

Anti-Oppressive Social Work

Preface

About this Book

There are two experiences which have led me to write this book. The first was growing up in Northern Ireland, particularly during the 1970s. The conflict in that part of the United Kingdom cost the lives of over 3,500 people and injured around 45,000. Discrimination, predominantly against Catholics in the public and private sectors, was widespread. The sectarian divide was also articulated through separate provision for Protestant and Catholic children, most of whom attended different schools and, if brought into care, were looked after in different residential homes. It was in my native Northern Ireland that I qualified as a social worker and subsequently worked as a practitioner in Belfast.

The second experience was my move in 1997 to West Africa where I was appointed Co-ordinator of Social Work at the University of Ghana. During my years in Ghana I became aware of the tensions between different ethnic communities. Some tribal groupings wielded more economic and political power than others. Occasionally, frictions flared into violent confrontation resulting in fatalities, the destruction of property, and families made destitute as they fled their villages to escape danger.

These diverse experiences of violence and inequality have made me reflect on my own social-work training and the extent to which it prepared me to meet these challenges. I have found it woefully lacking. Since the 1980s there has been a strong emphasis within social-work training on anti-racist practice. That focus has been exclusively defined by discrimination against *black* service-users by *white* social workers. This concept of racism has failed to embrace the complexities of ethnicity and the cultural differences between people, which lie behind these catch-all terms of *black* and *white*.

My own experiences convince me that to combat racism requires a more comprehensive understanding of discrimination than an exclusive focus on the *black/white* dichotomy. This book forms part of a small, though growing, number of texts which endeavour to improve anti-racist practice by introducing students and practitioners to the cultural backgrounds of ethnic communities living in the United Kingdom. I believe that cultural competence is a necessary and indispensable component of anti-racist practice.

Structure of the Book

Chapter One explores the nature of discrimination against people from ethnic minorities. Chapter Two explores the concepts of anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice and critically examines the meaning of 'race' and 'ethnicity'. Chapter Three examines the concept of cultural competence and proposes a new framework for social-work practice with people from ethnic minorities. Chapters Four to Seven detail research conducted with the main minority groups in Britain, while Chapter Eight explores the cultural backgrounds of economic migrants and refugees living in the United Kingdom. The cultural values and lifestyles of each ethnic community are explored and consideration is given to how these differ from family to family, change over time and are often modified through contact with other communities in the United Kingdom.

At the end of Chapters Four to Eight there is a worked scenario, which explores how a culturally competent practitioner might intervene with service-users and carers from minority communities. They examine how cultural knowledge deployed through an open-minded engagement with service-users and carers can achieve culturally appropriate services. These scenarios are also designed to demonstrate the interconnections between cultural competence and anti-oppressive practice. Each chapter concludes with a short list of further reading to broaden cultural knowledge and deepen critical thinking.

The Conclusion sets out to reconcile cultural knowledge with the practitioner's own heritage and offers guidance on how to improve awareness of one's own cultural influences. This final section also details the major pitfalls practitioners need to avoid when addressing culture in social-work practice.

The Use of the Terms Black and White

It is my contention in this book that the use of *black* and *white* as all-inclusive terms for people disguises important aspects of ethnicity and cultural heritage. However, the first two chapters of this book do employ these catch-all terms. This is because a number of the research studies cited in Chapter One make distinctions between *black* and *white* groupings. I have also used the terms *black* and *white* in Chapter Two as I am critiquing their use in anti-racist theory. For the rest of the book these terms are not used and are replaced by references to people from different ethnic minorities.

The Choice of Ethnic Minorities for this Book

Much controversy has surrounded the categorisation of ethnicities. Different ways of conceptualising ethnic minorities produce different versions of their experiences.

Up until the 1980s national statistics identified ethnic minorities using very broad catch-all terms, typically dividing them into 'Asians' and 'West Indians'. Within these groupings there was no differentiation between those who immigrated to the United Kingdom and those born in the country. Nor were such statistics disaggregated for age or gender. Modood (1992) criticises this method of data collection and analysis because it creates a crude dichotomy between the circumstances of black and white citizens. This in turn disguises the divergent experiences of ethnic minority groups, which can be further subdivided on the basis of age, gender, language, religion, mixed parentage and ethnic self-identification.

Surveys such as the landmark *Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities* in 1997, based around family origin, and the 2001 Census, based on self-identified ethnicity, chosen from a pre-specified list, have endeavoured to refine the process of categorisation. The methods used in these two instances are not above reproach. Recognising the unavoidable imperfections of classifying ethnic groups, this text devotes a chapter to each of the main ethnic communities appearing in the 2001 Census. It endeavours to counteract the homogenising tendency of categorisation in the 2001 Census by highlighting the cultural and religious diversity within each ethnic group. Attention is also given to the differing experiences of ethnicity and racism due to age, gender and disability. In addition, Chapter Eight focuses on white minorities from Eastern Europe and countries of the former Soviet Union alongside black minorities from the African continent.

There is a fine line between drawing on background knowledge of a particular ethnic community to inform practice and making perfunctory stereotypical assumptions about the values of individual families and service-users. Chapters Four to Eight are organised around the main ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom. They are not definitive accounts of different minority groups and only provide information about *some* of the cultural influences which *may* have a bearing on the perspectives and needs of *some* service-users and carers. Taken altogether the chapters are designed to alert practitioners to the range of issues which can bear on the needs of service-users and carers from minority communities.

1

Racism and Ethnic Minorities

A Brief History of Ethnic Minorities in the United Kingdom

Ethnic minorities have formed part of British society since the sixteenth century. In the wake of the slave trade, and later employment as seamen, those of African descent established small but notable communities in the port cities of Bristol, Liverpool, Cardiff and London. Not until the years immediately after the Second World War and the critical need for labour did the United Kingdom witness large-scale immigration from New Commonwealth countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent. The labour shortage was acute in unskilled manual employment and low-paid service-sector jobs. Then, as now, these were taken up by recently arrived immigrants while members of the majority white population moved to better paid employment and working conditions. Initially, government policy facilitated the wave of post-war migration under the British Nationality Act 1948, which granted citizens of Commonwealth countries the unfettered right to enter, work and settle with their families in the United Kingdom. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s migrants continued to arrive and establish themselves mainly in Greater London and the principal manufacturing cities of England.

The introduction of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962, changed government policy and sought to limit the numbers of Commonwealth immigrants by establishing stricter controls on who could enter the United Kingdom to work or reside. Immigration legislation enacted during the 1960s and 1970s was chiefly aimed at reducing the numbers from visible ethnic-minority groups entering Britain as opposed to white migrants from Australia, Canada and South Africa (Mason, 2000: 27; Clayton, 2004: 6–7). By the 1960s immigration for visible minorities was largely confined to dependants joining a male family member already settled in the United Kingdom. These ever more restrictive immigration controls were driven by concerns over race relations.

As early as 1958 tensions between white working-class communities and first-generation immigrants in London resulted in the Notting Hill riots. Conservative members of parliament, most prominently Enoch Powell, began to make populist pronouncements on the dangers of permitting entry into the United Kingdom of large numbers of Black and Asian immigrants. It was alleged that they would take the jobs of the indigenous white population and obtain entitlement to public-sector housing and welfare benefits without contributing to the economy (Schoen, 1977). The Government White Paper *Immigration from the Commonwealth* (Home Office, 1965) gave expression to this concern. It declared that the presence in Britain 'of nearly one million immigrants from the Commonwealth with different social and cultural backgrounds raises a number of problems and creates various social tensions in those areas where they are concentrated'. Implicit in this assertion was the anxiety that large ethnic minority populations would retain their own identities, hindering their assimilation into mainstream British society. Control of immigration therefore became closely linked to good race relations.

These assumptions, widely held by both politicians and the general public, resulted in viewing immigration as a problem rather than as a contribution to the economy or cultural diversity. In response to this climate of opinion, legislation enacted during the 1970s and 1980s progressively limited migration from the New Commonwealth, including family reunion. By the 1990s concern over the growing ethnic-minority population in Britain emerged anew as anxiety over the large numbers seeking asylum. In fact, applications for asylum (excluding dependants) rose from around 33,000 per year in 1994 to 84,000 by 2002 (Home Office, 2004: 1). To put this into perspective, even the figures of 2002 represent less than one asylum seeker per 1,000 people who visit the United Kingdom each year, either on business, vacation or to work (CIH, 2003: 4).

The Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951

This international accord is commonly known as the Refugee Convention and was originally drawn up after the Second World War to safeguard displaced peoples across Europe. It continues to provide the primary source of law worldwide for the protection of refugees. Article 33 places a legal duty on each signatory to the Convention to provide a safe haven for those forced to leave their own countries under the following circumstances.

No Contracting State shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. (Art. 33(1))

Nations, such as the United Kingdom, which have signed up to the Refugee Convention are obliged to grant asylum to refugees fleeing persecution in their own

countries. Recent legislation has made the settlement of asylum seekers in the United Kingdom more difficult than previously. The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 limit asylum seekers' right of appeal against refusal of their application and reduce access to welfare benefits. They also increase the power of the Home Office to deport 'failed' applicants from the country. These statutes were the product of a public perception that the United Kingdom was being swamped by asylum seekers who were invariably making bogus applications, claiming welfare benefits and absconding before they could be removed from Britain (Clayton, 2004: 10–11). Since the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001, according to Clayton (2004: 16), the prevention of terrorism has become a covert objective of legislation relating to refugees. This is achieved through the ever greater statutory powers of the state to control, detain and remove asylum seekers.

While the term 'ethnic minorities' has become synonymous with black and Asian minorities it must not be forgotten that there are numerous people from white minority groups living in the United Kingdom. Some of these are long established, for example people from Ireland have been migrating to Britain for many centuries. Others, such as Jews and gypsies fleeing persecution, came to settle in England during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. More recently, refugees from the Balkan wars of the 1990s and economic migrants from former Eastern Bloc countries, which are now members of the European Union, have increased the size of white ethnic communities in the United Kingdom. There is also increasing movement of people from countries of the former Soviet Union to member states of the European Union. Such individuals are not automatically protected from inequality by virtue of their colour. Many are confronted by the same prejudices, discrimination and immigration controls as are visible minorities.

The 2001 Census

The 2001 Census surveyed the whole of the United Kingdom population and obtained information on people's ethnic background. It established that out of a total population of approximately 59 million 7.9% were from ethnic minorities. Of those describing themselves as from an ethnic minority:

- 50% identified as Asian
- 25% identified as Black
- 15% identified as mixed (dual heritage)
- 5% identified as Chinese

Almost half of those belonging to ethnic minorities live in London while the rest are concentrated in the major cities of the Midlands and the north of England, reflecting historical patterns of settlement. But this disguises the fact that 78% of 'Black Africans' and 61% of 'Black Caribbeans' live in the capital. By contrast, only 19% of Pakistanis reside in London with 21% settled in the West Midlands and a further 20% in

Yorkshire and the Humber. Different minorities have contrasting settlement patterns which have been strongly influenced by the location of first-generation migrants. The distribution of ethnic-minority populations in the United Kingdom is not only a result of original migration and settlement patterns. The dispersal policy introduced under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 relocates asylum seekers from Greater London and the south east to the regions. The National Asylum Support Service arranges for refugees to be accommodated by private- and public-sector landlords in 'cluster areas' within each region on a 'no choice' basis. This has increased the presence of ethnic minorities in towns located away from their established communities and thus in areas which can leave them relatively isolated.

Race and Discrimination

The modern concept of race came to prominence during the nineteenth century. It was based on scientific claims that biological differences explained the diversity of peoples. Such ideas underpinned Social Darwinism which, based loosely on Darwin's theory of evolution, asserted that 'survival of the fittest' justified the dominance of some races over others. Conquest and domination was also rationalised through the belief that European peoples were mentally and physically superior to those of Africa and Asia. This same ideology was used to lend credence to the colonial exploits of European nations and the subjugation of peoples across the world (Miles & Brown, 2004: 37). Social Darwinism was again invoked by the Nazi regime during the twentieth century to legitimise the extermination of Jews in Europe. Public disquiet over colonialism and revulsion at the Holocaust discredited the biological concept of race (Miles & Brown, 2004: 59–60).

Social scientists and policy-makers have shifted attention away from *race* to the notion of *ethnicity*. In a frequently quoted definition, Smith (1986: 192) describes an ethnic group as 'a population whose members believe that in some sense they share common descent and a common cultural heritage or traditions, and who are so regarded by others'.

The Parekh Report

This was the report of a Commission consisting of 23 distinguished persons from different community backgrounds created in 1998 by the Runnymede Trust, an independent think-tank dedicated to advancing racial justice in Britain. The Commission was required to 'analyse the current state of multi-ethnic Britain and to propose ways of countering racial discrimination and disadvantage' (Parekh, 2000: viii). The Commission defined the nature of contemporary racism:

It may be based on colour and physical features or on culture, nationality and way of life; it may affirm equality of human worth but implicitly deny this by insisting on

the absolute superiority of a particular culture; it may admit equality up to a point but impose a glass ceiling higher up. Whatever its subtle disguises and forms, it is deeply divisive, intolerant of differences, source of much human suffering and inimical to the common sense of belonging lying at the basis of every stable political community. (Parekh, 2000: ix)

Contemporary racism has also kept pace with changing concepts. Discarding racial prejudice grounded in biology, the 'new racism' which emerged in the late twentieth century relies on the idea of cultural incompatibility (Barker, 1981). Instead of an appeal to 'race', the beliefs and customs of different ethnic groups are characterised as irreconcilable with those of the majority white British population. In other words, those using cultural incompatibility as a justification for curbing immigration have made their language neutral, when in fact their target is still visible minorities (Miles & Brown, 2004: 112). On closer inspection it is arguable that the 'new racism' is simply camouflage for the crudity of biological racism. The preface to Parekh (2000) captures the multifaceted nature of present-day racism

Parekh (2000) distinguishes between street racism and institutional racism. The first consists of overt racism such as abusive language, criminal damage and physical assault – acts usually perpetrated in public spaces. Modood et al. (1997) found in a survey of over 5,000 people from ethnic-minority households that 12% of them had suffered racial abuse within the previous year. For 1% of all those questioned this consisted of a physical assault, while for 2% their property was damaged in a racist attack. In the same survey one in five white people admitted to being racially prejudiced against those of Caribbean origin and one in four against those of Asian descent. Addressing the police force, a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary stressed that '...to be a victim because of skin colour multiplies the emotional and psychological hurt well beyond that of the physical pain' (Blakey & Crompton, 2000: 45). According to Parekh (2000: 128), this is because racism is an attack upon 'the values, loyalties and commitments central to a person's sense of identity and self-worth – their family, honour, friends, culture, heritage, religion, community, history'. This is particularly true for Asian Muslims who, after the destruction of the Twin Towers in 2001 and the suicide bombings in London during 2005, are increasingly subject to Islamophobia. This form of racism is based on colour, religion and the belief that the Muslim community supports terrorism. Police recorded over 1,200 suspected Islamophobic incidents nationwide in the first three weeks after the bombings on London's transport system on 7 July 2005. These consisted of verbal abuse, arson attacks on mosques and physical assaults on people suspected of being Muslim (*Observer*, 2005; *Guardian*, 2005). The Muslim Safety Forum reported a 500% increase in 'faith-based' attacks across London during July 2005 as compared with the same period in the previous year (BBC, 2005a). More wide reaching than the racist acts perpetrated by individuals is institutional racism, which received unprecedented public attention during the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry

Stephen Lawrence, a black youth, was stabbed to death in the street on 22 April 1993 by a group of five white youths in an unprovoked racist attack. The ensuing police investigation produced just a single witness and no one was publicly prosecuted for the murder. Stephen's parents made a number of complaints because of the slow progress of the case. As a result of media attention, a public inquiry was opened in 1997 to examine the failure of the police to properly investigate the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence. The Inquiry concluded that racist attitudes within the Metropolitan Police Service had obstructed an efficient investigation. It also produced a comprehensive and oft-quoted definition of institutional racism:

The collective failure of an organisation 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 behaviours which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (Macpherson, 1999: para. 6.34)

Institutional racism can take many forms. It includes negative stereotyping of people from ethnic minorities, patronising language or actions due to ignorance of a person's culture, the inequitable treatment of people from ethnic minorities and the failure to take into consideration an individual's cultural background. Institutional racism can be inferred from the overwhelming evidence revealed by national statistics and research studies on the experience of ethnic minorities in relation to education, employment, housing, health and criminal-justice.

Education and Ethnic Minorities

It is important to recognise that table 1.1 below does not present a simple picture of underachievement by black and Asian students relative to their white peer group. There is plainly divergence between the genders and various ethnic minorities in terms of academic accomplishment. Overall, students with Indian and Chinese backgrounds are higher academic achievers than those who are White British. Within these ethnic groups, females tend to obtain better results compared with males. Black Caribbean males do particularly badly academically. Those with mixed white and Caribbean heritage also do poorly, compared with white pupils. Although these statistics indicate that discrimination contributes to the underachievement of students from ethnic minorities, there are evidently other processes at work.

Initially, government policy addressed poor academic results among ethnic minorities by assuming that these were the consequence of cultural deficits such as family structure

Table 1.1 2004 GCSE results for ethnic minorities

Ethnic Group and Gender	Percentage of 15-year-olds in England achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A–C in 2004
Chinese females	79
Indian females	72
Chinese males	70
Indian males	62
White British females	57
Pakistani females	52
White British males	47
White & Black Caribbean females	45
Black Caribbean females	44
Pakistani males	39
White & Black Caribbean males	34
Black Caribbean males	27

Source: Department for Education and Skills (2005a: Table 3)

and customs. The official response was to assimilate pupils into the education system by insisting that they adjust. This strategy was part of a wider agenda to absorb ethnic minorities into mainstream society and ensure that they did not remain distinctive from the majority white population (Gillborn, 1990: 142–6). The failure of this policy to improve the academic performance of ethnic-minority pupils led to the adoption of multicultural education which explicitly acknowledges and values diverse cultural backgrounds.

However, evidence suggests that students from ethnic minorities are still treated differently on the basis of stereotypes, which many teachers from the white majority hold. For example, African-Caribbean boys are assumed to be trouble-makers or thought only able to excel on the sports field, while Asian girls are supposed to be passive and compliant. These stereotypes alter the behaviour of teachers in ways which reinforce underachievement for African-Caribbean boys and Pakistani or Bangladeshi girls (Gillborn, 1990: 113–14; Troyna & Carrington, 1990: 50–5). Labelling of black males as disruptive also explains the disproportionate numbers of black pupils who are excluded from schools.

School exclusions

Figures produced by the Social Exclusion Unit show that:

- 0.58% of African-Caribbean pupils were excluded
- 0.15% of White pupils were excluded
- 0.04% of Indian pupils were excluded
- 0.03% of Chinese pupils were excluded

(SEU, 2000a: Table 2)

A greater percentage of African-Caribbean pupils are excluded than are white pupils. It is also important to note that children from other ethnic minorities, such as those of Indian or Chinese heritage, were actually less likely to be excluded than white children. Clearly there are differences in the experiences of pupils from ethnic minorities in terms of academic achievement and school exclusions. They cannot simply be lumped in together and assumed to be subject to the same kinds of discrimination.

Despite evidence of racism in schools (Gillborn, 1990; Mirza, 1992), Asian and black students in the 18–24 years age range are actually over-represented in universities as a proportion of their numbers in the population. Overall, those from ethnic minorities are 50% more likely to obtain a university place than applicants from the majority white community. This reflects the perseverance of individual students from ethnic-minority backgrounds to achieve university-entry requirements. It also hides the fact that the vast majority of ethnic-minority students are concentrated in the 'new universities' rather than the more prestigious 'red brick' universities which can in turn reduce their career prospects (Modood, 2003: 61). In terms of achievement in higher education, 14% of those identifying as Chinese obtained a higher degree while only 5.1% of the white population held such a qualification. The proportion of the working population who were black, Asian or of mixed heritage holding a higher degree was similar to that of the white majority (Department for Education and Skills, 2005b: Table 1).

Employment and Ethnic Minorities

The first generation of post-war immigrant workers from South Asia and the Caribbean were predominantly from rural backgrounds and tended to be concentrated in low-paid jobs in transport, the textile industries and the health service. Their adult children, although born and educated in Britain, continue to be over-represented in unskilled and semi-skilled work. During the 1970s 'African-Asian' refugees expelled from the newly independent states of East Africa also arrived in Britain. Many of these refugees were highly educated professionals and came to Britain with substantial economic means at their disposal. Often they set up their own successful business enterprises. Highly qualified asylum seekers and economic migrants continue to settle in the United Kingdom, bringing with them considerable experience. Despite the advantages of many people from ethnic minorities, given their educational and professional qualifications, they experience higher unemployment rates and lower-paid occupations than the majority white population. Analysis of Labour Force Survey figures by SEU (2000b: 92) show that while less than 4% of the white population with a degree were out of work, this rose to 6% of Asian graduates and around 12% of African Caribbeans.

The Parekh Report

The Commission identified the disadvantaged position of ethnic minorities in the workforce and summarised their position as:

...over-represented in low-paid and insecure jobs; [they] have lower wages than the national average; and often work antisocial hours in unhealthy or dangerous environments. Many are not working at all. The underlying causes include industrial restructuring and a range of discriminatory practices by employers. Among individuals who are in work, many have good or excellent qualifications. They nevertheless have greater difficulty than white people with the same qualifications in gaining the most sought-after jobs – the top 10 per cent of jobs are denied to them by various subtle glass ceilings. (Parekh, 2000: 192–3)

As revealed in Table 1.2, there are substantial differences in unemployment rates as between ethnic groups and the majority white population. These figures also disguise the higher levels of part-time employment among some ethnic groups. Part-time work among men from the Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black African communities is two to three times higher than among white males. For women, part-time employment is much more evenly distributed across ethnic groups, with around one-third of all women undertaking work on this basis. Doubtless this reflects their greater domestic and child-care responsibilities (Heath & Cheung, 2006: 13). It is also significant that 23% of those identifying as ethnically Chinese and 25% of those identifying as Pakistani are self-employed as compared with just under 7% of white people. This substantially reduces potential unemployment among these ethnic groups and thus it being reflected in official statistics. Furthermore, as compared with white people, unemployment rates among ethnic minorities are 'hyper-cyclical', meaning that in times of recession jobs are lost to those from ethnic minorities at a much faster rate than to those from the majority white population. This is because they are over-represented in casual and unskilled or semi-skilled jobs which tend to be lost first in times of recession (Jones, 1993: 112–23).

There are a number of explanations as to why people from ethnic minorities do less well in the job market. There is evidence that, for some, poorer language skills in English are an obstacle to employment (Gray et al., 1993; Modood et al., 1997: 87). Though this fails to explain the finding that there is no appreciable difference in the employment prospects of first- and second-generation immigrants, despite the fact that those growing up in Britain will almost certainly have fluency in English (Heath & McMahon, 1997; Heath & Cheung, 2006: 2). Nor does it explain why those from Indian and Chinese minorities are better qualified than those from the majority white community and yet are not proportionately represented in higher-paid occupations (Parekh, 2000: 194).

Explaining these contradictions, an important study by Brown and Gray (1985) found that, despite the Race Relations Act 1976 outlawing racial discrimination, many

Table 1.2 Unemployment 2001–2004

Ethnicity	Men (%)	Women (%)
White	5	4
Indian	6	7
Bangladeshi	17	13
Pakistani	13	15
Chinese	4	6
Black Caribbean	15	11
Black African	14	12

Source: Heath & Cheung (2006)

employers continued to treat those from ethnic minorities less favourably than white people. The research surveyed employer replies to job applications and found that 90% of white applicants received a positive response as compared with only 63% of Asians and African Caribbeans. A later study by Simpson and Stevenson (1994) revealed that the probability of a white applicant being called to a job interview was twice that of an Asian or African-Caribbean applicant.

Housing and Ethnic Minorities

Household size together with the tenure, location and condition of housing are closely linked to the wealth and health of family members. Large household size combined with low income may create problems of overcrowding. For example, the average Bangladeshi and Pakistani household is twice as large as that for African Caribbeans and members of the majority white population (GHS, 2003). While cultural factors and personal preference may account in part for larger family groupings, it is not coincidental that 60% of Bangladeshi and Pakistani households are on low income. This compares with just 20% of white people (National Statistics Online, 2005). Tenure is also significant given that a substantial amount of money can be locked up in the capital value of an owner-occupied home in contrast to rented accommodation.

The rates of owner occupation are highest among the majority white and Indian populations. This contrasts with African Caribbeans, only half of whom own their homes with under half renting from the council or a housing association. This compares to just one-fifth of the British white population who rent from the council or a housing association. It is notable that just one-tenth of those from Indian communities rent from the social sector, that is to say half the proportion of the white population. It is important to note from Table 1.3 that there is considerable variation in the housing-tenure patterns of different ethnic groups. For example, there is a much higher level of owner-occupation and a lower level of social housing among the Indian community than among other ethnic-minority groups. At the other end of the scale,

Table 1.3 Housing tenure by ethnic group

Tenure ethnic group	Owner-occupied (%)	Rented from council/housing association (%)	Privately rented (%)
White British	71	20	9
Indian	78	10	12
Pakistani & Bangladeshi	62	20	18
Black Caribbean	48	45	6
Black African	26	51	23

Source: GHS (2003)

one-quarter of those from black African communities own their own homes with half renting from the local authority or a housing association.

Owner-occupation among the white population is strongly associated with greater wealth secured through the capital value of a home. Historically, for many ethnic-minority families owner-occupation has been a response to discrimination in both the public and private rental sectors. Extended families have clubbed together to purchase their own dwelling or utilised wider social networks within their ethnic community to obtain finance and contacts. Much of this housing is located in impoverished inner-city areas and is in disrepair. Low income among many ethnic minorities may further contribute to the poor maintenance of such dwellings. Owner-occupation for substantial numbers of ethnic-minority families actually results in more overcrowding and poorer housing conditions than renting from the local authority or a housing association (Mason, 2000: 81). Conversely, many households, particularly those from Indian and African-Asian groups, have been able to purchase detached and semi-detached properties and move to the suburbs (Modood et al., 1997: 222). Despite this progress, 56% of people from ethnic minorities live in the 44 most deprived local authority areas in the United Kingdom (SEU, 2000a: 17).

Typically, ethnic minorities are concentrated in particular inner-city areas. These have been popularly portrayed as segregated communities and ghettos of disadvantage. In these localities overcrowding, poor housing, unemployment, lack of amenity and high crime rates intersect. More recent research paints a different picture. In a comprehensive study, Modood et al. (1997) found that while there was evidence of segregation, this was not extreme. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis resided in local-authority wards where the average proportion of inhabitants from ethnic minorities was around one-third. For those of African-Caribbean descent the comparable figure was one-quarter. By contrast, Chinese households tended to live in wards where on average just one-seventh of the population was from ethnic minorities (Modood et al., 1997: 187). Discrimination by estate agents and public and private landlords in conjunction with low incomes have undoubtedly combined to restrict the housing options for people from ethnic minorities.

However, as Modood et al. (1997: 221) discovered, households also made active choices to reside close to kin or members of their own community. This is often to ensure mutual material and social support and for the reassurance of living in close proximity to others who share common linguistic, cultural and religious traditions.

Indeed, one of the reasons why homelessness tends to be a hidden problem among ethnic minorities is that many individuals and families depend on relations and wider social networks to provide accommodation in times of need (Chahal, 1999). The housing patterns of ethnic minorities are thus determined by interaction between the constraints posed by racism and low income, on the one hand, and positive choices to reside near members of one's own community, on the other hand.

The Benefits System and Ethnic Minorities

Craig and Rai (1996: 132–4), in their collation of the research, concluded that institutional racism, the failure of social-security agencies to translate information into minority-community languages or understand other cultures, and claimants' fear of the authorities explained the lower take-up of benefits by ethnic minorities. The Social Security Act 1986, which granted much greater discretion to staff in deciding claims, increased the potential for racial discrimination (Craig & Rai, 1996: 132). On the other side of the equation, people speaking English as a second or third language, or who could not speak it at all, were reliant on receiving information from relatives and friends (Craig & Rai, 1996: 135). Increasingly stringent immigration and residency rules regarding entitlement and anxiety over the action of immigration officers also reduce benefit claims from ethnic minorities (Craig & Rai, 1996: 132).

Difficult encounters with welfare agencies are one aspect of the low take-up of benefits by people from ethnic minorities. Another factor is the reluctance of some members of ethnic communities to claim benefits from the state. For example, many people among the Chinese community prefer to rely on kin support if at all possible rather than resorting to state benefits. Indeed, some may even feel ashamed to have to rely on the state rather than their family. For a number of individuals of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent claiming benefit is associated with charity for the poor and therefore perceived as being only for those in extreme need. Some individuals felt stigmatised by other members of their ethnic community for claiming benefit. In particular, their relatives could come in for criticism for failing to adequately support them. But, where individuals had made national-insurance contributions, there is often a sense of entitlement to benefit. In these circumstances, the complexity of claiming benefits, the patronising attitudes of staff and a lack of interpreters dissuaded a number of people from applying (Law et al., 1994). Those unused to making their own financial decisions or interacting with people outside their kin group or community (most often women) are likely to feel distressed and possibly overwhelmed (Barnard & Pettigrew, 2003: 4).

Pensions are problematical for many individuals from ethnic-minority groups for a number of reasons. First, the high rates of unemployment among some minority communities relative to the majority white population means that many do not have a personal pension, nor will they have contributed towards a state pension. Secondly, the nature of low-paid and casual work which most first-generation immigrants had to accept regardless of their qualifications also means that a substantial proportion were

Table 1.4 Pension coverage among ethnic minorities

Ethnic minority	Pension coverage* for men (%)	Pension coverage* for women (%)
White	61	37
Indian	46	26
Black	35	30
Chinese/Other	33	23
Pakistani	17	6
Bangladeshi	9	3

*Includes those contributing to private or occupational pensions

Source: Adapted from Ginn & Arber (2001: 528)

not able to contribute to a pension scheme. Thirdly, self-employment or employment in family-owned businesses may also disadvantage older people in pension terms. This is because many will have made no pension provision, while others have not been able to depend on an employer's contribution to an occupational pension topping up their own payments. Consequently, older people from ethnic minorities have less income available from personal or occupational pension schemes and therefore are more reliant on means-tested benefits than are those from the white majority community (Ginn & Arber, 2001: 522). The large-scale analysis of pension coverage among men and women aged 20–59 years conducted by Ginn and Arber (2001) discovered differences between genders and ethnic groups.

It is evident from Table 1.4 that men in all ethnic groups are more likely than women to be in a pension scheme. However, there are substantial differences in the proportions of people from ethnic minorities contributing to a pension. For example, 35% of men and 30% of women among the African and African-Caribbean communities are in a pension scheme compared with only 9% of Bangladeshi men and just 3% of Bangladeshi women. These revealing statistics reflect the different employment profiles of the various minority communities. They also demonstrate that older people among the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, particularly women, are likely to be the most financially disadvantaged in retirement.

Health and Ethnic Minorities

Research has consistently revealed positive correlations between ill-health, unemployment, poverty and poor housing conditions (Mason, 2000: 92). It is therefore not surprising to find that ethnic minorities are at greater risk of illness than the population as a whole. Table 1.5 presents results from a national survey as to the risk of a person from a given ethnic minority suffering ill-health.

Most striking is the much higher risk of ill-health among Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities as compared with the rest of the population. Both men and women in these minority groups are three to four times more likely to rate their health as bad or very bad

Table 1.5 Self-assessed health among ethnic minorities

Ethnic groups	Standardised risk ratio for males	Standardised risk ratio for females
General population	1.0	1.0
Indian	1.6	2.6
Pakistani	2.9	3.6
Bangladeshi	3.9	3.3
Black Caribbean	1.2	1.8
Chinese	1.1	0.9

Source: Department of Health (2001a)

compared with the general population. These same two ethnic minorities experience the highest rates of unemployment and the lowest incomes. Indeed, all those from ethnic-minority groups (with the exception of Chinese communities) are at greater risk of sickness than the general population. Nazroo (1997), in his analysis of a national survey, found that if adjustment was made for social class, housing and standard of living, then the disparity in the chances of becoming ill between the white population and ethnic minorities was substantially reduced. Aside from a correlation with poverty, research studies reveal a linkage between racial harassment, increased levels of stress and a higher incidence of ill-health (Nazroo, 2003: 100–1). A comprehensive review of research on ethnic-minority health was conducted by Smaje (1995), who found that most studies failed to take into account institutional racism and wider socio-economic inequalities when examining referral rates and service provision for ethnic minorities. These studies challenge the dominant view that there is a race factor determining the health outcomes for different ethnic communities. Only in very few cases, for example the higher incidence of sickle-cell anaemia among African and Caribbean peoples, has incontrovertible evidence established that a disease has a purely genetic cause.

Most studies on the incidence of mental illness in ethnic groups have relied on admission rates to hospitals. By contrast, the EMPIRIC (Ethnic Minority Psychiatric Illness Rates in the Community) survey investigated prevalence rates of psychiatric illness among a random sample of those living in the community. No statistically significant differences in the incidence of psychotic illnesses among ethnic minorities compared with the white majority population were found. Nor were there any marked differences in the prevalence of common mental disorders (i.e. depression, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder) among different minorities or between them and the white population (Sproston & Nazroo, 2002). Yet, ethnic minorities are over-represented among those diagnosed with a mental disorder or admitted to psychiatric wards. For example, African-Caribbean men are five times more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia than are white males. Asian men are three times more likely than white males to be so diagnosed. Similar findings have been collated for women (Mason, 2000: 98). Proportionately, more individuals from ethnic minorities are compulsorily subject to detention and treatment under the Mental Health Act 1983 than are white people (NIMHE, 2003: 19).

The explanation for the marked differences between the diagnosis and treatment of those from ethnic minorities in contrast to the majority white population is now a

matter of considerable controversy. Diagnosis of a mental disorder is dependent on the observation of the behaviour and the self-report of the person being assessed. Therefore, it is argued that racial stereotypes play a substantial role in the assessment of mental health among ethnic minorities (Knowles, 1991; Sashidharan & Francis, 1993). The pervasive labelling of African-Caribbean men as 'aggressive' would explain why they are three times more likely to be compulsorily detained under the Mental Health Act 1983. Once detained, there is a higher probability that they will be identified as violent, kept in secure units or special hospitals and receive invasive treatments such as major tranquillisers and electro-convulsive therapy (Smaje, 1995: 66).

The Criminal-Justice System and Ethnic Minorities

People from ethnic minorities are over-represented in the criminal-justice system. Drawing together research findings and Home Office statistics, Mason (2000: 105–9) reveals the inequitable treatment of white suspects and offenders compared with those from ethnic minorities. Under the 'stop-and-search' powers of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, black people are five times more likely to be stopped by police than white people. A breakdown of more recent figures from the Criminal Justice System Race Unit (CJS, 2006: v) found that under s. 1 and s. 60 of the 1984 Act, black people are respectively six and fourteen times more likely to be stopped and searched compared to white people. Statistics for those of Asian origin reveal that they are twice as likely to be stopped and searched under s. 1 and six times as likely to be so under s. 60 compared with white people. Around one in ten people are arrested in these circumstances, but these are disproportionately from ethnic-minority populations. Aside from arrests under 'stop-and-search', black people are on average five times, and Asians three times, more likely than members of the white population to be arrested in other circumstances.

Once under arrest a person can be informally dealt with, cautioned or detained. Home Office figures show that black people are less likely to be cautioned as opposed to being charged than white people or Asians. If brought before the court, a black person has between a 5% and 7.6% greater chance of receiving a custodial sentence than a white offender. Those of Asian descent are actually less likely to be sent to prison than are white people, although this finding varies across the country. If a black or Asian offender is sentenced to prison, the length of their term is likely to be longer than that for a white individual (Mason, 2000: 105–9). Home Office figures show that this general pattern is the same for both men and women. People from ethnic minorities account for 18% of males in prison and 24% of females even though they comprise only 7.9% of the population as a whole (SEU, 2000a: 34; National Statistics, 2003). Drawing together national statistics, Parekh (2000: 130) noted that black people were six times more likely to be in prison than white people. Given this overall picture, it is not surprising to discover that in regular national surveys around one-third of people from ethnic-minority groups express the view that they would be treated less

favourably by the criminal-justice system than those who are white (CJS, 2006: vi). Mason (2000: 108) characterises these instances of discrimination as a 'process of cumulative disadvantage in which differences of treatment at successive stages of the criminal justice system mount up to generate significant differences between ethnic groups in their representation in the prison population'.

A number of explanations account for the over-representation of ethnic minorities at every level in the criminal-justice system. The Report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry made detailed examination of police attitudes towards people from ethnic minority communities. It concluded that the disparity in stop-and-search figures across different ethnic communities was due to racist stereotyping. Such stereotyping within the police force went unchallenged through lack of training on race relations or cultural awareness (Macpherson, 1999: para. 6.45). By pooling the research on discrimination within the criminal-justice system Mason (2000: 110–16) identifies a number of other factors. These include the role of the media in caricaturing people from ethnic minorities in ways which produce moral panics. For example, young black men are consistently portrayed on television and in the newspapers as aggressive and responsible for a large proportion of rapes, muggings and violent crime. In fact, more people from the majority white community commit these crimes. Negative stereotypes of this kind pressure the police to act while at the same time shaping police attitudes. The end result is a self-fulfilling prophecy in which more black men are suspected of criminal activity, stopped and searched or arrested.

Social Care and Ethnic Minorities

In their overview of the literature, Butt and Mirza (1996: 31) conclude that there is no convincing evidence of a higher incidence of abuse or neglect of children among black families. Conversely, using evidence from government statistics, Thoburn et al. (2005: 49) discovered that in 2003 of all children in need 20% were from ethnic minorities even though they made up just 13% of the total child population. When these figures were further broken down it was found that:

- children of Chinese or Indian heritage were less likely to be receiving an 'in need' service than would be expected from their numbers in the child population
- Bangladeshi children were in receipt of an 'in need' service in the same proportions as they appear in the child population as a whole
- children who had an African or African-Caribbean parent and a white parent were twice as likely to be receiving an 'in need' service as would be expected from their numbers in the child population.

This disparity is similar in relation to child protection, with 17% of ethnic-minority children receiving a formal service when they make up just 13% of the total child population. When this figure is broken down it again shows that those of mixed heritage

are over-represented and those of Asian heritage are under-represented within the child-protection system as against their proportions in the entire child population (Thoburn et al., 2005: 75). Yet again, the pattern is repeated for 'looked after children', with 18.5% of them from ethnic minorities. Those children having mixed heritage or both parents of Caribbean or African descent were twice as likely to be 'looked after' as their proportions in the child population would indicate. By contrast, children of Asian heritage are only half as likely to be 'looked after', as would be expected from their proportion in the child population.

In an overview of the quality of social services provided to ethnic-minority children and families, O'Neale (2000: 1–4) concluded that most local authorities did not offer services appropriate to, or sensitive to, the needs of ethnic minorities; families often experienced difficulty accessing social services; ethnicity was not fully addressed in social-work assessments; and practitioners had varying levels of understanding of ethnic minority issues. A more recent review of the research by Thoburn et al. (2005) came to similar conclusions. Surveys of young people continue to reveal that their religious and cultural backgrounds were often ignored by residential staff and foster carers. In some instances this left them isolated from their own ethnic community after leaving care (Barn et al., 2005). Studies on young carers among ethnic-minority families found that professionals use cultural stereotyping, presume that young carers receive assistance from their extended families, disregard the positive aspects of a child's caring role, and fail to appreciate parental mistrust of social services. These appear to be major obstacles for ethnic-minority families in obtaining appropriate services (Shah & Hatton, 1999; Jones et al., 2002).

A study by Chamba et al. (1999) which surveyed 600 ethnic-minority families caring for a severely disabled child found that ethnic-minority respondents reported higher levels of unmet need than did white families. In a report commissioned by the Department of Health to review the literature on ethnic-minority experiences of services for people with learning difficulties, Mir et al. (2001: 47–8) found that social-care agencies failed to pay sufficient attention to cultural background, most particularly the importance of religious faith and contact with other members of a service-user's own ethnic community. This made it difficult for many service-users to preserve a robust and meaningful sense of cultural identity. Stereotyping by professionals of ethnic-minority people with learning difficulties and their carers was another obstacle to quality in service provision identified in the report. Commenting on ethnic-minority carers, Butt and Mirza (1996: 101) noted the scarcity of studies in this area. On the basis of incomplete research, they mention that carers from the white majority, like those from ethnic minorities, can be both 'unsupported and isolated'. However, for carers from ethnic groups, 'this is often exacerbated by communication difficulties and the lack of sensitive and appropriate services. Service provision continues to remain ethnocentric, geared to meeting the needs of the white majority' (Butt & Mirza, 1996: 101).

Studies of service provision for people from ethnic minorities with sensory impairments reveal similar concerns. This is a particularly pressing issue for people with hearing impairments who find that deaf culture is dominated by the viewpoint of the white-majority community. As a result, many deaf people from ethnic minorities feel their spirituality or cultural outlook is not reflected in day-to-day activity with other deaf people. They

often experience a contradiction between their heritage, which it can be difficult for them to access because they use British Sign Language, and deaf culture. Both social-care workers and their managers appear reluctant to engage with the dilemmas posed for such individuals. Either agencies fail to act due to other budgetary priorities or staff from the white-majority population abdicate responsibility for meeting the cultural needs of service-users (Ahmad et al., 1998; Flynn, 2002). Physically disabled service-users from Asian minorities have identified a lack of cultural knowledge among social workers as a major factor in their low confidence in either them or the services they offer (Vernon, 2002).

Mental-health services for people from ethnic minorities are the subject of mounting criticism. Some minorities, for example those from the African-Caribbean community, are subject to higher levels of compulsory detention under the Mental Health Act 1983 and higher dosages of psychotropic drugs than are members of the white majority population (McLean et al., 2003: 658). Those from Asian backgrounds are under-represented in the mental-health-care system. In part this is due to stereotypical assumptions on the part of professionals that they are more 'psychologically robust' and are cared for by their families. The failure of services to acknowledge the impact of racism on mental health or adapt to the cultural and religious needs of people from Asian minorities is another reason for low take-up of provision (Wilson, 2001).

Referring to mental-health provision for older people from ethnic minorities, the government acknowledged that 'services may be neither readily accessible nor fully appropriate. Assessments may be culturally biased, making it difficult for needs to be properly identified, or assumptions may be made about the capacity and willingness of families to act as primary carers for their older relatives' (Department of Health, 2001b: para. 7.3). This confirmed the findings of an earlier collation of the research by Butt and Mirza (1996: 54) which states that social-care agencies 'are not in a position to meet the social care needs of black elders. There are various barriers, ranging from a lack of knowledge of services to racism, or to inappropriate services.' This conclusion accords with the findings of the government's own investigation into service provision for ethnic-minority elders. The inspection revealed that 'the ethnocentric nature of service provision meant that many black elders had difficulty in having their needs met' (Department of Health & Social Services Inspectorate, 1998: 5). Butt and Mirza (1996: 94–9) come to the overall conclusion that, regardless of age, people with disabilities from ethnic minorities are confronted with services which, due to language barriers, cultural insensitivity and racism, simply fail to meet their needs.



Further Reading

Butt, J. & Mirza, K. (1996) *Social Care and Black Communities*. London: HMSO. This report provides an overview of research studies examining the experiences of ethnic-minority service-users and carers. It covers a wide range of service provision, from children to adults and older people, in relation to both mental and physical health.

Department of Health & Social Services Inspectorate (1998) *They Look After Their Own, Don't They?: Inspection of Community Care Services for Black and Ethnic Minority Older People*. London: HMSO. This government inspection examines the extent to which Social Services Departments are meeting the needs of older people from ethnic minorities. It makes recommendations for improvement to service delivery.

Modood, T., Berthoud, R., Lakey, J., Nazroo, J., Smith, P., Virdee, S. & Beishon, S. (eds) (1997) *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage*, The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities. London: Policy Studies Institute. This is a comprehensive overview of social and economic conditions of the major ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom.

Thoburn, J., Chand, A. & Proctor, J. (2005) *Child Welfare Services for Minority Ethnic Families*. London: Jessica Kingsley. This book presents an overview of the research literature on the delivery and outcomes of child-welfare services for families from ethnic minorities. It also details the implications of the findings for policy and social-work intervention.