much clearer for white and Indian owners (of whom 62 per cent and 58 per cent respectively lived in such houses) than for other groups. It is notable, however, that the quality of the housing bought by women is worse than that bought by men. This difference held across classes and minority ethnic groups and probably reflects gender differences in the capacity to raise finance.

There is no neat relationship between social class, generation and minority ethnic group, despite the predictions of the assimilation models. On the one hand, Black-Caribbean youngsters are generally doing better than their elders, with higher proportions in white-collar work as opposed to manual jobs; only 40 per cent of the British-born Black Caribbeans are in manual occupations compared with nearly 70 per cent of the immigrant generation according to the 1991 Census. This socioeconomic progress is correlated with the outward movement of the younger Black-Caribbean population within and beyond Greater London. On the other

hand, generational differences in the occupational status of the Indian population take on a different character. In this case, the older generation is better represented in the higher-status jobs than the youngsters, although the British-born are relatively well represented in junior white-collar occupations. They thus have favourable career prospects, which may be translated into up-market moves in the future. However, for the moment, the significant trend towards suburbanisation noted by Rees and Phillips (1996) in Greater London is largely explained by the relocation of more affluent, first-generation Indian households. Meanwhile, the younger British-born generations are settling within the established areas of Indian settlement. There is some evidence from Bradford (Medway, 1997) and Bedford (Sarre *et al.*, 1989) to suggest that this outward mobility is linked to the parental provision of housing for the next generation, as more affluent immigrants relinquish their home or assist in purchasing cheap housing for their children.

The potential for inter-generational social and spatial mobility is evident, leading Robinson to suggest that "the British born are set on different social and spatial trajectories from their immigrant forebears" (Robinson, 1996, p. 197). However, the picture is not quite so simple. Those youngsters in work are clearly doing as well or better than their parent's generation, but youth unemployment presents a major constraint upon spatial dispersal. Higher proportions of the British-born minority ethnic population are unemployed than the first generation. For example, in 1991, 31.4 per cent of British-born Caribbean males were unemployed compared with 17.5 per cent of immigrant males. Similarly, unemployment levels amongst British-born Pakistanis rose to 41.6 per cent compared with 28.3 per cent for the older generation. The unemployed are likely to find themselves with limited housing choices, just like their white compatriots. They are also likely to encounter the disadvantages associated with their ethnic status in their search for housing (in terms of institutional discrimination) and so may well have

few options outside the poorer areas of the inner city. The differential experience of the employed and unemployed youngsters in each minority ethnic group is likely to prove a major social and spatial divider in the near future.

The minority ethnic population is thus now characterised by a divergence of employment experience along race, class, gender and generational lines, which will have implications for their housing options. While socioeconomic progress is evident, it is important not to underestimate the impact of continuing minority ethnic group poverty and unemployment. In a national review of poverty in Britain, Oppenheim (1993) concluded that on every indicator, black people are more at risk of poverty and unemployment than other groups. Indeed, in 1995, when white male unemployment was 8 per cent, levels for the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group stood at 18 per cent, while unemployment for Blacks rose to 21 per cent (Labour Force survey data, 1995). This pattern of disadvantage is particularly acute for minority ethnic groups in declining industrial towns. Ratcliffe (1996), for example, found that approximately half of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi households in Bradford contained nobody in full-time work. This clearly has far-reaching implications for their housing options. Similarly, recent research in Calderdale, West Yorkshire, drew an explicit link between poverty and immobility amongst home-owners, revealing that many owners who wished to move did not have the financial resources to do so (Davies *et al.*, 1996).

There is no doubt, however, that a small black middle class is emerging and that this is strongly associated with the beginnings of minority ethnic deconcentration and suburbanisation. However, the long-term consequence of this socioeconomic progress for a more extensive dispersal is less certain. It may be argued that the black middle class is fairly fragile and that its members only occupy a tenuous position within both the labour and housing market. Daye (1994), for example, asserts that black occupational

achievement is, at least in part, dependent upon an ability to circumvent structural racism within the workplace.

There is certainly evidence that the labour market is still strongly segmented along racial lines, that black minority workers earn less than similarly qualified whites in the same occupations, and that their career prospects are weaker (Ohri and Faruqi, 1988; Jones, 1993). Scrutiny of the higher-status occupations also reveals both horizontal and vertical segregation within them; whites are more likely to occupy managerial posts, especially within large organisations, and black groups are more likely to be professionals or employers. The absence of the black minorities from senior management positions in large firms is particularly notable. There is also evidence that racial inequalities exist in the well-paid growth sectors of the economy, such as insurance, banking and information technology (Phillips and Sarre, 1995; Benson, 1989). Similarly, the fracturing of experience of well-educated black and white youngsters trying to embark upon a professional career can be illustrated with reference to the medical and legal professions (Phillips and Sarre, 1995).

Daye (1994) therefore questions whether the upward mobility of some black workers will result in a permanent middle-class grouping in the British class structure. Phillips and Sarre (1995), however, contend that the overrepresentation of Indians in particular in professional occupations reflects a strategic response to exclusion that might secure their advancement. Professionalism, it may be argued, constitutes a means of coupling high levels of formal education with highly prized occupational rewards, transforming cultural assets through education into material gain. Thus, formal qualifications can ease the route into organisational career structures and minimise the effects of racial discrimination. Nevertheless, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that organisational assets and cultural power still largely reside with the white (male) population, who can use them to curb entry to higher-status occupations or to block pro-

motion prospects, thereby securing their own privileges and rewards.

There are also other considerations which cast doubt upon the future relocation of the black minority population on a large scale. Socioeconomic advancement does not guarantee suburbanisation or dispersal. Cultural factors, which serve to anchor minority ethnic group members in the (often deprived) ethnic territory, may intervene. Such factors may include the Muslim's religious aversion to taking out the loans necessary for an up-market move, although financial ingenuity on the part of some banks may be providing a route around this. Institutional constraints, coupled with racial harassment, also play a role in constraining mobility as is explored below.

Relocation away from the ethnic cores of the inner city is thus not always easily achieved, even for those with the financial capacity to make the move. The cost of mobility is not only measured in terms of the ability to pay the rent or mortgage, but in relation to the householder's capacity to negotiate access to the suburbs.

Institutional Forces in the Housing Market

Minority ethnic progress in the housing market of the 1990s not only reflects the greater resources, in terms of both finance and knowledge, at the disposal of these groups but a significant erosion of institutionalised racial exclusion over time. Black minority ethnic groups are thus now particularly well represented in the social rented sector (see Table 2) and access to finance and information in the private housing market has improved immeasurably since the early days. There are nevertheless still major inequalities between white and minority ethnic groups in access to good quality housing in desirable locations in all tenures (Karn, 1997).

The 1991 census data presented in Table 3 indicate that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis live in the most deprived housing in the worst locations. Both groups are characterised by very high levels of overcrowding compared with whites, and many households live in

Table 2. Tenure by ethnic group of head of household, Great Britain, 1991 (percentages)

Ethnic group	Owner-occupiers	Local authority tenants	Housing association tenants	Private tenants	Renting with job	Total households
White	67	21	3	7	2	21 026 565
Black Caribbean	48	36	10	6	1	216 460
Black African	28	41	11	18	2	73 346
Black Other	37	34	11	14	4	38 281
Indian	82	8	2	6	2	225 582
Pakistani	77	10	2	10	1	100 938
Bangladeshi	44	37	6	10	3	30 668

Source: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (Crown copyright).

accommodation without central heating—for example, 34 per cent of Pakistanis compared with 19 per cent of whites. According to the English House Condition Survey (1991), over one-fifth of these two groups live in what has been assessed as the ‘worst’ housing in the country, which is characteristically found in the inner city. Indians in contrast do better; only 19 per cent live in properties deemed to be in the ‘worst’ condition. Black Africans are five times as likely as whites to be living in accommodation where they have no access to, or must share, amenities such as a bath and inside WC. This reflects their overrepresentation within the private rental sector.

There is also considerable variation in the type of housing occupied by black minority ethnic and white groups. According to the 1991 census, half of white households live in detached or semi-detached properties compared with less than a one-quarter of Black Caribbean, Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi households. The South Asian groups are the most likely to be found in the terraced housing so commonly associated with inner-city living (see Table 3), a pattern broadly similar to that in the 1980s.

As we will see, the legacy of past housing market discrimination has been difficult to shake off. The early concentration of Asians into the most deprived parts of the private housing sector and Black Caribbeans and Bangladeshis into hard-to-let council estates

continues to shape the housing prospects of these groups. The recent restructuring of the housing market, and in particular the residualisation and commodification of the social rented sector, has only served to tighten the trap. In addition, institutional discrimination, although no longer so explicit as in the early days, still plays a role in the structuring of minority ethnic housing options.

The discussion now turns to look at the potential for past inequalities to combine with current institutional practices to shape future housing improvement and dispersal. The public and private housing sectors are considered in turn.

Social rented housing. Over one-third of the black minority ethnic groups now live in the public housing sector, as do a similar proportion of Bangladeshis and smaller numbers of other Asian groups (Table 2). The housing associations also play an important role in housing the minority ethnic groups. Indeed, the housing options of a disproportionately high number of female-headed households in all groups are tied to the policies and practices of institutions in the social rented sector.

Studies of council housing allocations over the past 25 years have shown that minority ethnic groups have received a disproportionate share of the least desirable types of housing on the least popular estates (for example,

Table 3. Measures of housing quality by ethnic origin, Great Britain, 1991 (percentages)

Ethnic group	Lacking/sharing bath or inside WC	No central heating	Terraced housing	Overcrowding (> 1 person per room)	Total households
White	1.2	18.9	28.6	1.8	21 026 565
Black Caribbean	1.4	17.4	38.5	4.7	216 460
Black African	5.1	15.8	25.3	15.1	73 346
Black Other	2.4	20.2	31.6	5.5	38 281
Indian	1.1	12.4	41.6	12.8	225 582
Pakistani	1.7	34.2	60.2	29.7	100 938
Bangladeshi	2.0	23.6	44.8	47.1	30 668

Source: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (Crown copyright).

see Commission for Racial Equality, 1984, 1988a, 1989, 1990a; Henderson and Karn, 1987; Phillips, 1986). This has not only given rise to a highly concentrated and segregated pattern of minority ethnic residence within this tenure, but has also significantly disadvantaged these groups in terms of their propensity to relocate within, or escape from, this sector. Early racial inequalities in the pattern of allocation have become increasingly fossilised as the potential to transfer out of less desirable locations has diminished with council house sales. Although the 'right to buy' has conferred some benefits upon minority ethnic groups (Peach and Byron, 1993), black tenants have been underrepresented amongst the purchasers and have borne the brunt of the subsequent residualisation of the public sector. Lack of investment in replacement stock has meant that waiting times for all applicants have increased, with particularly severe consequences for the homeless, high proportions of whom are black (London Research Centre, 1989; Davies *et al.*, 1996). Ironically, proposals in the 1996 Housing Act to accommodate the homeless in temporary, private rental housing rather than council properties will scatter this vulnerable group more than before. However, this is unlikely to bring access to anything other than the poorest accommodation in low-rent districts.

Although the crudest forms of racial discrimination once evident in this sector have

now largely disappeared, segregationist tendencies persist. A Commission for Racial Equality investigation (CRE, 1993) into the policies and practices of Oldham MBC concluded that the council had discriminated against Asian applicants by segregating them on to certain estates in the centre of the town and by offering them poorer quality housing. Research by Howes and Mullins (1997) has also pointed to constraints upon the mobility of council tenants within Greater London. They found that Black Caribbeans, Bangladeshis and Black Africans in particular did not have access to the full range of property types in the local authority sector, with far fewer securing detached or semi-detached houses than white housing applicants. A number of other subtle processes, such as a failure to respond to minority ethnic needs, continue to disadvantage minority ethnic applicants and restrict their housing options.

There is nevertheless more variation in the policies and practices of local authorities than in the past, and some more enlightened councils have sought to address the entrenched patterns of segregation in their authorities. An experimental scheme of housing allocation on Greater London Council estates in the London borough of Tower Hamlets was introduced, for example, in the mid 1980s with the aim of widening Bengali housing choice (Phillips, 1984). Hitherto, Bengali tenants had been highly segregated

on some of the poorest estates in the west of the borough, centring on Spitalfields and Brick Lane. Their segregation reflected traditional ethnic ties with this declining area; ties that had been strongly cemented by a long history of racially discriminatory institutional policies and practices (Phillips, 1986). Given the high level of local authority control in the borough (i.e. of 90 per cent of the housing stock), the link between council housing policy and racial segregation was strong.

The experimental housing allocation scheme was successful in extending the range of offers made to Bengali housing applicants to include traditionally white estates of better housing quality. However, the pattern of acceptance and rejection of these offers tended to reinforce the established pattern of racial segregation. While some Bengalis did accept offers on traditionally white estates in the east of the borough, most were loathe to settle beyond their ethnic territory. Offers on Bengali-dominated estates, which were generally of poorer quality, were also unpopular with white applicants. Their refusal of these properties thus again reinforced segregation. Asian reticence to break with their established pattern of residence may be partly attributed to cultural factors and the pull of the community, but was also related to a fear of racial harassment. This fear was well justified given the history of racial violence in the borough. Properties on estates with a reputation for harassment were often refused without being viewed. Meanwhile, white intimidation at the time of viewing prompted further refusals. Thus, the legacy of past discrimination, coupled with the council's failure to tackle racial harassment, brought a minimal redistribution of tenants. The subsequent transfer of all public housing into the control of the local borough council only served to entrench racial segregation in Tower Hamlets as blatantly discriminatory policies and practices were deployed (Commission for Racial Equality, 1988a).

A decade later, the London borough of Lewisham commissioned a survey of the

housing preferences of its black and white applicants for council housing (Phillips, 1993). This was prompted by the persistence of black (mainly Black Caribbean) segregation in the more deprived areas of the north of the borough together with black refusals of offers of council accommodation on better (white-dominated) estates to the south, on the borders with Bromley. Since 40 per cent of Lewisham tenants are black, the council could potentially contribute to racial deconcentration in the borough. Its role is all the more important given that Lewisham is one of the main areas of net in-migration for black groups (Champion, 1996).

Interviews with applicants for council housing in Lewisham once again revealed the power of established community links with particular localities, as well as the fear of racial harassment, to shape housing aspirations. Forty per cent of the black respondents stressed a preference for living close to family and community, thus largely perpetuating the historical association between the black population and the relatively deprived and overcrowded area of Deptford. Very specific localities within the south of the borough (for example, Catford) emerged as part of a secondary cluster of favoured locations, but much of the south-east was excluded from consideration. This link between community and place, which was produced by past exclusionary housing market practices, is thus now sustained by community ties. These not only reflect cultural forces associated with the maintenance of distinctive ethnic identities and lifestyles, but also the perceived risk of racial harassment outside the ethnic territory. One-quarter of the black people interviewed maintained that they had refused an offer of better quality property, to which they aspired, because of anxieties (particularly amongst the women) about isolation and harassment. One-third expressed more general worries about racial harassment. Evidence indicates that the greatest levels of harassment were occurring at the time on the Silwood estate in the north of the borough (Lewisham CRC, 1993), rather than in the south. Nevertheless, the perceived lack of

community support in the face of potential harassment was clearly a significant factor in blacks' housing decisions.

Racial harassment thus clearly plays an important role in maintaining racial segregation within the public sector, depriving black tenants of a wide range of locational choices and access to good quality properties away from the ethnic cores. Fear of racial harassment and the 'managerial problems' associated with it also prompts housing managers to make allocation decisions which minimise the potential for ethnic group conflict and violence (Phillips, 1986).

Housing associations have proved an important alternative to council housing for the Black-Caribbean population in particular. However, housing association properties are even more unevenly distributed geographically than council housing, with high concentrations in inner London and larger urban areas, but few in rural areas and small towns. Similarly, the newly emerging network of black-led housing associations, while providing black people with access to better quality housing than in the past, also reinforces the pattern of segmentation in the social rented sector. Geographically, these black associations are very unevenly distributed and limited in number (Harrison *et al.*, 1996). Since the black population has a greater propensity to apply to black-led rather than white-led associations, their range of locational choices within this tenure is likely to be narrow.

The private sector. Market segmentation, which results from minorities having to restrict their search to a spatially limited and usually inferior section of the housing market, has contributed significantly to the enduring pattern of minority ethnic concentration and segregation in the private sector. In the past, this found its clearest expression in the private rental sector, where there has been a long tradition of renting from a landlord of a similar ethnic origin. Although private renting has diminished significantly over the post-war period, minority ethnic households are still overrepresented in this tenure compared with whites.

Indeed, for some groups, such as the Black Africans and some Asian minorities, it still performs a significant housing role (Table 2). However, research indicates that systematic discrimination can still curtail minority ethnic housing options within this sector. In 1990, for example, a Commission for Racial Equality investigation using actor-testing, found that, nationally, one in five accommodation agencies were discriminating, in Ealing it was nearly half and in Bristol one-third (CRE, 1990b).

Similar processes have been at work in the owner-occupied sector, where groups of Asian origin are disproportionately represented (see Table 2). In the past, widespread institutional exclusion brought a reliance on word-of-mouth exchanges of information and private funding arrangements, thereby limiting the range and price of properties considered for purchase to the poorer, cheaper end of the market (Sarre *et al.*, 1989). As institutional use increased, minority ethnic groups were subjected to racial steering by estate agents (Hatch, 1973; Commission for Racial Equality, 1988b) and inequalities in access to housing finance (Commission for Racial Equality, 1985), both powerful determinants of minority ethnic segregation. The entry of minority ethnic estate agents into the market, specialising in the exchange of inner-city properties, only served to reinforce the segregated pattern (Phillips, 1981).

Institutional responses to the minority ethnic groups are now much more varied than in the early days. By the late 1980s, market competition encouraged many financial institutions actively to pursue minority ethnic clients as a new source of profit. These inclusionary strategies were, however, selective and depended upon the perceived risk associated with a particular minority group. Research in Bedford indicated that while Asian clients were valued for their reliability and thrift, Black Caribbeans were treated, as in the past, with suspicion (Sarre *et al.*, 1989). The potential for financing a relocation within the private sector is therefore differentiated by minority ethnic group, as well as by

class and gender, both of which also contribute to the differential allocation of housing resources.

Estate agents' reactions to minority ethnic purchasers have also changed over time, although the channelling of clients to 'suitable' areas on the basis of 'race' and class stereotypes remains an important part of their professionalism. Interviews with agents in Bedford in the late 1980s and Birmingham in the early 1990s indicate that managers are still wary of black clients. Many agents still fear that black entry into a white neighbourhood will be paralleled by a decline in neighbourhood status and property values. Thus, while inner-city agents accept the inevitability of an ethnic clientele, those selling in more up-market areas still seek to preserve the status (and value) of white-dominated neighbourhoods. While white demand for such areas remains high, they believe they have nothing to gain (and much to lose) from tipping the racial balance.

There is therefore still evidence of market manipulation by estate agents, which works to the detriment of black housing purchasers. This, at best, may be manifested in the racial steering of middle-class blacks to particular localities, often adjacent to the ethnic cluster. Other agents, however, employ more directly discriminatory tactics, such as failing to respond to black clients' requests for information or rationing housing details (Phillips and Karn, 1992). As the Commission for Racial Equality (1990c) investigation of an Oldham estate agency found, some estate agents also continue to accept discriminatory instructions from vendors (thus preserving racially segregated areas) and directly promote racial segregation through steering. Since the minority ethnic clusters coincide with the poorer neighbourhoods, the association between clustering and deprivation remains.

The white-dominated planning profession, whether intentionally or unintentionally, has also imposed a brake on private-sector dispersal (Thomas and Krishnarayan, 1994). For example, minority ethnic groups often find it difficult to obtain planning permission for

shops, religious facilities and housing extensions outside the ethnic cluster. Would's (1994) analysis of planning applications in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, found that middle-class whites, familiar with the planning process, readily registered their objections to proposed developments in their neighbourhood, whilst inner-city Asian residents rarely objected. The impetus for minority ethnic community development and expansion *in situ* was therefore strong. Existing planning structures, designed to look after the 'public interest', have thereby tended to reproduce a landscape which reflects predominantly traditional British values and inhibits the minority ethnic relocation process.

Institutional forces thus still contribute to market segmentation and help to sustain a pattern of minority ethnic segregation and disadvantage. Nevertheless, the selective relaxation of exclusionary institutional practices over time coupled with the greater resources (financial and knowledge) now at the disposal of some minority ethnic purchasers has brought increasing diversity in the type of housing bought. According to the 1991 Census, Indian home-owners now occupy the highest-status housing of all the black minority groups. For example, as Table 4 indicates, 44 per cent of Indian home-owners live in detached or semi-detached housing with central heating, which is not far off the proportion for whites (51 per cent). In contrast, fewer Pakistanis or Bangladeshis own these better types of housing; instead, as many as 30 per cent of Pakistani owners live in terraced properties without central heating (compared with 7 per cent of white owners). This is often accompanied by very high levels of overcrowding (see Table 3).

These disparities in home-ownership status may be partly attributed to social class, as previously noted, although significant differences also emerge between minority ethnic groups when controlling for occupation. For example, while 58 per cent of Indian managers and professionals live in detached/semi-detached housing with central heating, only 31 per cent of Black-Caribbean and 47 per cent of Pakistani managers and profes-

Table 4. Ethnic owners: indicators of housing standards (percentages)

Ethnic group	Proportion in detached/semi-detached housing with full central heating	Proportion in terraced housing with no central heating
White	51	7
Black Caribbean	24	10
Black African	23	7
Black Other	27	9
Indian	44	7
Pakistani	23	30
Bangladeshi	20	19

Source: 1991 Census, 2 per cent Sample of Anonymised Records (Crown copyright).

sionals are in the same housing position. Other factors (cultural or institutional) thus clearly intervene in the translation of occupational success into housing status. An analysis of 1991 Census data indicates that this status hierarchy survives across localities. The situation in suburban areas is particularly interesting because of the potential impact on living conditions. Indian owners appear to have experienced greater improvements in housing status with suburbanisation than Black-Caribbean owners, who are still overrepresented in terraced housing. This may be attributed to the younger age structure of the Black-Caribbean group, gender differences in the head of household (female heads tend to do worse) and, possibly, selective institutional discrimination.

The strategies adopted by households wishing to enter owner-occupation, despite poverty and social exclusion, have been striking. Home-ownership can provide a route into the suburbs for more affluent minority group members, although there may be penalties to be paid. Evidence in the past demonstrated that minority ethnic purchasers paid a 'colour tax' in order to secure accommodation (Collard, 1973; Fenton, 1977). More recent research in Birmingham suggests that this may still be true; Asian businessmen are securing good quality, high-status, detached housing but at a high price (Phillips and Karn, 1992).

For many owners, however, past racialised

divisions of space within the private housing market present an enduring constraint upon mobility. Asians still own much of the very worst housing in the poorest locations and their properties are often a dubious asset. This has serious financial implications for inner-city residents wishing to relocate in higher-status areas characterised by more rapidly appreciating property values. The evidence of high levels of housing disrepair in the inner city points to the importance of urban renewal for improving the living conditions of these owners and enhancing their prospects for relocation. Research by Ratcliffe (1992), however, indicates that minority ethnic owners do not always benefit from such investment as much as whites.

Racial harassment also inhibits spatial mobility, although wealth can provide a shield in the form of private transport and home security systems that the inner-city poor cannot afford. However, moving with the threat of harassment incurs both emotional and financial costs. Virdee (1995) has revealed the extraordinary lengths to which some minority ethnic households have gone to adapt their lifestyles to cope with the everyday risk of racial violence and abuse. In the private rental sector, landlord harassment is also an issue, with ethnic minority tenants (especially young blacks) being twice as likely as white tenants to experience this (Greater

London Council, 1986). This has reinforced the tendency for market segmentation.

Clustering as a Cultural Resource

There is an implicit assumption in much of the British literature on minority ethnic segregation that spatial deconcentration and dispersal is a worthy goal and sign of minority ethnic group progress. There is some validity in this given the strong and persistent correlation between black minority segregation and deprivation in this country. The central concern, however, should more accurately be with the groups' ability to *relocate* away from the deprived urban areas, a process which may or may not be associated with dispersal.

It is evident that clustering still performs an important function in the lives of the minority ethnic groups in Britain today, with thriving ethnic centres providing a territorial base for the maintenance of a distinctive way of life and political organisation (Solomos and Back, 1995). Over time, the larger clusters have themselves become spatially differentiated along religious, regional, linguistic and even caste lines (Medway, 1997). The vitality of the ethnic cluster has been sustained by changes in its function and meaning over time. Whilst early immigrants sought to replicate their 'traditional' lifestyle, this inevitably has had little appeal for the British-born youngsters. Yet ethnographic research indicates that minority ethnic clustering can perform an important function in the formation of cultural identities for Asian and Black-Caribbean youth (Back, 1996; Farrar, 1996). Their distinctive ethnic lifestyle rarely reproduces the 'traditional' culture in a pure, unmodified form, but more commonly involves a process of transculturation or cultural syncretism, whereby new, contextualised cultural forms emerge from a blend of past traditions and present experiences, of which racism is one (Hall, 1992; Back, 1996).

Cultural autonomy, and the segregation which helps to sustain it, can become both a resource and a refuge in a potentially hostile

society. The idea of dispersal away from the ethnic cluster can be threatening. While the 'middle-class' suburbs and the lifestyle associated with them may be a signifier of status for white families, their meaning may be very different for the minority ethnic household, particularly its female members. As Boys (1990) has argued, the notion of 'home' as a 'woman's place' is founded on conceptions of white middle-class domesticity. For Asian women in particular, separation from the ethnic community through suburban living may make them more dependent upon men in the family for mobility and socialising, especially if racial harassment is perceived to be a threat. It may also affect their chances of work, since many women rely on community networks in their search for a job.

Recent research has uncovered strong preferences for continuing clustering amongst some minority ethnic group members, both young and old. For example, a survey of the predominantly Gujarati Indian community in Preston, Lancashire, confirmed the importance of the close proximity of shops, religious facilities, and family and friends for maintaining the inner-city ethnic cluster (Ashiana, 1996). The Asian authors of the report argue that the community's housing needs can best be met by improving the provision of accommodation within the established areas of minority ethnic settlement. Similarly, Karn and Lucas (1996) uncovered strong resistance to slum clearance and the associated breakup of the centralised Asian community in Birmingham. Residents were unwilling to make long-distance moves away from clearance areas, especially if there was the threat of racial harassment. In this and in other cases, minority ethnic communities have shown increasing political strength and organisation in opposing clearance and dispersal.

Conclusion

The past 10–15 years have seen localised change in the pattern of minority ethnic

settlement in Britain; a change characterised by a diversity of experience both within and between minority ethnic groups. At the one extreme, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have remained highly segregated within the ethnic cores. Meanwhile, Black Caribbeans have displayed a rootedness in their early regions of settlement, although better-off British-born members of the group have started to drift outwards from the central areas. At the other end of the scale, the Indian population now has a very diverse geography, ranging from inner-city clustering to the settlement of professionals in rural areas. The first generation of Indians in particular has displayed relatively high levels of localised mobility, which have been associated with decentralisation, suburbanisation and ex-urbanisation.

Cultural factors clearly play a role in sustaining segregation at the local level, but cannot wholly account for the persistent pattern of concentration, segregation *and* deprivation. So far there is little evidence of a large-scale relocation of ethnic clusters from inner-city areas to higher-status suburban locations along the lines of the Jewish populations in Leeds and London (Newman, 1985). Forces for segregation and dispersal, inclusion or exclusion, are clearly complex, dynamic and contextual in that they are experienced in different ways in different places by different minority ethnic groups. Experiences also differ between members of the same minority ethnic group, by gender (Afshar and Maynard, 1994) and by generation, for example. Yet it would seem that that, despite growing minority ethnic group empowerment, the boundaries of black and white space are still generally being drawn by the more powerful white population, reflecting their balance of control over institutional resources and the power of popular racism, through racial harassment, to maintain social and spatial distance between the groups.

Forces for concentration and segregation take on their most extreme expression in the rural context. The British countryside is still quintessentially white and seems to offer few points of access for the black person (Agye-

man, 1989). Furthermore, black absences from the countryside and black presence within the cities reinforce the stereotype that black British people are an urban population; their exclusion from this part of Britain therefore seems natural. Kinsman (1995), in examining the sentiments expressed in the work of black photographer Ingrid Pollard, demonstrates how the English countryside can produce feelings of discomfort and absence of belonging for black people. These sentiments, Kinsman suggests, are bound up with conceptions of English nationalism (which are profoundly white) and images of a distinctive and separate black identity. The black person's feelings of exclusion from the British countryside, it may be argued, are associated with their marginality and 'outsider status' in Britain. A recent report by the Church of England synod (Church of England, 1996) signals that black people's exclusion from rural areas is far from imagined. It admits that some rural dioceses are seen as 'no-go' areas for blacks, thereby adding the Church to the range of institutions which fail to represent adequately the black minority ethnic population of Britain.

It is true that the day-to-day experience of more successful minority ethnic group members may not be one of exclusion; the benefits of capital clearly outweigh the negative attributes of ethnicity. Thus Asian doctors and businessmen can buy into the suburbs, or even the rural areas, although their passage is eased if they show signs of cultural assimilation. However, the structural integration of the black minority ethnic population is in its infancy and institutional discrimination still puts up obstacles to advancement. In addition, the sense of belonging, of inclusion in ideas of nationhood, must still be open to question and cast doubt in the minds of those who wish to secure a place in the suburbs or (white) British countryside.

Note

1. The term black minority ethnic refers to people of South Asian (Indian, Pakistani,

Bangladeshi), African and West Indian origin.

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