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Ethnic inequalities under New Labour: progress or entrenchment?

Book section

CHAPTER 9

ETHNIC INEQUALITIES UNDER NEW LABOUR: PROGRESS OR ENTRENCHMENT?

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The New Labour party elected to government in 1997 came to power inheriting a legacy of ethnic inequalities in housing, education, employment, health and criminal justice outcomes. The early research evidence from the First Survey of Ethnic Minorities carried out in the mid-1960s documented racialised disadvantage and discrimination in the lives of all minority ethnic groups, most of whom had arrived from Britain's colonial territories to fill job vacancies in the post-war period (Daniel 1968). Since the mid-1970s, however, while the broad pattern of ethnic inequalities has persisted, there is also considerable differentiation, with those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, and to a lesser extent those of Black origin, generally faring worse than those of Indian and Chinese origin (see for example Smith 1977; Jones 1993; Modood et al. 1997)[1]. Whilst the earlier period provided unequivocal evidence of both direct and indirect racial discrimination, the empirical research has additionally, over the intervening years, accumulated to reveal a complex interplay of socio-economic, demographic, institutional, structural, and cultural factors as contributing to the less favourable outcomes for minority ethnic groups.

In its first period of office, New Labour's policy response to ethnic inequalities was

framed by the public inquiry into the Metropolitan Police Service's investigation of the racist murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993. The government is to be applauded for fully endorsing the Inquiry team's findings that 'institutional racism' had played a part in the flawed police investigation, and that it was endemic to public organisations such as the police, schools, and government departments.[2] It was defined by (Macpherson 1999: para 34) as:

> 'The collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people."

Despite the conceptual imprecision of the term (Mason 1982; Miles and Brown 2003) and some resistance to accepting its pervasiveness (Dennis et al. 2000), eliminating institutional racism was a central plank of the government's policy rhetoric, at least during New Labour's first term of office. Academic and policy commentators alike saw this as a 'watershed' and 'benchmark' in British race relations" (Bourne 2001).

In practice, New Labour policy has ultimately settled for promoting race equality, a more liberal and less politically controversial policy goal. The flagship element of this approach was the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, a recommendation of the Macpherson Report, representing the first race relations legislation for twenty five years. It is now possible for the police and Government departments to be found guilty of racial discrimination. The Act also places a statutory duty on all public authorities to

promote equality of opportunity, to proactively promote good relations between people of different racial groups, and to publish a race equality scheme. Public authorities are also required to audit, consult, and monitor existing policies and services to assess whether these impact differently on different ethnic groups.

As Tony Blair has espoused in numerous speeches New Labour's aim is to achieve "true equality: equal worth, an equal chance of fulfilment, equal access to knowledge and opportunity", and "not equality of income or outcome" (see for example his 1999 Labour Party Conference Speech). The social exclusion agenda is central to this, providing both an ethical and business case for a level-playing field through which individuals can compete equally for social rewards. A range of initiatives has been mounted which have the broad aim of reducing multiple disadvantage for all groups, with fewer measures specifically targeted at minority ethnic groups. The chapter will consider the impact of these policies on long-standing ethnic inequalities in education, employment and policing. The last section of the chapter will attempt an overall assessment of New Labour strategies to reduce ethnic inequalities, as well as providing some thoughts on where further policy developments are required.

Neighbourhood Contexts

After World War II, migrants came to Britain, acting as a replacement population in urban areas that had suffered significant war casualties or population losses following upward white mobility (Peach 1996). South Asian groups tended to settle in areas where manufacturing and textiles industries were the key employers, with Black Caribbeans (and later Black Africans) concentrated in urban centres where public sector employment (e.g. hospitals, transport) was readily available. Patterns of residence were significantly constrained by limited financial resources, experiences of racial

harassment and discrimination in obtaining private property, and residency restrictions which prevented access to council housing. Ethnic clustering also resulted from a desire to maintain cultural, linguistic and religious ties, and to provide social support (Karn and Phillips 1998). These factors together have set the context for contemporary patterns with minority ethnic groups experiencing relatively static geographical concentration and disadvantage.

Making up only 8% of the UK population according to the 2001 Census, minority ethnic groups are residentially concentrated in metropolitan areas in England and Wales. They are more likely than their white counterparts to live in areas where unemployment and social deprivation is higher, to be housed in poor living conditions and to experience high levels of overcrowding, and this is particularly the case for Pakistani/Bangladeshi ethnic groups (Lakey 1997; Harrison and Phillips 2003). These adverse conditions at the neighbourhood level provide the backdrop for minority ethnic groups' experiences in other areas, and it is these which are considered next.

EDUCATION

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of education on life chances, with qualifications increasingly seen as the key to future study, employment, social position, and income. The role of education in social reform is similarly important, with education in the 1960s viewed as a key means of integrating minority ethnic groups into the labour market and civil society, and as a tool for reducing prejudice and discrimination.

Educational Attainment

However, the attainment levels of black pupils have long been lower than those of their white counterparts, whilst their rates of exclusion from school have been higher. In the 1970s and 1980s, these features of black educational experience were assumed to be the result of these pupils possessing a negative self-image reinforced by a culturally irrelevant curriculum and poor linguistic skills (Swann Report 1985). By the 1980s and into the mid-1990s, the statistical picture showed considerable differentiation in minority ethnic educational attainment. As Table 9.1 shows, based on attainment at age 16 (five or more GCSE passes), there is a higher-attaining cluster of ethnic groups (Indian, White, and findings from other research include those of Chinese origin in this group), and a lower-attaining cluster (Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi). The empirical research evidence has pointed to a range of explanations for these disadvantageous outcomes including socio-economic disadvantage, racist teacher attitudes and expectations, a culturally biased and alienating National Curriculum, anti-school black masculinities, poor family-school links and parental support, and large concentrations of minority ethnic pupils in unpopular and poorly resourced schools (Gillborn 1998; Sewell 1997; Abbas 2002; Tomlinson 2001).

[Table 9.1 about here]

Government policies

New Labour expressed its early commitment to reducing educational disadvantage in their pre-election manifesto and in Blair's mantra of 'Education, Education, Education'. The Excellence in Cities policy initiative has a core aim of raising educational standards in areas suffering socio-economic disadvantage which means that over 70% of minority ethnic pupils are included in a range of schemes to tackle educational

disaffection, truancy and behavioural problems (see Chapter 3, this volume).

A key element of the government strategy to improve educational attainment among minority ethnic groups is the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG), introduced in 2001-2. Funding of £154 million has been allocated to local education authorities with high concentrations of minority ethnic pupils for language development training, peer mentoring and mediation schemes, targeted literacy and numeracy sessions, behaviour management programmes, and summer schools. In response to the Macpherson Report recommendation, the National Curriculum for secondary schools now incorporates a citizenship element which teaches about the history of Britain's diverse ethnic communities. Government initiatives have also focused on improving initial teacher training and increasing the recruitment of minority ethnic teacher trainees.

Outcomes

It appears that New Labour's early commitment to reducing educational disadvantage has produced some positive results. Figure 9.1 shows that the proportion of pupils in all ethnic groups obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C has increased considerably (see Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of this improvement). It is also significant that the highest achieving groups in 2003 were of minority ethnic origin: 79% of Chinese girls and 71% of Chinese boys achieved five or more GCSE grades A*-C in England, followed by 70% of Indian girls and 60% of Indian boys (DfES 2004a). Interim evaluation findings on the Excellence in Cities programme also indicate higher levels of progress for Asian and Black/Black British pupils at Key Stage 4, although the opposite was found for the latter group at Key Stage 3 (Kendall et al. 2002).

[Figure 9.1 about here]

However, it is disappointing that ethnic inequalities in educational attainment are still observable. The evidence points to a widening gap between the higher and lower attaining cluster of ethnic groups (see Demack et al. 2000). A more comprehensive categorisation of pupils by ethnic origin for 2003 indicates further differentiation between the high-attaining cluster (Chinese, Indian and Irish), a mid-range cluster (White British, Mixed, Bangladeshi, Travellers (Irish), Pakistani and Black African), and the performance of the lowest attaining cluster (Black Caribbean and Gypsy/Roma) (DfES 2004a).

Figure 9.2 takes into account socio-economic status (using the proxy of free school meals). It is evident that pupils of Black Caribbean and Black Other origin have lower attainment, and Chinese pupils higher attainment, regardless of their eligibility for free school meals. The only exception to the pattern is the majority ethnic group of white pupils. One-fifth of White British pupils eligible for free school meals achieved five or more GCSE/GNVQs, an attainment level similar to that of the poorer-performing minority ethnic groups. These findings point to the need for further exploration of ethnicity and socio-economic status in attainment outcomes.

[Figure 9.2 about here]

School Exclusions

The most recent data on permanent exclusions is also discouraging, showing that Black Caribbean pupils are over three times as likely as White pupils to be permanently

excluded, with only slightly lower exclusion rates for those of Black Other origin. Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese pupils are either proportionately or under-represented among those excluded (DfES 2004b). While this represents a significant improvement over previous years (see Figure 9.3), undoubtedly in response to the Government target of reducing exclusions by one-third (Social Exclusion Unit 2000), there is still disproportionality in the use of this sanction. The 16% reduction in permanent school exclusions between 1996/97 and 1998/9 (24% for those of Black Caribbean origin), predated the introduction of the Government target (Social Exclusion Unit 2000, Table 2).

[Figure 9.3 about here]

Promising approaches to raising educational achievement and reducing school exclusions include mentoring programmes, structured learning and support programmes with assessment and target setting, an inclusive curriculum which shows respect for the cultural background of all pupils, parent-school initiatives, and support for supplementary schools (DfES 2002; see also Ofsted 2002; Tikly et al. 2002).

In October 2003, the Government announced the *Aiming Higher* strategy, targeting resources on raising African Caribbean attainment in 30 secondary schools. Schools will receive a package of support, resources and expert consultancy. It remains to be seen whether these approaches will alter the pattern of persistent ethnic inequalities in attainment and exclusion. Still inadequately addressed is the issue of teacher racism and conflict in teacher-black pupil interactions. Both Gillborn (2001) and Osler and Starkey (2001) have also questioned the role of citizenship education in bringing about significant anti-racist change in schools, promoting ‘understanding’ and ‘tolerance’

rather than challenging racism.

EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY

Like education, employment represents a critical experience in our society, affecting social status, quality of housing, health, and enjoyment of leisure. At the beginning of New Labour's first term, the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities (1997) demonstrated that at each level of qualification (none, O' level or equivalent, A' level or higher), unemployment levels for Black Caribbean and Pakistani/Bangladeshi men and women were higher than for white men and women (Modood et al. 1997; see also Wadsworth 2003). This differential was reduced for those of Indian and African Asian origin. A similar pattern was observed for male occupational attainment and average earnings, broadly mirroring the higher and lower attaining ethnic clusters found in educational outcomes.

Analysis of the Family Resources Survey by Berthoud (1998) also included samples of Chinese and Africans. This found higher average earnings for working Chinese, but also a larger proportion of poor Chinese (28%) compared with poor white households (16%). The African sub-sample was found to fare worse than Caribbeans and was significantly poorer than white households. Findings for other ethnic groups were generally similar to those of the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities. Of particular concern were very high levels of worklessness among Pakistani and Bangladeshi households, and their much lower levels of average earnings even in work.

Patterns for minority ethnic women were similar, although the differences were smaller. Exceptions included higher average weekly earnings among minority ethnic compared

with white women, although this parity did not extend to women of Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin.

Whilst men of Indian (and Chinese origin) perform better than other minority ethnic groups in terms of unemployment, earnings and occupational attainment, multivariate analyses which examine the effect of ethnicity on occupational outcomes after allowing for factors such as qualifications reveal an ethnic penalty for *all* minority ethnic groups (Cabinet Office 2001, Table 4.11). Controlling for education, training, experience, marital and parental status and region, for example, the average Indian man was 1.64 times as likely to be unemployed as the average white man, with Black men 2.51 times and Pakistani/Bangladeshi men 2.85 times as likely. Indian men received average weekly earnings £23 lower than their white counterparts, rising to £81 for Caribbean men, £132 for African men and £129 for Pakistani/Bangladeshi men. Similarly, the average Indian man was 0.61 times as likely to be in a professional or managerial position as the average white man, and the figure was even lower for Pakistani/Bangladeshi men (0.56) and Black men (0.36). The trend is broadly similar for women, although only the foreign-born face an ethnic earnings penalty (Cabinet Office 2001, Table 4.12).

Government policies

Labour market policy is an area in which New Labour has placed enormous stock, seeing increased participation as a means for reducing poverty and social exclusion. Labour market underachievement also has implications for national economic performance. As minority ethnic groups will make up more than half the growth of the working age population in the next decade (Cabinet Office 2003), increasing their employment rates is an issue which requires policy attention, and has indeed been one

of the Government's key objectives: initially, this was a Public Service Agreement target for 2001-4, but it has now been extended to 2006.

The various general initiatives established to meet this aim are scrutinised in Chapter 2 of this volume. Policy developments specifically targeted at minority ethnic groups have centred on promoting the business case for equal opportunities, improving ethnic monitoring of programmes such as the New Deal, and enhanced partnership working with local minority ethnic providers of employment training and support. Early evidence on the impact of the New Deal for Young People on minority ethnic groups in Oldham indicates that personal advisors tended to be viewed positively, although dropout rates at the Gateway stage are higher nationally for minority ethnic groups than for young white people. Fewer individuals from minority ethnic groups entered subsidised or unsubsidised employment, with more going into education and training or the voluntary sector options. It is unclear whether this reflects a greater degree of commitment to training, lack of choice, or lower expectations by clients or advisers (Fieldhouse et al. 2002).

Outcomes

The data presented in Figure 9.4 show that all minority ethnic groups have lower economic activity rates than the white majority. For both men and women this trend is as much in evidence in Summer 2002 as in Summer 1997, with the exception of Chinese men whose rates of economic activity increased significantly over the time period. For women, the pattern was similar, but economic activity rates also increased for Mixed and Asian women, while declining for black women. These data are somewhat hard to interpret given the aggregation of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshis into the Asian sub-category.

[Figure 9.4 about here]

The 1990s saw a significant drop in unemployment, as well as an increase in average earnings and the proportion of people in professional jobs, and these improvements benefited most minority ethnic groups. However, relatively poorer labour market outcomes have continued, although there is variation in the degree of inequality. Table 9.2 reveals the extent of ethnic inequalities in employment outcomes among both men and women in 2003.[3] Economic activity rates remained lower for minority ethnic groups compared with the white majority ethnic group, although this gap was small for men of Black Caribbean, Indian and Mixed ethnic origins, and non-existent for Black Caribbean women. Disparities in unemployment were generally sharper: with the exception of Indian men, unemployment rates were between two and four times those of the white majority. The pattern is slightly less marked for women, but unemployment among Black Caribbean, Black African and Indian women is still double that among white women, while for those of Mixed and Pakistani ethnic origins the rate is three times as high.

[Table 9.2 about here]

This goes some way to explaining why minority ethnic groups' position in the income distribution is generally lower than their white counterparts, and this too is a long-standing pattern. If all ethnic groups were equally positioned in the income distribution we would expect to see 20% of each group in the bottom income fifth, but as Table 9.3 illustrates, this is not the case. Almost two-thirds of those of Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin were in the bottom fifth before or after housing costs in 2002/3. While all

minority ethnic groups are consistently over-represented at the bottom of the income distribution, those of Indian and Caribbean origin are closest to the white ethnic group. The proportion of the latter group in the bottom fifth departs more clearly from those of Indian origin once the self-employed are included, suggesting that this form of employment is less successful for Caribbeans.

[Table 9.3 about here]

Comparable data on child poverty among ethnic groups are only available since 2000/01 (and for 1999/00 excluding the self-employed). The recent picture appears similar to that already discussed in relation to income distribution, but with very significant progress for Indian children: 37% of Indian children lived in households below 60% median income after housing costs in 2000/1, reduced to 22% in 2002/3. This compares to a fall from 28% to 26% for children in the white ethnic group. On an after housing costs measure, Indian children are now less likely to live in relative poverty than white children; before housing costs, 19% of Indian children are poor compared to 18% of white children (Department for Work and Pensions 2004).

In contrast, there is no evidence of any movement out of poverty for children of Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin, 75% of whom were poor after housing costs in 2002/3; or for children of Black/Black British origin, 46% of whom were poor in 2002/3. Thus, government policies on child poverty discussed in Chapter 7 appear to have been less than effective for most minority ethnic groups. The very high levels of child poverty concentrated among Pakistani/Bangladeshi children is of particular concern.

Analytical research undertaken by the Cabinet Office (2001) has highlighted the

complex explanations for labour market underachievement, relating to, on the demand side, fewer business opportunities in areas with high minority ethnic concentrations, with cultural and religious factors seeming to play a part. On the supply side, lower skills and qualifications among some minority ethnic groups, poorer language fluency, poorer health, and the quality and location of childcare and transport facilities may all contribute to less advantageous outcomes. There is official acknowledgement that racial discrimination still has an impact, although its extent is very difficult to quantify.

A 'new' intellectual and policy framework was launched in early 2003 with a ten year vision of eliminating disproportionate barriers to employment for minority ethnic groups (Cabinet Office 2003: 7). The report stridently sets out policy measures to increase employability by raising educational and skills attainment, connecting people with work through the tailoring of programmes, increasing housing mobility and improving access to childcare and transport, and promoting equal opportunities in the workplace. These are clearly important elements of increasing labour market participation among minority ethnic groups. Equally essential, however, are the sometimes subtle processes of direct and indirect discrimination which operate to limit minority ethnic individuals from reaching their potential according to their qualifications and levels of employment experience, and to perpetuating employment segregation as some employment opportunities are viewed as exclusively 'white' (Cabinet Office 2001).

POLICING[4]

As the introduction to this chapter noted, the Macpherson Report provided New Labour with the framework for achieving racial equality in society. The Home Secretary's

Action Plan which followed the report mainly addressed itself to extensive reform within the police service. Foremost in its programme of work was the establishment of a Ministerial Priority "to increase trust and confidence in policing amongst minority ethnic communities" (Home Office 1999: 3). This was to be measured using performance indicators relating to public satisfaction, family liaison, racism awareness training, racist complaints, the recruitment, retention and progression of minority ethnic police officers, the policing of racist incidents, and the use of stop and search powers. Given their importance in understanding the historical and contemporary relationship between the police and different minority ethnic communities, it is the latter two which are considered in detail in this chapter[5].

Racist Incidents

Historical and recent research have shown the heightened risk that minority ethnic groups have faced from racially motivated victimisation, with police recorded racist incidents increasing 200% between 1988 and 1996/7 (Home Office 1997, 1998), although such data are subject to under-reporting and under-recording (Maynard and Read 1997). Moreover, the historical evidence on the poor response that victims have received from the police in this area was reinforced by the police investigation of Stephen Lawrence's racist murder (Macpherson 1999; see also Bowling 1999; Clancy et al. 2001).

Following the Macpherson Report, the Home Office produced a *Code of Practice on Reporting and Recording Racist Incidents* in April 2000 which applied to all statutory, voluntary and community groups, and the Association of Chief Police Officers drafted its own guidance *Identifying and Combating Hate Crimes* (2000) which is now used by all police forces. These accepted the Macpherson definition of a racist incident as "any

incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person". Additionally, many police forces have created specialist units with officers specially trained to investigate racist and other hate crimes.

These policies have had some impact on police practice. It is clear, for example, that there has been an increase in victims' reporting racist incidents to the police and their willingness and ability to record them as racist incidents, with a doubling of recorded incidents between 1998/9 and 1999/2000 (Clancy et al. 2001; Home Office 2003a). Burney and Rose's (2002) study has highlighted the more intensive and closely supervised investigation of racist incidents by the police following the Mcpherson Report. Nonetheless, while the BCS has estimated racist victimisation rates to have dropped in 1999 compared with 1995, it is probably too soon to attribute any of this decline to post-Macpherson policing reforms.

Stop and Search

The use of stop and search powers by the police has long been the most controversial issue in debates about the policing of minority ethnic communities (see Bowling and Phillips 2002). In 1997/8, the rates of stop and search were 19 per 1000 for the white population, but seven times higher at 139 per 1000 for black people and two times higher for Asians at 45 per 1000 (Home Office 1998). Academic debates have centred on the extent to which these patterns of disproportionality can be legitimately explained by minority ethnic groups' younger age structure, their greater 'availability' on the street because of higher levels of school exclusions and unemployment, their residential concentration in higher crime areas where more stops and searches take place, and their elevated rates of offending according to victim reports, particularly for 'street crime' offences (see Phillips and Bowling 2003 for a review).

The disproportionate use of police stop and search powers is also consistent with patterns of selective enforcement based on negative stereotyping and the heightened suspicion that police officers have of black people, which has been well-documented in research studies and police inspections (for example FitzGerald and Sibbitt 1997; Bowling and Phillips 2002; HMIC 2000). Even the Macpherson Report (1999: para. 45. 10) acknowledged that "the majority of police officers who testified before us accepted that an element of the disparity was the result of discrimination."

The government's response to the problem of disproportionality was to attempt to tighten the regulation of powers with a revised Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 Code of Practice A[6]. This included providing those stopped with a record containing reasons for the stop, improving the supervision and monitoring of stops and searches by senior officers, and more clearly specifying what is meant by the concept of 'reasonable suspicion' which must exist before a stop is conducted.

Figure 9.5 shows that the pattern of ethnic disproportionality in stop and search remains largely unchanged since these policy developments were introduced. However, levels of recorded stop and search fell from 1 million at the time of the Macpherson Inquiry (late 1998-early 1999), to around three quarters of a million in 1999/2000, with sharper falls for those of minority ethnic origin. This reduction was probably at least partly attributable to the criticism that the use of the power was frequently unlawful and unjustified (FitzGerald 1999), but probably also reflected officers' concerns about being accused of racism.

[Figure 9.5 about here]

Despite the absolute drop in the numbers of all ethnic groups stopped and searched by the police between 1997/8 and 2001/2, the fall was lower for black (-23%) and Asian (-21%) people than white (-31%) people. The black/white ratio fell from 7:1 in 1997/8 to 5-6:1 between 1998/9 and 2000/1, but the 'Macpherson effect' subsequently waned: ethnic disproportionality reached its highest levels in 2001/2 with a black/white ratio of 8:1. While it is difficult to be sure about the reasons for the increase, the target to reduce robbery imposed on Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in the government's crime reduction strategy is probably a contributory factor.

There also remains evidence of the use of 'racial profiling', as described by the minority ethnic police officers interviewed by Cashmore (2001: 652), who reported being advised to stop "black kids with baseball caps, wearing all the jewellery", in order to enhance their performance levels: "if you see four black youths in a car, it's worth giving them a pull, as at least one of them is going to be guilty of something or other". Evidently, further work is necessary with senior officers giving unequivocal guidance that stop and search is not a measure of productivity, and with individual officers being made fully aware that the misuse of stop and search powers could lead to disciplinary action. Moreover, since in 2001/2 only 13% stops and searches resulted in an arrest, a reconsideration of the value of stop and search as a crime control technique is urgently required, particularly given the adverse impact it has on police-community relations (Home Office 2003a; Phillips and Bowling 2003).

‘COMMUNITY COHESION’

The structural inequalities and racial discrimination already discussed in relation to education, employment, and policing appear to have coalesced and erupted into racialised confrontations between young Pakistani/Bangladeshi and white men, amidst serious clashes with the police in the northern towns of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in Spring/Summer 2001. In the aftermath, the official reports into the disturbances focused on communities experiencing ‘parallel lives’, inhabiting segregated residential, educational, occupational and leisure spaces, with much negative stereotyping of the Other. Whilst there was recognition of extreme levels of socio-economic deprivation in these communities, alongside problems of political leadership, disengagement, weak policing, and the presence of extremist groups, much attention focused on communities lacking shared values and a shared vision (Cantle 2001; Denham 2001).

Critical commentators have challenged the emphasis the government placed in these reports on cultural difference, ‘Asian criminality’, and self-segregation among Asian communities as the key factors in the disturbances, arguing that this played down the role of wider socio-economic inequalities and institutionalised discrimination (Kalra 2002; Kundnani 2001; Alexander forthcoming; Burnett 2004). For Amin (2002: 963), “rather too much has been made of Asian retreat into inner-urban wards to preserve diaspora traditions and Muslim values, while not enough has been said about White flight into the outer estates, which has been decisively ethno-cultural in character – in escaping Asian ethnic contamination and wanting to preserve White Englishness.” Self-segregation undoubtedly poses significant policy problems for a government committed to integration and a communitarian model of citizenship. But while educational and residential segregation along ethnic lines is pronounced in some parts

of the country (Burgess et al. 2004), the balance between choice and external constraints in explaining these spatial inequalities remains unclear.

The policy response has included the setting up of the Community Cohesion Unit and the establishment of 14 Community Cohesion Pathfinder projects in April 2003, to assist in the development and dissemination of best practice. Local programmes include initiatives such as funding a voluntary sector worker to establish an inter-faith council, including a political champion in strategy groups, and producing a video and feedback event to illustrate the perspectives of young people, parents, and professionals. The progress report for the first six months points to the need for the concept of community cohesion to be well understood locally and for all government initiatives to be joined up at a local level (Home Office 2003b).

Further policy direction could be provided to indicate the mechanisms for assisting safe geographical integration at the neighbourhood level. Suggestions for Bradford include developing local neighbourhood compacts with residents' groups who are willing to help with welcoming Asian families into housing areas, rewarding those that actively encourage and achieve cross-racial involvement in neighbourhood activities, and integrating educational and leisure activities (Anne Power in Ratcliffe et al. 2001; see also Haddock 2003). Such efforts will probably only succeed if they additionally address the more deep-rooted problems which affect divided communities. These are inextricably linked to poverty, exclusion, marginalisation, and to processes of discrimination in education, housing and employment. A political call for a reimagining of Britishness and belonging which can incorporate the diverse, hybrid and diasporic identities of those whose ancestry lies outside Britain is also of paramount importance in fostering a common investment in local communities (Parekh 2000).

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF NEW LABOUR POLICIES ON ETHNIC INEQUALITIES

During their first two terms in office, New Labour presided over some significant improvements in the life of socially disadvantaged groups which have also benefited minority ethnic groups, albeit that some of these trends – in education and unemployment particularly – were evident under the previous government. Turning to look specifically at *ethnic inequalities* reveals a less flattering picture. In education, employment and policing, New Labour policies have had little discernible impact on reducing differences between ethnic groups, even if overall, all ethnic groups have experienced some positive change. It seems likely that there are a number of reasons for this disappointing assessment.

A bureaucratic limitation of New Labour policy measures relates to their timing. Many initiatives which *specifically* address the needs of minority ethnic groups have been launched only during New Labour's second term in office. This may well be precisely because ethnic inequalities have shown no sign of abating; it is testimony to the complexity of the barriers to more equal outcomes for all ethnic groups, and may reflect a recognition that a policy focus on social exclusion is insufficient to improve the experiences of the most disadvantaged minority ethnic groups (see Social Exclusion Unit 2004). This clearly indicates the need for a policy response which more directly addresses direct and indirect forms of discrimination as alluded to in the substantive sections of this chapter.

A further criticism relates to the emerging evidence of a tension between New Labour's public managerialist policies, quasi-market reforms, and the 'targets culture' on the one

hand, and equal opportunities and cultural diversity on the other. Carter's (2000) research on equal opportunities in the NHS found that the devolved local management of staff has allowed discriminatory practices in recruitment and selection as individual staff members are given power to recruit staff directly, largely through informal and non-regulated mechanisms. Similarly, as already discussed, Cashmore's (2001) research with minority ethnic officers has also highlighted the implicit pressures on officers to stop and search "easy targets" in order to boost performance profiles. 'Racially informed' choosing of schools by white parents using basic league tables may be a further example of the ways in which elements of quasi-market reforms have adverse consequences for minority ethnic groups (Tomlinson 1998; Gillborn 2001) .

Research such as that by Carter (2001) and Cashmore (2001) also highlights the internal resistance to reform amidst perceptions of preferential treatment for minority ethnic groups. Such pockets of resistance will necessarily militate against change at both an individual and institutional level. Further research and development work is required to uncover effective processes of change within public and private sector organisations which carefully but rigorously challenge assumptions of preferential treatment. Moreover, whilst it would be a brave politician who promoted the radical goal of equality of outcome rather than opportunity, New Labour can be criticised for not devoting more resources, particularly through education and neighbourhood policies, for perhaps the most promising element of the new statutory duty contained in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 – the "promotion…of good relations between persons of different racial groups". This requires public authorities – and not just those affected by the Northern disorders – to proactively encourage positive relationships and reduce the segregation of communities along ethnic lines.

A further conceptual criticism of New Labour policies relates to Doreen Lawrence's[7] claim that race is no longer a central pillar of the government's equalities agenda (Dodd and Hopkins 2003). It is certainly true that recent policy statements rarely refer to institutional racism[8], instead preferring the more politically innocuous term, 'race equality'. It is not clear whether this political sleight of hand is meant to dodge the more difficult task of changing organisation's cultures or whether the promotion of race equality is simply a more pragmatic strategy for bringing about change in the short-term.

It is hard not to concur with the chorus of critical commentators who favour the former conclusion, and have variously referred to New Labour's approach to dealing with racism as "naïve multiculturalism" (Gillborn 2001: 19), "facing both ways" (Bourne 2001: 14), and "the new assimilationism' (Back et al. 2002: 452). With the exception of Gillborn, all castigate New Labour for promoting social inclusion whilst at the same time introducing restrictive and exclusionary immigration and asylum policies which contribute to the demonisation of asylum seekers and refugees amidst the global movement of peoples (discussed further in the following chapter). For all, continuities between Conservative government policies of earlier periods and New Labour policy approaches are evident, with both failing to address structural forms of inequality and racism.

Concluding Comments

The challenge for New Labour is to reduce the deeply entrenched ethnic inequalities seen in these key areas of social and criminal justice policy. It seems likely that success will rest upon specifically targeted initiatives which address socio-economic disadvantage more generally, in addition to 'tough measures' to eradicate racism and

discrimination. Promoting minority-influenced organisations such as black and minority ethnic housing associations, supplementary schools, and culturally sensitive services, at the same time as improving mainstream provision, must also form part of this strategy. It will be some time yet before it will be possible to assess how well New Labour has performed against its recently expressed policy objectives in the areas of education, employment, policing and community cohesion.

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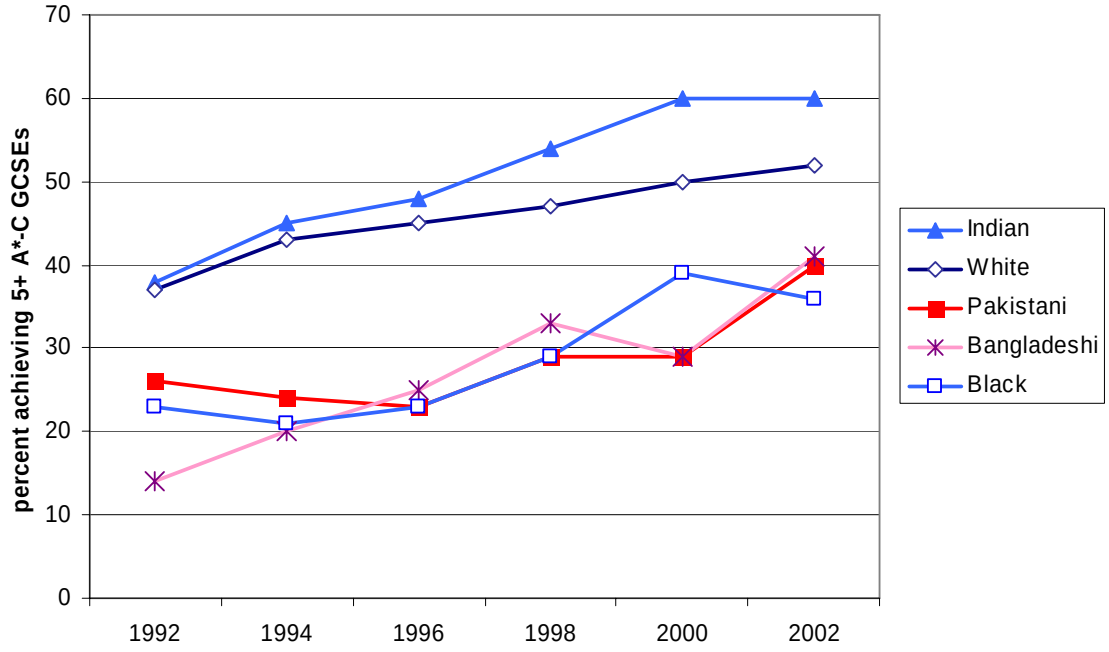
Table 9.1 Changes in GCSE attainment by ethnicity, England & Wales: 1988, 1995 and 1997 compared

Ethnic Group	Five or more higher grade passes			Improvement (+/-)		Attainment inequality relative to white performance
	1988	1995	1997	95-97	88-97	
White	26%	42%	44%	+2	+18	
Black	17%	21%	28%	+7	+11	Gap narrowed in latest figures (from 21 to 16 points) but grew overall (from 9 to 16 points).
Indian	23%	44%	49%	+5	+26	Inequality eliminated by 1995 and white level exceeded by 5 points in latest figures.
Pakistani	20%	22%	28%	+6	+8	Gap narrowed in latest figures (from 20 to 16 points) but grew overall (from 6 to 16 points).
Bangladeshi	13%	23%	32%	+9	+19	Gap narrowed in latest figures (from 19 to 12 points) and fell narrowly overall (from 13 to 12 points).

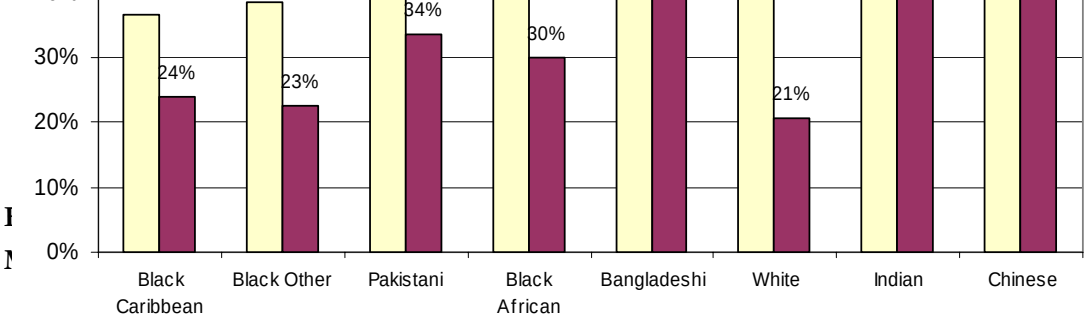
Source: Gillborn and Mirza (2000, Figure 2) from the Youth Cohort Study.

Note: Improvement and gap relative to white attainment is measured in percentage points between the relevant cohorts.

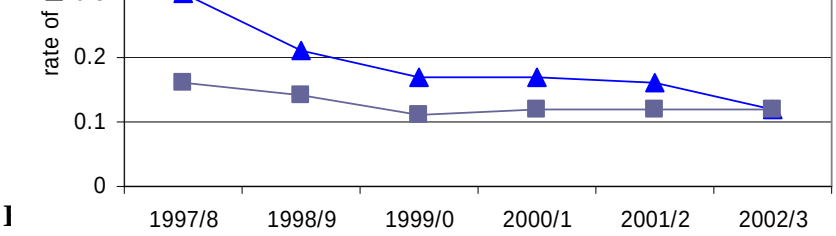
Figure 9.1 Proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs, grades A*-C, 1992-2002



Source: Based on Bhattacharya, Ison and Blair (2003), Figure 4; data from *Statistical First Release, Youth Cohort Study: the activities and experiences of 16 year olds: England and Wales 2002.*

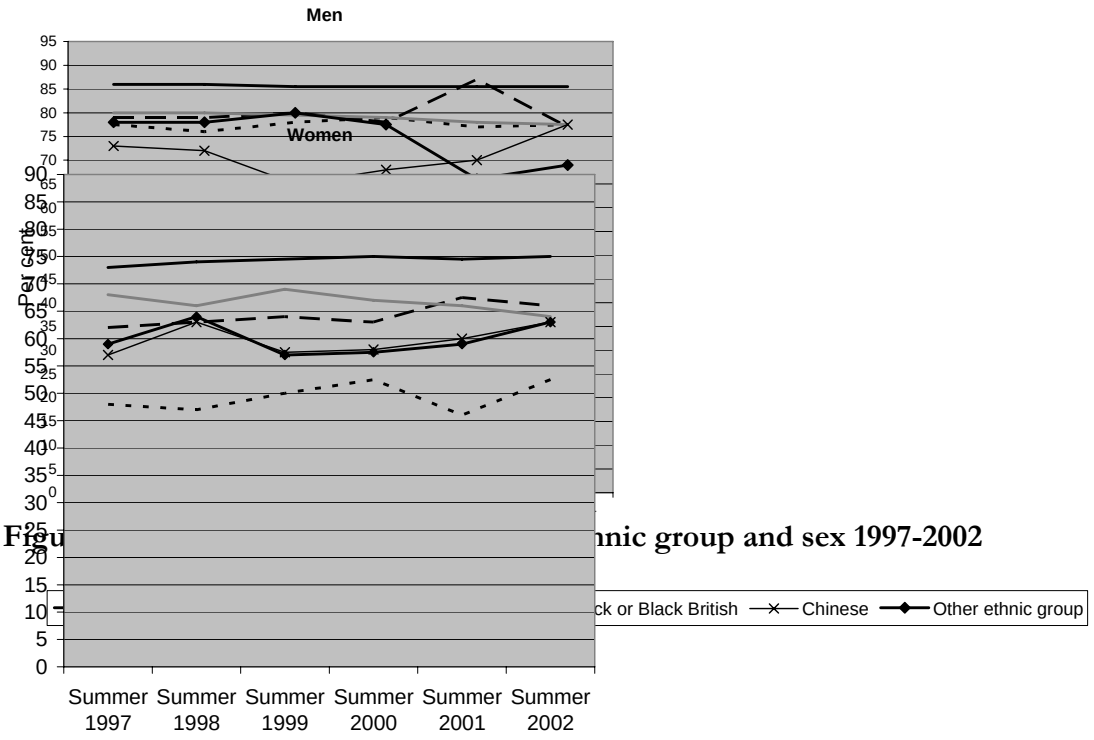


Source: Based on Bhattacharya, Ison and Blair (2003), Figure 5; updated using DfES (2004a).



Source: DfES (2004b) and earlier equivalents.

Note: 2002/3 data are provisional.



Figu nic group and sex 1997-2002

Source: Smith (2002) from the Labour Force Survey.

Note: Economic activity rates for people of working-age (men aged 16-64, women aged 16-59). Data for the period 1997 to 2000 are backcast.

Table 9.2 Male and female economic activity and unemployment rates, by ethnic group, Autumn 2003

Ethnic group	Economic activity	Unemployment
Men		
White	85.0	4.8
Black Caribbean	83.4	16.1
Black African	77.5	10.5
Chinese	71.4	-
Indian	82.1	7.7
Pakistani	72.3	10.9
Bangladeshi	76.4	21.5
Mixed	83.1	18.4
Women		
White	74.7	4.1
Black Caribbean	75.0	9.7
Black African	60.0	9.2
Chinese	58.7	-
Indian	68.7	10.4
Pakistani	34.2	13.2
Bangladeshi	26.6	-
Mixed	68.4	13.6

Source: Office for National Statistics (2004b).

Table 9.3
Share of Each Ethnic Group in the Bottom Income Fifth

Before Housing Costs

Ethnic group	*Excluding the self-employed*					*Including the self-employed*	
	1996/7	1997/8	1998/9	1999/2000	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3
White	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Black[1]	29	34	31	27	29	30	31
Caribbean				22	25	29	28
Non-Caribbean				34	34	31	35
Indian	31	28	27	32	31	24	21
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	73	58	61	64	64	60	66
Other[2]	31	33	31	29	32	29	25
All	**20**	**20**	**20**	**20**	**20**	**20**	**20**

After Housing Costs

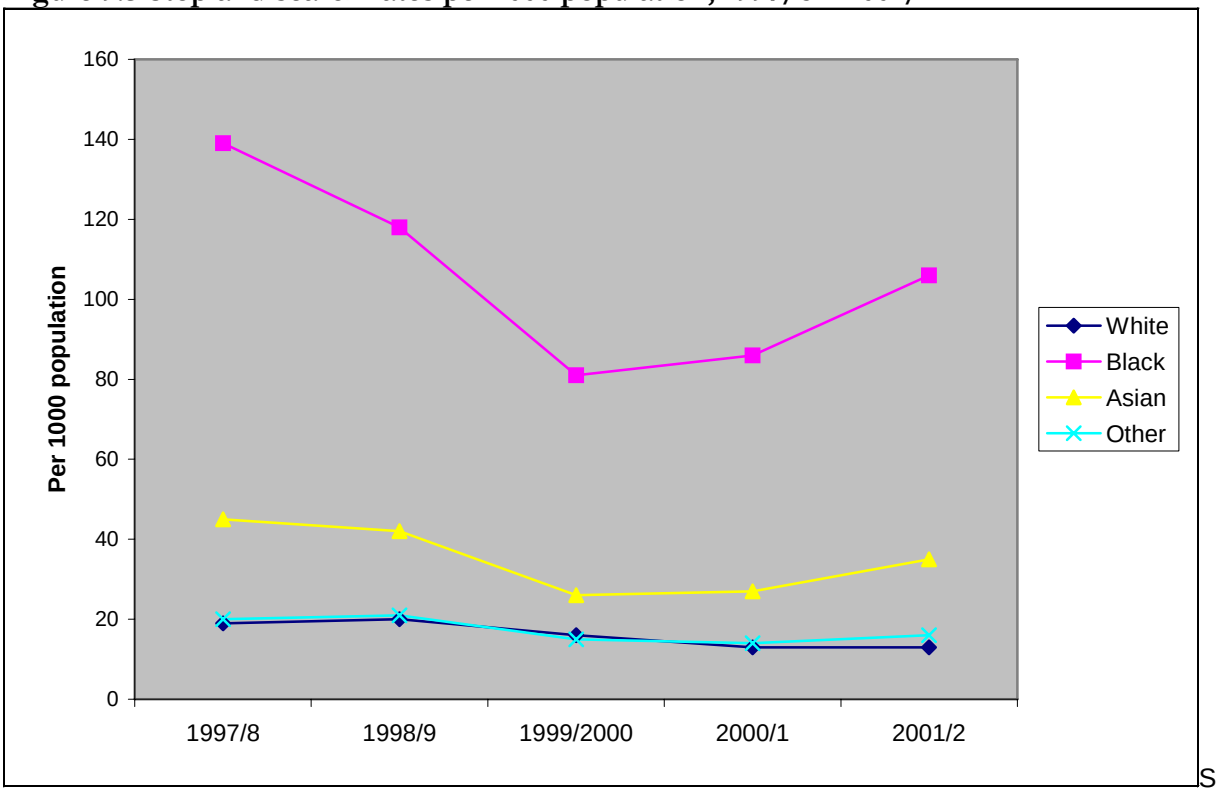
Ethnic group	*Excluding the self-employed*					*Including the self-employed*	
	1996/7	1997/8	1998/9	1999/2000	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3
White	18	18	19	18	18	18	18
Black[1]	39	42	40	35	37	38	36
Caribbean				26	29	34	31
Non-Caribbean				49	47	43	42
Indian	29	25	26	32	27	26	22
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	67	57	60	61	62	61	65
Other[2]	42	42	39	37	36	37	31
All	**20**	**20**	**20**	**20**	**20**	**20**	**20**

Source: DWP (2004) and earlier equivalents.

Notes:
1. For 1999/2000, 2000/1 and 2001/2, calculated as a weighted average of Black Caribbean and Black Non-Caribbean.
2. For 2002/3, calculated as a weighted average of Mixed, Asian (but not Indian, Pakistani/Bangladeshi) and Chinese and Other.
3. The presentation of these data in HBAI statistics changed in 2001/2 to include the self-employed.

4.

Figure 9.5 Stop and search rates per 1000 population, 1997/8 – 2001/2



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Source: Home Office (various) Section 95 statistics *Race and the Criminal Justice System.*

ENDNOTES

[1] It is acknowledged that the concepts of 'race' and ethnicity are socially constructed and contested. This chapter relies on the categorisation of ethnic groups according to the research and statistical material it reviews, recognising the pitfalls of designations sometimes far removed from self-perceptions of ethnicity and ethnic identity (see for example Fenton (1996) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993)).

[2] Both Jack Straw, then Home Secretary, and David Calvert-Smith, Director of Public Prosecutions, publicly announced that the organisations for which they had responsibility (the Home Office and the Crown Prosecution Service), were 'institutionally racist' (Straw 1999; *The Guardian*, Thursday July 26, 2001).

[3] Figures comparing economic activity and unemployment rates by ethnic origin for 1997 and 2003 are not available, because the Labour Force Survey changed ethnicity classifications in 2001 to be in line with the census.

[4] This section of the chapter draws heavily on the author's co-authored work with Ben Bowling (e.g. Phillips and Bowling (2003) and Bowling and Phillips (2003)).

[5] For a discussion of the experiences of minority ethnic communities in relation to these other areas of policing see Phillips and Bowling (2003).

[6] It also commissioned a programme of research on the issues of 'availability', public perspectives, the impact of stops and searches on deterrence, detection and intelligence-gathering, and police decision-making; findings are summarised in Miller, Quinton and Bland (2000).

[7] The mother of murdered black teenager Stephen Lawrence.

[8] Recall also Home Secretary David Blunkett's comment that he was worried about the term institutional racism deflecting attention from responsibility for eradicating racism at the individual level (speech to the Home Office Ethnic Network AGM, 14 January 2003).