United Kingdom

Muslims in the labour market in the UK: Leeds and Leicester

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Summary

This report examines and analyse Muslims in the labour market in the UK focusing on 2 cities Leeds and Leicester. The report critically assesses policy developments and responses at a local level and explores how this relates to the European discourse surrounding the inclusion of minorities in the sphere of employment. The report engages with the complex discursive re-configurations surrounding racism and examines how it is becoming increasingly difficult to locate racism across western plutocracies. The report focuses on Muslims as a population vulnerable to racism, Islamophobia and intolerance and draws upon particular situations in the workplace that demonstrate and reinforce the wider political and public debates surrounding representations of Muslims as 'problematic'. As such the report examines the way in which public policy discourses construct Muslims as 'others' in the employment sphere with the consequence of diluting the discussion of racism and weakening anti-racist approaches and practices in the workplace. As the report goes on to investigate, this means that the ability to exercise rights and access to protection is extremely limited. The report analyses the way in which the weakening of such anti-racist policies and legislation through fair practices of recruitment and professional training has meant an emphasis on assimilation as well as racism as transformed into ignorance, that is, rather than structures of racism being challenged through policy and legislation, the blame is heavily rested upon Muslims themselves represented as a population unwilling to adapt to the values of mainstream British society.

Our findings are based upon in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted in Leeds and Leicester with regional/national policy makers, local Council body representatives, local public servants, immigrant's grassroots organisations, anti-racist

NGOs, immigrant's and ethnic minority's organisations, supervisors of Islamic cultural centres and academics. Throughout the report we examine the extent to which the localisation of anti-racist measures are shaping discourses surrounding tolerance, racism and anti-discrimination and furthermore the extent to which racialised practices are increasingly denied as a structural problem. The key findings we analyse emerging from the data are centred around firstly, the construction of 'otherness', that is how are Muslims constructed in the workplace. Secondly, the situation of vulnerability, that is, how Muslims are defined as vulnerable due to their situation which contributes to exclusion, discrimination and segregation. Thirdly, the report examines the controversies/problems encountered by Muslims in terms of discrimination and racism, and furthermore how they are constructed as a 'problematic' minority in the labour market. Finally we look at the production of integration and multicultural societies, that is we examine the mechanisms that are set underway to improve the situation and seek the integration of the excluded, we analyse how such measures can be seen as examples of good practices in the employment sphere.

Introduction

This report will develop a comparative discursive analysis of local/regional cases resulting from complex cultural diversity and the role of local public bodies. The focus will be on employment to analyse the effectiveness of local mediation agencies in identifying racism and tolerance, we will draw upon our data findings to develop our critique throughout. Moreover, we will examine the extent to which the localisation of anti-racist measures are shaping racism and anti-discrimination. That is, not as a structural problem but as particular incidents taking place in specific localities and in relation to 'problematic' (in our case Muslim) populations.

The reasons for deciding upon Leeds and Leicester to conduct the fieldwork are two-fold. Firstly, both areas have a high and visible Muslim population. Secondly and more importantly both Leeds and Leicester have in recent years come under the Media spotlight for very different reasons. Following 7/7 Leeds was framed as a place for 'breeding' terrorism and 'harbouring' extremist activity as many of those involved in the attacks were from Beeston (South Leeds). In contrast Leicester has been celebrated in the Media for becoming one of the most multiracial, diverse cities in the UK, in 2003 Leicester was predicted to become the country's first 'plural city' with no overall ethnic majority, and was subsequently awarded Beacon status for community cohesion. As such Leicester is considered more or less devoid from 'radical' Muslims.

The methodology for the fieldwork consists of 18 in depth, semi structured interviews, alongside 2 focus groups. 9 interviews are based in Leeds, 9 based in Leicester, with 2 focus groups conducted in Leicester.[1] The sample for both the interviews and focus groups consist of respondents involved in the following fields/organisations:

- Regional/National policy makers
- Local Council body representatives
- Local public servants
- Immigrant's grassroots organisations
- Anti-racist NGOs
- Immigrant's and ethnic minority's organisations
- Supervisors of Islamic cultural centres
- Academics

By adoping a discourse analysis approach we are concerned with the construction of subjects and relations, by observing the various signifying and hegemonic practices. That is, the interviews and focus groups enable us organise the discourse around tolerance and anti-racism, and understand the way in which meaning is structured and relayed through the constitution of subjectivities in distinct spaces.

1. Muslims in the workplace: key findings of Leeds and Leicester

Our findings focus upon the way in which the hegemony of liberal ontology affects the way in which anti-discrimination practices in the workplace are carried out within a post-racial framework. Traditionally the struggle for racial justice took the form of support for anti-discrimination legislation and policies. This section will map out the limits of anti-discrimination as illustrated in the sphere of employment. Against the landscape of the post-racial coupled with the establishment of the Single Equality Act,[2] we see a weakening of anti-racism policies and legislation to protect racialised groups. To add to the mix, under the climate of austerity, grassroots and advocacy groups are also made weaker. Combined these factors are signalling the empting out or

[1] Keeping to the ethical guidelines of social research by the British Sociological Association (BSA), we ensure to safeguard and protect the anonymity and privacy of those who have participated in the research, thus throughout this report we will refer to the interview respondents as numbers, we are unwilling to add anymore information as this could compromise issues surrounding confidentiality. See: http://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm

[2] The Equality Act came into force from October 2010 providing a modern, single legal framework with clear, streamlined law to more effectively tackle disadvantage and discrimination, See http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/

invisibilisation of the discourse on institutional racism. The challenge for anti-discrimination policies becomes clearer when demands that Muslims as Muslims should be protected are increasingly made more vocal since anti-discrimination was premised on a particular idea of what kind of people would face workplace discrimination. Muslims by not being easily catergorisable into racial classification schemes can interrupt such anti-discrimination policies. Taking the case of Muslims in the workplace, we will illustrate how discrimination is transformed into poor management and lack of (or non-existent) understanding, rather than racism. With fewer bodies in place to protect racialised groups and relaxed training (or in some cases no training in place at all), on diversity in the workplace, we will see how racism has become tied up in a language of ignorance and lack of education or over-sensitivity and trouble making.

We will focus on four key overlapping themes to explore how the post-racial logic has been manifested in relation to instutional racism, discrimination and intolerance to Muslims in the workplace, we understand the post-racial as 'characterized by a sense that we have seen the 'end of racism' and its expulsion from the public domain' (Sayyid 2010: 3). The themes we will examine emerging from the data are centred around firstly, the construction of 'otherness', that is how are Muslims constructed in the general local and national discourse. Secondly, the situation of vulnerability, that is, how Muslims are defined as vulnerable due to their situation which contributes to exlusion, discrimination and segregation. Thirdly, we will examine the controversies/problems encountered by Muslims in terms of discrimination and racism, and furthermore how they are contructed as a 'problematic' minority. Finally we will look at the production of integration and multicultural societies, that is we will examine the mechanisms that are set underway to improve the situation and seek the integration of the excluded, we will examine how such measures can be seen as examples of good practices.

2. The construction of 'otherness'

When examining how Muslims have been constructed as the 'other', it is important to explore the significance of the immigrant imaginary (Hesse and Sayyid: 2006). The immigrant imaginary developed by Sayyid and Hesse (2006), explores the way in which immigrants and ethnicised populations are read through a European framework, as such there is an ontological split beween the host and the immigrant, in which the immigrant is constructed as 'backwards, primitive, oppressive and patriarchal', and the host as 'enlightened, liberal, free-thinking and modern':

> The experience of South Asian settlers has been dominated by the immigrant imaginary, an imaginary that sought to restore the disruptive effects of postcoloniality by re-inserting South Asians into the colonial framework despite their relocation and unravelling of the colonial world order. (Ali 2006: 166).

For Hesse and Sayyid (2006), the dominant and largely naturalised migratory framework of host-community/immigrant-community remains inadequate with its simplistic and reductive attempt to narrate the settlement of ethnically marked communities in Britain, however, such accounts nevertheless:

> …Sustain the fictions in British public culture of a termination between the imperial past and the nationalist present, as well as of a structural and political separation between a racially unmarked indigenous British society and racially marked migrants who become carriers of culture for British consumption or proscription. (Hesse and Sayyid 2006: 21).

Throughout a variety of registers there is an apparent expectation that migrants within the 'host' society embrace the 'modern' values of the national majority in a journey 'in which tadpoles eventually turn into frogs' (Hesse and Sayyid 2006: 22). To elaborate, there is often a naturalised assumption that ethnicised communities 'should' conform and be socialised within mainstream society, this hegemonic account of the migratory process is thus characterised '…with the importation of inscrutable cultures and bizarre practices from another time and distant lands, in which generational movement, from immigrant to citizen, seen as absorption into the British way of life, requires movement from Urdu and Hindu to Cockney and Brummie' (Hesse and Sayyid 2006: 22).

For Hesse and Sayyid, such 'absorption' of 'Britishness' refers to the way in which these ethnicised migratory communities have been 'assimilated, rather than assimilating', this process is thus regarded as the only source of renovation in which the replacement of the non-west with the west is implied if not imposed upon such communities living within the British ethnoscape (Hesse and Sayyid 2006: 22). The notion of the immigrant imaginary is important as it provides a conceptual framework enabling us to examine the extent to which Muslims in the sphere of employment are 'othered' and contrasted with the national majority, that is we want to examine the extent to which Muslims have been constructed through the lens of the immigrant imaginary.

In both Leeds and Leicester the discourse mapped out demonstrates the way in which the 'othering' of Muslims has been played out, the most hegemonic ways we can see the 'othering' of Muslims and how this impacts them in the workplace are through overlapping nodes including appearance, 'backward' cultural practices, 'passive' women and 'unwillingness' to integrate. The respondents in both Leeds and Leicester identified intolerance towards Muslims based on a particular 'fixed' image of the

Muslim, the idea of the Muslim as a terrorist is perhaps the most strongest stereoype throughout western plutocracies, for example as one Leeds based BME activist recalls:

> I did a workshop with some young people with learning disabilities around cultural diversity and I took two other people with me with learning disabilities from the Black community. We went and did this workshop and I did it in conjunction with a Muslim lady who works for the Nuffield institute and she is a very high up woman. She and I put together this training looking at all the different cultures and looking at stereotyping and that kind of thing and we put up some images of different people from different cultural backgrounds dressed in different ways and that kind of thing and we asked them to tell us, 'just from looking at that person, what do you think they are? What do you think they do?' So we went through this process and there was a picture of a young Muslim man and all of the people in the room said, 'he might be a terrorist!' (Interview 1).

The Muslim 'other' is a well embedded construct circulating locally, nationally and globally. We can see from the data the way in which the Muslim 'other' has infiltrated into the workplace around these particular nodes. When discussing barriers for Muslims entering the employment sphere many of the interviewees pointed out how particular constructs of the 'other' restricted Muslims in the job market, as a Councillor in Leicester stated:

> I think they (Muslims) face the biggest barrier where there are issues around what they might perceive in terms of having a Muslim name, not getting short-listed, having a beard or a female wearing a niqab or a veil. (Interview 2).

In another interview, a youth worker in Leicester expressed the anxities young Muslims had about entering the workplace based on how they are constructed or percieved by employers:

> There is anxiety in some senses, because obviously during the month of Ramadan they do worry about stuff like flexibility or having ten minutes aside to break your fast and stuff like that, we have those conversations, but I think on the whole their worry is more to do with the fact of actually getting in to employment. Also maybe if they grew a beard or if the girls chose later on in their life that they want to wear the hijab then how would they be perceived, so that sort of thing more so. So it is more about how they are portrayed physically, how they look, because some of the discussions we have with young people…we have got some young girls who wear hijab and some don't and the ones who don't wear hijab say, 'to look at me we can be anybody', but when you blatantly look Muslim, like the girls who wear hijab or the boys who look Muslim and are in more traditional clothing their experiences are slightly different to those who wear Western clothing. (Interview 5).

In a report conducted by the Open Society Institute, entitled 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010) findings were similar and they highlighted an example of a focus group in which one respondent had applied for a number of jobs in administration, the respondent had all the necessary skills and qualifications yet the application was repeatedly rejected, however, when applying again the respondent changed his name to David and succeeded in getting to the interview stage (Open Society Institute, 2010: 71). The same sentiment was echoed in a focus group we conducted with a Muslim organisation based in Leicester:

> Some of them even claim...again I have no evidence to support any of this, I am going on hearsay...that they fill in application forms and they are rejected straightaway and some actually claim that if they put another Western sounding name then at least they get an

> interview and the application form is exactly the same; so same qualifications, experiences etc. So there is this feeling in the community that Islamophobia is rife and we may have difficulty in relation to accessing services provided to our community, including employment. (Focus Group 1).

In an interview with a Leeds City Council representative, we see the impact of the 'war on terror' in further 'othering' and marginalising Muslims in the sphere of employment:

> I have seen clear cases of discrimination where young Muslim men have gone to employment agencies just to enquire about a job and the lady behind the counter will refuse just to give them a job description. I have actually been with a young Muslim and he said, 'just let me see the job descriptions', and she was like, 'you won't be appropriate for it'. So obviously he kicked off and said, 'you don't even know jack about me so how can you say that I am not going to be appropriate?' And quite clearly then all you can assume is it was based on the colour of his skin, his religion or whatever. And up until that time I felt that young Muslims just play the race card all the time and clearly that is not the case. (Interview 4).

The construct of Muslim women and debates surrounding the wearing of the veil at work were noted in a number of occasions. This points to the notion of the Muslim woman as 'oppressed' and 'passive', respondents from a Muslim community organisation spoke of their experiences in Leicester:

> I have worked in hospitals for twenty five years now, one day I was on cover and somebody came in to ask me something but because I have got a scarf on their automatic assumption is, 'she probably can't understand', which is quite degrading and she did that twice and she went next door to ask somebody else and I said, 'excuse me, I can speak English, I have worked here for x amount of years', and she said, 'oh, oh, oh I am really sorry'. But it is that perception isn't it, that because you are covered up then you haven't got a brain basically, it is sad really. (Focus Group 2).

However, rather than challenge the stereotypes of Muslim women a handful of respondents fed the discourse of the immigrant imaginary. We see articulated quite clearly the cultural tropes emphasisng Muslim women and passivity, as such, Muslim women are constructed as less able and less willing to integrate and work. It is suggested here that Muslim women are more likely to be unemployed due to a lack of education and skills with a heavy influence of culture and religion, questions of the impact of racism in providing access for Muslim women remain absent:

> There are disproportionate impacts in terms of things like educational attainments between different communities and access to the job market, some of that is cultural to organisations but some if it is also cultural to communities. So there is something like, for instance, if we were talking specifically about Muslim communities young women do not apply for jobs or don't access external employment…in a lot of those communities, particularly women, don't move from that community, geographically you wouldn't go from Harehills to the other side of the city, so it does present us with some challenges in terms of how we do that integration within and between communities, how that community perceives us as a service provider, and how other communities perceive what we do and how we work with that community. (Interview 7).

Quite clearly we see a dismissal of the impact of racism in society as a whole affecting Muslim women and their mobility, rather it is unproblematically suggested that these

women simply don't want to integrate, move, or even apply for jobs. Shinder Thandi (2006) argues that:

> …While many of the relatively poor outcomes can be explained by economic, social and demographic factors operating on both sides of the labour market, there is still a large residual that remains unexplained. This points to the operation of both direct and indirect forms of covert discriminatory practices in the labour market. (Thandi 2006: 229).

In a similar vein, we see another respondent who rather than pointing to the impact of racism and discrimination as a key barrier, instead stresses cultural practices and 'insular' family units deemed 'oppressive' and 'restrictive' for Muslim women:

> It could be that a lot of those women who are not getting in to the workplace in the way that others are, is because those that have come to marry here may have come from India or Pakistan and be married here….because I know quite a lot of women who have come here and got married to men born in Britain and they struggle with the language, they struggle with the cultural differences and just generally getting through. And sometimes the husbands aren't very helpful and don't support their wives, they want them to stay at home, but a lot of them eventually get empowered because you are living a community where women have rights and women's' rights are recognised very strongly in society and that there are organisations that will pick up on those things. (Interview 1).

Once again, we see the absence of a critique of the impact of racism in society in providing access and support for Muslim women, instead it is assumed they 'struggle' with the language, or cultural differences and have unhelpful husbands. We see how the respondent also points to the notion that Muslim women often find refuge and empowerment in western societies, thus the 'backward' and 'oppressive' construct is contrasted to the 'modern' and 'liberal' values of the west, which reinforces the logics of the immigrant imaginary. This trope was also found in the study Muslims in Leicester, which identified that 'some employers held negative and outdated stereoypes of Muslim women, such as that women wanted to work in a single-sex environment or that there was a high chance of women wanting to leave work due to getting married' (Open Society Institute, 2010: 73). The respondent goes on to say:

> When Muslims are celebrating Ramadan and they are fasting it is very difficult for them at work and in the everyday community to just live normally and for people to understand that as well sometimes because I have come across people sometimes being quite negative about the fact that they are not very sociable. So you think well that is only adding to this negative feeling that they are not like us or they are doing things so differently that we should exclude them. (Interview 1).

We see here how Muslims as constructed as unsociable, this was echoed in another Leeds based interview with a council worker who linked exclusion and unsociability with the drinking culture of the west:

> I think the role of alcohol is a massive one of interest, because if you look at the importance of alcohol in British society; people who can drink together tend to socialise better and tend to assimilate more, so if you take that out, I have lots of friends who don't drink alcohol and they talk about that being slightly excluded from society. (Interview 12).

The idea of the Muslim as not willing to integrate was a common theme and clearly limits access and acceptance, as another Leeds based respondent working as an Equalities Officer argued:

> But then what are we, when I say 'we' I am just thinking as a Muslim person here, what is it that I am trying to integrate in to? I have got my own identity, but I am British, so what is it that I have got to do as an addition to make myself more British and adapted? I pay my bills, I go to work, I pay my taxes, I have my own private family life, which we are all entitled to, I don't break the law and I can't see anything that I do that is different to my next door neighbour who is White, so what I am integrated to? This is a great concept, but what is it that I am integrating to? (Interview 17).

Here we see how everyday rountines such as paying bills, paying taxes, being law abiding and so on as mentioned above is still not enough, as another interviewee pointed out, in relation to settled and to some extent assimilated Asian communities the level of acceptance is undermined by racism:

> You know one of my friends who I grew up with she is fifth generation Sikh British and her kids still get called 'Paki' on her way to school. She works as a lawyer and her husband is an architect and they have a very nice life, they eat lasagne for tea on occasions, but they still have that impact in their life, so I think they would have a different view that they are totally assimilated and their life and culture is accepted here. (Interview 12).

We can see how the generations of settled communities are still not accepted or tolerated despite their level of integration and mobility however, due to the hegemony of the Muslim 'other' many youth are taking the path of assimilation in order to secure jobs, as an activist in Leicester pointed out:

> I know people are changing their names, so if you have 'Mohammed' as your name shorten it to 'Mo' or whatever, because you know that you are more likely to be discriminated against otherwise. I think people are very careful of how they dress. People feel intimidated. People feel it is better to conform. I know a young man who had a very successful job in London and he changed his name to a Christian name 'John' and he didn't drink alcohol because of his faith he was t-total, but he would not tell them and he said he was a vegetarian, because his work involved a lot of socialising. Young people are under a lot of pressure. (Interview 13).

This presents a dangerous situation in which some Muslim youth are pressured into following a trajectory based on a particular set of values. The discourse illustrates a particular construct of the Muslim 'other' as a subject constitutive of 'strange' dresscodes and names, 'peculiar' practices, unsociable and difficult to integrate, moreover, there is a clear racialisation of the Muslim 'other' in which Muslims become marked through various nodes as 'different'. The appearence of Muslims is constructed as problematic and unacceptable in the employment sphere, thus we are seeing a move towards many Muslim youth attempting to modify their behaviour and appearence to gain access to the job market. We see how even the settled communities who were born in Britain still face exclusion from the job market, which demonstrates the hegemony of racist configurations surrounding Muslims in the British context.

This however, is not all too surprising as the notion of the Muslim 'other', heightened by the war on terror, is well established throughout Europe and the rest of the world, circulating in Media accounts, academic literature and political discourse for example, British Prime Minister, David Cameron claimed this year that multiculturalism has failed and Muslims in the UK are 'self-segregating' and increasingly 'radicalising', similar sentiments were expressed by Germanys leader, Merkel,[3] and in France we can see how President Sarkozy is also following this anti-Muslim narrative with the banning of the burqa.[4] Thus the discourse around the Muslim 'other' as 'dangerous', 'primitive', 'opressive', and so, is clearly hegemonic throughout Europe and the west, however, what we are interested in is the way in which this 'othering' has impacted Muslims in the workplace.

These constructs are entrenched within the wider public discourse, the next section will explore the extent to which the situation has become increasingly vulnerable for Muslims and how this works to isolate, marginalise and restrict them in the workplace, that is how this 'othering' goes beyond racialised and cultural assumptions based on dress, skin colour, name and so on, and extends into the actual practices of the state, employers and institutions.

3. The situation of vulnerability

In his first speech as British Prime Minister, David Cameron claimed that state multiculturalism had failed and was the main cause of terrorism and radicalisation, he 'signalled a tougher stance on groups promoting Islamist extremism' and went on to state that 'frankly, we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and much more active, muscular liberalism.[5] Against this landscape right wing parties such as the English Defence League (EDL) have flourished in speading a more violent version of the anti-muslim discourse. As such the vulnerability for Muslims is extremely high as Muslims continue to fall victim to xenophobic attacks:

> I myself have been a victim of some racial abuse about eighteen months ago; I was just walking to work and a White youth just basically walked towards me and pulled my veil off and shouted at me. (Interview 13).

Interestingly this female was based in Leicester an area seen as more tolerant, which illustrates the hegemony of the anti-Muslim sentiment. In Leeds a male respondent spoke of his experience post 9/11 and 7/7, as stated:

[3] See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11559451, BBC, 17th Oct, 2010.
[4] See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13031397, BBC, 11th April, 2011.
[5] See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12371994, BBC, 5th Feb, 2011.

> I remember after 7/7 where…I think prior to 7/7 or prior to 9/11 I had never really faced any kind of racism or discrimination but after 9/11 I clearly saw that. Before 9/11 I really didn't feel uncomfortable being a Muslim or showing I was a Muslim, so if I chose to wear a Mosque hat out in the community I wouldn't feel anything about it, I would just carry on, I wouldn't feel I was being looked at, however after 9/11 and especially after 7/7 I did feel it, I felt really conscious about how I was dressed, what I looked like, if I hadn't shaved for a week or so and I had grown quite a lot of stubble or a little beard I could feel people looking at me and whether that was just my subconscious I don't know, but then I think that was the first time I really realised actually young Muslims don't just play the race card, there is actually quite clearly an issue there. (Interview 6).

In addition to this a Leicester based anti-racist activist also noted that:

> I work with a lot of different Muslim groups and individuals as well and there are young men that feel they have been stopped and searched much more than they would have been. And in fact my own son, who is not a Muslim, but he has been stopped and searched eleven times in the last two years, and on two occasions he came home and he said to me, 'I think they thought I was Muslim, because they asked me my name and they looked a bit surprised when I told them'. He looks a bit Muslim, whatever that means, so I think they stopped him for that reason. (Interview 15).

Again, we are not pointing out anything necessarily exceptional here, as the Conservative politician Baroness Warsi herself commented this year that Islamophobic comments are now making table talk,[6] so attacks, harrasment, stop and search and harder airport security are practices increasingly becoming more and more naturalised in contemporary European societies. However, interestingly we are also seeing the post-racial logic at play where some on the other hand dismiss the prominence of Islamophobia, as an academic based in Leeds stated:

> This is the interesting thing about this Islamophobia, and, as you know that British Pakistani ex-Muslim sociologist…Yes Kenan Malik. He makes a pretty strong case for there not being a rise of Islamophobia. He says both empirically and anecdotally that there isn't a great deal of it. And I have to say that the Muslims that I know say they feel uncomfortable, but they don't say, 'and somebody sat next to me on the bus and gave me a right bollocking' or 'when I sat down carrying my haversack they all left the bus'. I mean you heard occasional things like this after 7/7, but I haven't heard that from my Muslim friends. (Interview 3).

This feeds into the liberal logic that Islamophobia has in fact not increased, as pointed out above Kenan Malik is a key advocate of this debate and denies there has been any rise in Islamophobia as he argues in his essay 'Islamophobia Myth'.[7] This approach is extremely problematic as a weath of data available from monitoring units points to the very contrary, for example a summary report published by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia on Islamophobia identified that post 9/11 there was 'a rise in the number of physical and verbal threats being made, particularly to those visually identifiable as Muslims, in particular, women wearing the hijab' (Meer and Modood, 2010: 75-6; Allen and Nielsen, 2002: 16).

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[6] See, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12235237, BBC, 20th Jan, 2011.
[7] See Malik, K (Feb 2005) *'Islamophobia Myth'*
http://www.kenanmalik.com/essays/islamophobia_prospect.html
Last Accessed: April 2011.

In relation to notions of Muslims as 'self segregating' in Leeds City Council there was an emphasis on cohesion and integration, the Council has in place strategies aimed to improve society in terms of tolerance and diversity. However, we can see quite clearly in such policy documentation, the hegemony of the post-racial logic, that is the breakdown of cohesion and integration is found in peoples' perceptions rather than the structures and institutions themselves, as stated in their guide:

> 'The Commission on Integration and Cohesion noted that whilst monitoring people's perceptions is important it is also vital to look beneath people's perceptions to identify what causes them…personal charactersitics, attitude and the type of a community a person lives in affect perceptions around cohesion and integration.'[8]

Here the failure of integration and cohesion is marked by factors that may affect peoples' perceptions, so the focus is on attitudes or beliefs rather than state practices. To be fair they note the impact of unemployment on BME groups and cohesion:

> 'The concentration of unemployment and worklessness amongst some ethnic minority groups and some new immigrants, coupled with poor living conditions and the limited life chances availiable in some urban and also rural environments, posed real threats to social cohesion. Work remains the best and fastest route out of poverty. For a community the loss of jobs brings decline, resurgent gender inequality and in some cases fuels racism and cultural tensions.'[9]

However, in their definitions cohesion is referred to as something that 'must happen in communities to ensure that different groups of people get on well together'[10] and integration is defined as 'when new and exisiting residents adapt to one another.'[11] On the surface these are simple, not necessarily problematic definitions but as we go further on in the literature, the riots of 2001, involving Muslim communities, and the London Bombings and the attack on Glasgow Airport, are noted as examples of contributing to segregation, yet examples of right wing extremism are very thin, and moreover the phenomenon of 'white flight', that is when white families move out when ethnically marked communities join their neighborhood, is also absent in this account.

As such, we can see throughout this discourse a particular focus on Muslims as 'problematic', the documentation goes on to suggest 'to prevent violent extremism, a targeted approach which deals with a specific threat, builds resilience at a community level but also works to counter the global terrorist ideology is needed'[12], it is argued that 'extremism makes cohesion and integration harder to achieve. By putting in place support for cohesive and integrated communites we will substantially reduce the medium and long term risk of indivduals and groups being drawn down the path of

[8] Cohesion and Integration Priorities 2008-2011, Leeds City Council, pp 25.
[9] Cohesion and Integration Priorities 2008-2011, Leeds City Council, pp 25.
[10] Cohesion and Integration Priorities 2008-2011, Leeds City Council, pp 8.
[11] Cohesion and Integration Priorities 2008-2011, Leeds City Council, pp 8.
[12] Cohesion and Integration Priorities 2008-2011, Leeds City Council, pp 18.

extremism potentially leading to conflict and violence.'[13] Underlying this, the focus on extremism as threatening integration and creating segregation echoes the statements made by David Cameron, whereby Muslims are targeted as the main perpetrators for a breakdown in cohesion and integration, this notion was reiterated by a Leeds City Council representative:

> I suppose we would describe it as self segregation, so there is an argument; do those communities feel that they have got self segregation because they feel that they cannot be included in mainstream society? Or is it about maintaining culture and identity by having that self segregation? So you look at the geographical areas where the Muslim communities tend to live and yes it does gravitate around a place of worship, so for example, Harehills, but then also they use local shops, local facilities, local schools and meet their children's' needs. (Interview 7).

Here we see very little attempt to explore societal factors combined with structural racism keeping Muslims in a particular area, instead we are confronted with a culturally deterministic explanation, moreover, the idea of Muslims 'gravitating' towards a place of worship and using local shops, etc, is not really particular to the Muslim community, it is rather commonplace for most communities to do this, yet that is not problematised as self segregation, these fundamental critiques appear to be overlooked and thus reinforce the construct of the specific 'problematic' Muslim. A more sympathtic response was given by a Leicester City Council representative:

> But it is a simple psychological fact isn't it that if someone is making you feel alienated then you step backwards rather than forwards, and so, communities feel, 'oh we have got to create services for ourselves because those people out there don't like us', and I have seen that in all sorts of communities and actually they get it from both sides. (Interview 8).

Again however, although she points out that wider society alienates Muslims, she falls into the trap that these communities are taking a step 'backwards' and establishing a community that accommodates particular needs is seen as problematic rather than positive. Many respondents were critical of the notion of integration and how it has been used to stigmatise the Muslim community:

> I don't think we have had a national discourse on what we are integrating in to, I think we are all lost, we give different answers, you know Cameron talks about multi-culturalism or Britishness but what does it mean? I asked this guy yesterday, 'what does it mean to be British?' And he said, 'eat fish and chips', and I said to him, 'tick; that is me'. Then he said, 'and to be loyal to the country when it comes to sport', and I said, 'yes, yes, tick that is me, I am happy on that. What else?' He said, 'supporting democracy', so I said, 'yes that is me. So what else is there?' He was vague; he could not give me any answers. (Focus Group 1).

Another commentator critical of Camerons' comments echoed similar concerns:

> Cameron talking about this 'lack of integration' you are putting it right in the forefront again; you know the leader is saying this and it exasperates the problems and it makes it look bigger than it is. Let's look at Bradford; they have got all these Indian restaurants; do you think all their customers are Indian? There is integration. What about Next? Are none of their customers Muslims? Of course we are integrating, we are doing business, as Muslims

[13] Cohesion and Integration Priorities 2008-2011, Leeds City Council, pp 19.

> we are either profiting or we are investing in to other businesses. Even if you look at the Next workforce; so many of them are Muslims and that will be a common organisation in this city because obviously the head quarters are here and people would apply for jobs there. (Interview 13).

Adding to the vulnerability, it was pointed out that are also inter-ethnic tensions with animosity about Muslims being 'favoured' with resources, for example:

> I remember two young Sikh boys who run this amazing youth community project for young Sikh boys and they were looking for funding but they couldn't get it anywhere and they said to me, 'what do we have to blow up to get to do this work?' And that really stuck with me, because they were great people trying to do something for society, for their community, but they felt like they were being blocked and again there wasn't enough money to go round anywhere at the time, but if you see that then you have to respond to it. (Interview 12).

This was a fairly consistent theme that Muslims had access to more money, funding and so on further fuelling the notion of 'problematic' Muslims as 'stealing jobs and money' as pointed out:

> Often we are looking to blame somebody, we all do it, if you are unemployed you blame 'those Pakis are taking our jobs' or 'our funding has been cut; it's them', when that is not true. At the moment though we are flavour of the month, I wouldn't even say flavour of the month, I would say flavour of the years, so it is like' oh look it is those Muslims they have got the money, look they have got a community centre and we have lost out'. So the people are channelling their anger and it is not the right way. (Interview 13).

We have mapped out the context of the vulnerability of the situation on the ground, however, we will now explore how this has impacted on Muslims in the employment sphere. From the interviews we are able to see the ways in which Muslims have been victimised through discrimination, racism and Islamophobia, making access to the job market more difficult, as a respondent pointed out:

> The message was that because Muslims are segregated and live in their own communities then that is more likely to be terrorism, so we need to make sure that we have got cohesion to integrate them and they know what British values are. And that has been the predominant policy and philosophy of governments and the Media. So that has the knock-on effect to how Muslims are viewed, you can no longer be called a Muslim without some value judgement behind it and normally the thinking is, 'oh you are a Muslim, I wonder if you are moderate or a extremist, I wonder if you believe in this or that'. So, it is usually that where as previously I think that being a Muslim was just another faith and now it has got a lot more meaning and significance to it, that then has an effect on how you are looked at in employment terms. I don't know whether you are aware of the Department of Work and Pension Study which was done in October 2009, it was government research and they did a sting operation and they sent in Asian sounding people and White people for interviews for jobs. And what they found was that you needed to apply sixteen more times than a White person to be considered, with the same level of qualifications and the same level of experience for the same job, which shows that discrimination is still rife despite equality and legislation. (Interview 15).

Here we see how employment structures and practices are restricting and discriminating against Muslims whilst protection is weakening and to some extent failing, as an interviewee commented:

> …But they (Muslims) will be like, 'well I want to be a pilot but because my name is Mohammed they are going to think I might be a bomber', or, 'I want to join the army but I might end up being a double agent or a spy', because it is all going round in their heads, or, 'I want to join the police force but they may turn against me and say 'well we don't trust you'.

> So it is difficult and I think it is easier for those who decide to practice their faith without it being visible, so they shorten their names, dress in a certain way, which is fine, that is their choice but if they are doing it because they are being pushed and to conform and because they think 'to keep me safe let me do this otherwise I will get recognised' (Interview 13).

Morevover an activist in Leicester illustrates how this situation of vulnerability is disenfranchising Muslim youth in the work sector:

> I have certainly met a lot of young Muslims who really want to work and really want to feel as though they belong and they are still trying to do it, but there are some that have got very disillusioned and they just think, 'I am better off just claiming benefits, keeping my head down, not saying anything so I won't have to go though any heart ache or put my family through anything', which is very sad because they started with really good aspirations and intentions. (Interview 15).

The following was thus a typical response from many of the people interviewed either reflecting on personal experiences or on the work they carry out with Muslim communities:

> Even for myself I am looking for work at the moment and I am already thinking, 'well I wear a veil so who is going to give me a job?' I am already concerned about where I am going to apply and I know I have got the skills and I know I can do a really good job, but is somebody even going to let me through their doors? As soon as they see my veil when I go for the interview; am I going to get a chance? Are they going to judge me by what I wear and then that will be it? I am already worrying and I am realistically thinking; can you see yourself in that organisation? Are you going to be working, etc, etc? Especially when you face these kinds of things constantly, instead of what you have it is what you look like. So it is very, very difficult, very difficult. (Interview 13).

There is clearly anxiety amongst Muslims about entering the workforce, first of all will they even have access in the first place if they have a Muslim name, if they succeed through the application stage the anxieties turn to what they wear, how they look and how their practices will be seen to conflict with their employers. These anxieties are heightened with the hegemonic political and public discourses surrounding Muslims as unwilling to integrate, self-segregating and so on. Combined with this on a day to day basis Muslims are confronted with racism, harassment, abuse, stop and search measures and surveillance. The final push comes with the growth of violent right-wing movements in spreading anti-muslim propaganda. As such it is only fair to point out the situation for Muslims in the UK is extremely vulnerable, however they have very little protection, especially in the workplace.

Muslims are not legally protected under the Race Relations Act (1976), which states that it is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of colour, race and nationality, and on the grounds of ethnic or national origins, in the fields of employment, education, housing, and the provision of goods, facilities and services. Sikhs and Jews are both protected under this Act. This points to one way in which it becomes more difficult for Muslims to exercise their rights against discrimination. Although we see the new category of 'religion' instituted as one of the key strands protected under the Single

Equality Act, legal access remains limited and processes to prosecute against discrimination are a harder, more lengthy process, where as under the Race Relations Act there tends to be a much greater level of protection, as Sayyid (2010) argues,

> Islamophobia as a conceptual category (re-) emerges with The Runnymede Trust Report in 1997. This report was based on the ways in which it was felt by its authors that anti-racism provisions of British legislation were adequate for safe-guarding Muslims from discrimination. This was because in Britain, apart from members of the Jewish and Sikh faith, other faith communities were considered not to be 'races' and thus not protected from discrimination by law. Therefore, if employers discriminated not the basis of 'colour' but because someone was a Muslim, e.g. refusing to hire a Muslim because they assumed that they would demand time to pray, halal food etc would impact upon their capacity to do their job, they could not be prosecuted. (Sayyid 2010: 7).

According to a report conducted by Paul Weller (2011), exploring religious discrimination in Britain, there is a vast range of evidence to suggest that 'Muslims appear to experience religious discrimination with a frequency and seriousness that is proportionately greater than that experienced by those of other religions' (Weller 2011: 41). Weller goes on to argue that the current anti-discrimination approach in the UK is based a more 'universal' framework and does not allow for special policies and laws for particular groups as it is thought that 'a generic approach can help to overcome the kind of initial antipathy that can otherwise be found in relation to what can sometimes be seen as 'special pleading' by one group for 'special treatment'' (Weller 2011: 51). He argues that this is potenially problematic in that 'such an approach needs to give due weight both to the generic features of religious discrimination and to the specificity of the forms that it takes in connection with Islamophobia (and, in principle, other specific forms) (Weller 2011: 51).

The Employment (Religion or Belief) Regulations came into force in 2003 'bringing obligations to employers and providers of vocational training not to discriminate, victimise or tolerate harassment on grounds of religion or belief' (Weller 2011: 51) Following this the Religious and Racial Hatred Act replaced the common laws of blasphemy and blasphemous libel in 2006 (Weller 2011: 51). The establishment of the Equality Act 2010 meant that previous equalities legislation was mainstreamed across all the protected grounds covered by the Act, including age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Additionally 'positive duties were also introduced with regard to religion or belief, including in the provision of goods and services' (Weller 2011: 51). Against these backdrop of these changes the report found that since December 2003, there was an increase in the number of tribunal cases relating to 'religion or belief', although it remains unclear how far this links to increased frequency of claims of discrimination or to a stronger awareness of potential legal remedies for such discrimination (Weller 2011: 36). Despite the increase of cases coming forward it is crucial to point out the following:

> … In 2009-10, only two per cent of the 760 Tribunal cases concerning religion or belief that were disposed were successful, thus underlining that there is a substantial difference between those instances in which the tribunal system sees sufficient prima facie evidence to accept consideration of a claim for religious discrimination and a determination within the law that such discrimination has taken place. At the same time, it should be noted that the success rate for all types of equality is very low; in 2009-10, the highest success rate was in relation to sexual orientation at five per cent. (Weller 2011: 31).

In addition to this it was also found that:

> …Within this analysis of the Census, data on religious affiliation in relation, for example, to data on employment tended to support the findings of the Religious Discrimination in England and Wales research project that Muslims may disproportionately experience unfair treatment related to religión. (Weller 2011: 14).

The findings of the report, alongside our interview data reveals the highly disproportional level of discrimination experienced by Muslims in the employment sector. Muslims thus appear to be extremely limited in exercising their rights in cases of unfair treatment based on religious grievances. Policy in this area remains weak and fails to account for the specific needs of Muslims and practices of Islamophobia.

Combined with this, we are seeing a shift towards a language which translates racist practices and discrimination into lack of ignorance or misunderstanding, as such the discourse surrounding institutional racism has been weakened immensely. Let us look at this further, we picked up a few national Media stories demonstrating clear discrimination towards Muslims, one was based in Leeds at the Royal Mail in which Muslim postal workers were not given time off to celebrate Eid in September 2010, and another which is a more common headline circulating, was regarding a Muslim teacher being dismissed from work for wearing the veil in the classroom. We asked respondents if they thought these cases were evidence of racial/religious discrimination. In the case of the Royal Mail from the 20 respondents interviewed 9 identified this as discrimination, just under half the sample, the majority of these respondents were from BME activist organisations, 2 of these based in Leeds the rest in Leicester, one was a Leicester City Council representative, another a Councillor again based in Leicester. The rest however were more vague around the issue and translated it into an example of poor business management, ignorance and a lack of understanding amongst employers, a Leeds City Council represntative suggested:

> There is sometimes a fine line between poor staff management and being discriminatory. In a lot of cases it is just about people being crap at managing staff and not dealing with the issues as they arise, because they are frightened of being accused as being racist, then leaving it until a bit further down the line when somebody would say, 'if you have got a problem with my behavioural conduct and you have known about it for six months, why wait six months until you discuss it with me?' And we do get quite a lot of those cases. (Interview 7).

Similarly also based at Leeds City Council another interviewee responded:

> We have come up with some smaller examples than that but it is definitely an example of ignorance in the workplace, which is if you don't understand the significance of other religious festivals then it is hard to translate that and when you are trying to apply business practice but you are unaware of personnel practice then you end up making decisions not suiting everybody in your workplace. So a lot of stuff that I think needs to happen to go forward is actually working with employers to talk to them in a HR way, it is actually good for the work force to understand their needs and their expectations of an employer. (Interview 12).

These responses were fairly common among all the participants in which evidence of discrimination was unproblematically transformed into ignorance, thus pushing aside any room for debates surrounding institutional racism.

In relation to the case of the veil the same sort of pattern emerged, very few articulated this as discrimination, it was only those based in BME organisation who pointed this out:

> I think it is absolutely despicable, because to my mind I do not see the rationale at all, because if you really wanted to identify a piece of clothing as a marking of what you think is right or wrong then surely we have got so many other people that we can pick on that wear the wrong types of clothing; I would say grey suits for one, because it is usually White men that cause most of the problems in the world, so why don't we target them and pull their jackets off for god's sake? So woman wearing the hijab causes hardly any problems at all and yet people target them and vilify them in such a way as if they are a symbol for terrorism, you know Jack Straw did it, Cameron's done it, France of course has banned it and Belgium. So I just don't understand the rationale and I do think it is frustrating. (Interview 15).

The overall responses were vague as with the case of the Royal Mail, but there were also those who understood the concerns regarding the veil in terms facial communication, for example:

> I do believe that a lot of communication happens through peoples facial features when you are expressing yourself, you do need that communication, but I don't think people should be forced, because they should still have the right to dress the way they do or to practice whatever they do, but I think it depends in what context you are talking about, one would be if you are in a certain line of work and it is important for you not to have the veil on because people rely on communication through someone's face, but in schools if you are teaching kids that are mixed kids anyway and you have got a veil on, then I am not too sure about that. (Interview 5).

The tensions surrounding the veil was also found in the research Muslims in Leicester which found that Muslim women wearing the scarf or veil would 'receive a reaction from other people, or such clothing would create a sense of uneasiness in the employment arena, for men the beard would have a similar impact' (Open Society Institute, 2010: 72). Here we see the same sort of argument about the veil as 'restrictive':

> I mean this is a very generalised statement, but I think it is better for society as a whole if women play a full and unrestricted part in society. And the thing about wearing the niqab is whatever else you say about it, it does restrict your full and inclusive engagement with the wider world. (Interview 3).

It is the ambiguity surrounding these cases which is perhaps most telling of the way in which the post-racial manifests itself. That is racism was not really picked up on in

these instances, it is often seen as boiling down to the notion of misunderstanding or ignorance, which was common throughout the majority of the interviews, very few respondents even used the term racism directly, and not one respondent marked these cases out as examples of institutional racism.

This is signficant and perhaps the most troubling when we look at the vulnerability of the situation, here we can see how the whole language of institutional racism and/or discrimination is rarely drawn upon, thus the rights of Muslims at work is increasingly under threat especially in terms of legal protection. If discrimination and institutional racism is increasingly dismissed by mediation bodies as nothing other than ignorance the paths to exercise ones right becomes extremely limited. As such we are seeing racial discrimination as nothing more than a human rights issue, a struggle similar to that of disability, gender and so on, for example when asked about the level of tolerance and equality in relation to Muslims the following response was given:

> I don't think we have got equality yet, they have still not hit it for certain groups, for example, lesbian, gay and bisexual issues, they are still at the bottom of the pile, in communities there are still people who aren't sure how you deal with some of the issues or how you address some of the issues. (Interview 7).

Another respondent used gender inequality to highlight similar difficulties women encouter to those of minority ethnic backgrounds:

> I was speaking to someone who runs the Trainline and 95% of their workforce is White male, so not female, White male, and they were saying, 'of course they don't understand the needs of other communities because of that', and they are changing and adapting as a result of that. (Interview 16).

Although these are harmless examples highlighting inequalities across particular groups, it is interesting that the focus of the interviews were based around Muslims in the workplace and the barriers, discrimination and inequality they may encounter. Yet despite this very specific area, as illustrated the respondents drew upon other branches of inequality to mainstream racial/relgious inequality with gender and gay and bisexual issues, for example. This is not to dimiss the importance of such issues however, what this demonstrates is the way in which racial struggles for justice have simply become just another strand of inequality easily comparable to other types of inequality, as such the specifity of racism becomes lost. The question of racism, both structural and institutional thus remains marginal and tagged with ideas of ignorance and misunderstanding.

It is important to point out that there are a number of factors that act as barriers to labour market participation as Thandi argues,

> For females poor access to child care (due to location, socio-economic status and affordability) may be an important factor. For others, a poor state of health may be an important barrier-evidence shows that, compared with whites, BrAsians tend to suffer disproportionately from certain kinds of ailments, for example, diabetes and coronary heart

> disease. Poor public infrastructure of inner city areas-poor housing, poor transportation and lack of mobility- can also act as an important supply-side barrier. (Thandi 2006: 223).

However, as Thandi goes on to stress the key explanation lies within racial discrimination in the employment sphere as we have demonstrated throughout our findings. He argues that 'wide-ranging evidence suggests that although the more overt forms of racism that existed in the 1950s and 1960s may have become less visible, various complex and institutionalised forms of racism still remain' (Thandi 2006: 223). We have demonstrated throughout this section that it is precisely this more institutional form of discrimination in employment that is contributing to the vulnerability of the situation for Muslims, as the data has pointed out the more covert kind of racism is increasingly framed instead as ignorance, misunderstanding and lack of awareness.

4. Controversies and problems

Following from the previous section this part of the report will focus on the key controversies and problems mapped out in the discourse. Taking into account the vulnerability of the situation for Muslims in the workplace, the main controversies and problems we identified were: training in the workplace on diversity and different cultures is weak, institutional racism is marginal with the establishment of the Single Equality Act, and the post-racial logic, and protection on grounds of discrimination/racism is limited especially with the closure of many BME grassroots organisations under the climate of austerity.

When asked about training in the workplace it was generally stated that training on specific cultures and ethnicities was generally relaxed and weak, thus many employers were unaware about certain sensitivities or practices they needed to take into account. The following example given by a representative from Leicester Council of Faiths illustrates the extent of the lack of knowledge and poor understanding of Muslims:

> I'll tell you a little story about the early days of my job; one of the major public service providers, I won't say who it was but you have to dial 999 to get them so it is any one of the three, they phoned up and said they wanted advice because they wanted a Muslim candidate to work in the call centre and they didn't want to give this person a job because they were Muslim; how could I advise them to do that but then still stay on the right side of the law? They said, 'should we employ this person and then say at the end of their probationary period that they haven't fitted in?' And I said, 'what is your problem with this person? Are they fit for the job?' And this was a person who was in charge of Human Resources in Personnel said, 'imagine from time-to-time you have a circumstance where due to staff illness or lack of cover there is only one person in the call centre, one person taking emergency calls, what would they do if that person is a Muslim candidate and was the only person on duty and somebody phones in but they were doing their prayers at the same time so they didn't take the call?' And I think my first thing was, 'could you say that again please?' So they thought that this person would spread their prayer mat in the place of work and be doing one of their five prayers of the day and a call would come in from somebody whose house was on fire or had been in a road accident and they wouldn't answer it because they were going off to say their prayers at that point and they thought that lives

> would be lost because of this and would be pinpointed that they had hired a Muslim for this job, then they would get attacked as an institution because they thought the easiest thing would be not to hire any Muslims for the call centre. So I said, 'number one, ok my first piece of advice is stop reading the bloody Daily Mail. Number two; have you ever had any training about religious minorities in the workplace?' And they said, 'no'. I said, 'ok get some. Number three, have you ever actually spoken to the person that you are thinking of employing and said to them, ''what would happen if..?'' And they said, 'no because we are frightened'. I said, 'ok a Muslim is obliged to pray five times a day, some of them are outside the working time, early in the morning, late in the evening, they coincide with lunch time or a break. Do you allow your employees a break to have a cigarette? So why can't somebody go off to say their prayers?' (Interview 18).

This is extremely problematic and demonstrates the absolute lack of engagement and training about minority ethnic groups, however it was not the only example, as another participant goes on to tell us:

> I think it is very poor and I will tell you a fact based on another argument; we do a lot of training to a lot of police officers, probation officers and prison staff where we try to separate the faith of Islam and the level of understanding of those public service workers in relation to what a Muslim is and Islam as their understanding is so poor it is unbelievable. As an example; we went to a prison in the South of the city and we said, 'how would you recognise somebody who has become radicalised within the prison?' And the answer that came back from the prison staff was, 'when they suddenly have a beard and are wearing a long shirt that is it', now if that understanding is so poor at that security Government civil servant level then what chance do we have at an employer's level? Because they are not a community outside, they are part and parcel and they read the same newspapers, they see the same news bulletins, their minds are also conditioned by what they see and read. I think if these public service employers have no idea then what chance do we have in the private sector? I think we have got a long way to go until they actually understand the community. (Interview 10).

Once again we can see a clear lack of understanding by employers in relation to Muslim communities, and as the participant points out training in the private sector poses a huge worry especially when there is so little awareness in some public sector organisations. Thandi (2006) argues that,

> The private sector does not have a good track record when it comes to recruiment from areas of BrAsian settlement. Many companies simply do not use local agencies for recruitment and evidence from company recruitment practices suggests that BrAsian job applicants are disproportionately likely to fail to get jobs they have applied for even when class, education and location is accounted for. This can only be explained by direct or indirect forms of racism or lack of cultural awareness. (Thandi, 2006: 219).

Furthermore in a report exploring BME inequality it was argued that it is 'unacceptable that the specific duties for the new Equality Bill will scrap requirements for race equality schemes and with them large chunks of employment monitoring. While new regulations for equality provision in procurement from Private sector companies in the Equality bill are welcomed there is still a gap in requirements for all private sector companies operating in the UK to be non-discriminatory in Employment.[14]

Respondents acknowledged employment practices needed improving in the area as a Leicester City Council representative pointed out:

[14] See, The Price of Inequality: The Black Manifesto 2010 (2010) Equanomics UK, pp. 20-21.

> I think that the problem is what has happened is some of our business and working practices haven't updated themselves to take account of what modern society looks like and the fact is that society in Britain is changing and perhaps there does need to be much more flexible approaches to the way in which business practice works to take that in to consideration. If you had people being refused time-off work at Christmas all hell would be on. I just think it is about the slowness of business and industry to catch up with the nature of what British society looks like these days, and actually if they could get their heads around that it would really be a good opportunity for some really fantastic business practice, because the service could improve as a result of having a more flexible workplace. (Interview 11).

Similar sentiments were expressed by a Leeds City Council representative who suggested that the dialogue between employers and employees surrounding sensitive issues needed more attention:

> So something like a small issue of sausage rolls being served on a Friday, can suddenly take on a massive religious significance that actually in a multi-cultural society doesn't need to. So it actually about spaces and places for dialogue where we can understand; What is acceptable? What is totally unacceptable? What can we work on? What can we compromise on?' And I think that way we get a much better working environment for everyone involved. A lot of what I deal with is the tensions that arise as a result of any group being seen to be given unfair treatment and I think that is part of the problem, which is that some employers don't know how to show that they are being fair to all and certainly employees don't know how to expect fairness when their needs are different from others. And so, again, the more we can get people in to a space of being able to fairly and openly debate about what would be a good outcome in a situation rather than it being a conflict. (Interview 12).

A spokeman for a Muslim community organisation based in Leicester also pointed to the weakeness of training particularly surrounding Muslim and faith matters in the workplace:

> I think across the board training is definitely needed, and not just one-off training, more ongoing training and engagement is needed with the staff, because you can bet your bottom dollar...and this isn't just a Muslim issue, let's be clear about this; I will give you an example within say the Sikh tradition with the five K's and the wearing of them, it has been known to have been examples where people have fallen foul to the law in relation to that, in fact Sikhs and Jews have more protection when it comes to legislation, but that has been a problem. Our Christian brothers and sisters; same sort of issue where they feel they have been discriminated in the workplace and again there are notable examples of registrars who have been found guilty. So I think there is a general sort of illiteracy when it comes to faith issues across the board. (Interview 14).

The lack of understanding shown by employers was also commented upon by a Leeds based respondent working with Muslim communites:

> I think employers need to be more aware of Muslims and Muslims beliefs and their attitudes and values, because there is a lack of understanding, which I think could make it more problematic for agencies or employers to take on employees. I have heard stories where Muslims might work in a place and they don't have anywhere to pray and stuff like that and that might make it really difficult for them. Some young Muslims I know who wouldn't go in to particular fields because of the ethics of that industry. I do think there is a role for everyone to play, for employers, for communities and for Muslims themselves, but in terms of generally raising their awareness of different faiths. (Interview 6).

Race related training in the workplace is a key factor in any strategy to address race inequality, however a report conducted by Joanna Bennett and Fran Keating (2008) points out that:

> The concept of race and racism has been replaced by culturalism as an explanation for the social inequalities experienced by BME groups and is the central framework for race related training. The current culturalist approach is criticised (eg. Bhavnami, 2001) for focusing on the superficial manifestations of culture, such as health beliefs, values, communal rituals and shared traditions. This suggests that ethnic groups are made up of people who are all the same, and share a static culture. A major challenge facing race equality training is the shift in government policy away from multiculturalism, which historically has influenced the framework for training. Emphasis is now being placed on the need for minority groups to develop core values of 'Britishness', de-emphasising cultural and linguistic differences, which have previously been the basis for addressing ethnic inequalities. (Bennett and Keating 2008: 57).

In addition to weak training in employment, the establishment of the Single Equality Act which consequently dissolves racial struggles, combined with the impact of the cuts to BME organisations is having a detrimental effect on minority ethnic groups who now have fewer resources to call upon for aid and advice in legal action against discrimination, as a Leicester based anti-racist activist noted:

> The equality legalisation is so weak in the punishment that it allows and even where employers know that they have acted completely inappropriately there are so many opportunities for having that publicised, but they would much rather pay out than stand forward and come and defend their actions. Then add to that the means of taking legal action are being reduced by this government, so legal aid…not that legal aid was ever there for discrimination cases, but that disappearing shows how much other legal recourses will disappear; community advice services are disappearing across this country, the Citizens Advice Bureau won't exist in a couple of years. We as an organisation support people who have been subjected to racial discrimination, we haven't had any funding to do that work for seven years but we just do it on the remains we have from other pieces of work that we have done. (Interview 4).

This view was expressed from those working in BME organisations in both Leeds and Leicester, they were all critical of the Single Equality Act and noted the weakness of protection on grounds of racial justice:

> I think it is in such a poor place. I mean yes the new Equality Act is there, the Equality legislation has been gutted, we haven't got the mechanisms that the Race Relations Amendment Act had and the specific duties are very vague, so we really have to rely on the general duty, the duty to promote equality and race relations, it is just weak. (Interview 15).

Here we can see the extent to which anti-racist discourses are increasingly losing their purchase with the establishment of the Single Equality Act, as the specifity of 'race' issues become generalised and mainstreamed under the umbrella of the human rights framework, as such we can identify the limitations of anti-discrimination in the workplace in the post-racial context. However, there were those respondents who celebrated the Single Equality Act, critiquing instead previous legislation, as a Leeds City Council representative commented:

> We have had equality legislation for thirty five years but we have still got inequality, we still haven't tackled it, bar a few minor changes, the current government have enacted the equality act, which actually for the first time gives all equality, all protective characteristics some equity and some clarity. (Interview 7).

The same respondent goes on to say:

> I suppose I am a bit simplistic sometimes, no one lives in a block in a box, so what identities to do with me, to do with my gender, to do with my ethnicity, to do with my impairments, actually depending on what my particular services are that I need to access it would be different for each service. We still have racism but we still have sexism, we still have an issue in this country, some people still can't access buildings because of their disability or their impairments. I don't know whether I agree with the argument about it being diluted, what you need to do is look at the individual rights or workout and identify which identity is the best for that service provision, because actually we can all just tick loads of boxes, no one just ticks the BME box do they? Because you can tick the gender box or the…because you know Black people can also be gay, being gay is different to being Black, but there is a common issue where they suffer discrimination and suffer disadvantage, most people cannot deny their ethnicity, quite a lot of people hide their sexual orientation, because of people's perception and how people will react to you. (Interview 7).

However, in contrast to this another respondent argued the following:

> I think the danger in having kind of a general duty is that what happens is people pick and choose and I think that that allows people to dismiss things like Islamophobia much more easily, and the same applies to gender. (Interview 11).

The next participant, although seeing the establishment of the Single Equality Act as positive still noted the potential problems of the shift in relation to racism:

> I think it is positive because I think it caught up with the fact that society is more complex and that inequality can occur for all sorts of reasons. The six strands in the old equalities legislation were too simplistic, probably, and we still have protected categories don't we? So there is a possible danger that it actually makes us think, 'well actually ok we have dealt with racism, we have ticked that box and we have changed the legislation, because the problem has gone away', so it actually may make people relax about racism and that would be a big problem, I think, because it would then weaken decades of work that has happened. (Interview 9).

The final problem we saw emerging is the level of access, training and support in place for young Muslims wishing to enter the workplace. When asked if there was sufficient or enough access, training and support for Muslims, a Leicester City Council representative stated the following:

> There is absolutely nowhere near enough and that is one of the most worrying things about the current economic climate and the affects of the budget cuts is that where we were offering insufficient support in the past that will reduce even further. I think one of the problems that I have come across is that when money comes down the pipe from the Government to various forms in order to do economic development to support training and to support people in to employment it tends to come down through the reaching on infrastructure and often when we invite people to bid for those funds in order to provide interventions to support people in employment the contracts to go to organisations, that are well established professional organisations, often not necessarily based in the city, you know when you are sitting down doing commissioning you tend to do a low risk approach, so you give it to the people who have delivered in the past, and what those organisations often don't have is sound governance and sound financial management and you don't have to lose sleep at night that it is all going to go to pot because it will all be delivered and will tick the boxes, but what those organisations don't have is they don't have their fingers right in to the community itself, so they often don't tailor their offer as closely as it needs to be tailored to the communities to try to be supportive. (Interview 8).

The same respondent goes on to say:

> …And I will go back to that example of Somalis; where the Somali community on St. Matthews is they have still got a psychological barrier around going out of the door and getting on the bus and going to a centre where training and support is offered, they almost can't engage with any service unless it is provided by their own community and on their own doorstep, but a lot of these big providers don't have that kind of very local infrastructure and

> don't know how to provide through the community, they do support the community but they don't support the community to help itself. So although there are people in the Somali community who have got the skills to support the businesses and there are people with accountancy backgrounds and business inspired backgrounds they would never be on the radar of a regional employment or something like that, they wouldn't know how to engage with those very local doorstep providers. (Interview 8).

Here we see quite clearly the lack of access and support provided by mediation bodies, thus the level of engagement between local communities and wider employment providers is poor, thus the skills and qualifications Muslims (in this case Somali Muslims) have are not recognised, moreover their needs are not understood thus the gap between them and the service provider is vast. In Leeds City Council it was similarly expressed that due to government spending cuts, the level of access will be weakened, however, there was more of a generalised approach and the level of discrimination in restricting employment wasn't once touched upon:

> We do have targets around employment of people from BME backgrounds, we don't necessarily break it down to different heritages but we do have percentages of people's certain pay grades that we should have, some of it will reflect the local population and now that the whole performance culture has gone out of the window with the current government we can set whatever targets we want. And I think one of the things at the moment if you look at a big city like Leeds, the Council, we have a difficult situation ahead of us, we know there is going to be challenges with certain communities, we want to understand the impact of any decisions that we make that they don't just disproportionally impact on certain communities. So for example, funding cuts, what we wouldn't want to do is start to make a whole series of funding cuts and then start to realise that a BME community in a particular geographical location in Leeds is taking the biggest hit and a White low class community over here isn't. So there is some sort of balance to what we do, so we have a whole load of processes in place to understand that, we are not doing any external recruitment, so the issues around certain groups of people not being able to access the job market is going to get worse because we are not getting external recruitments, there are still some jobs that go externally, but in a lot of cases posts just are not being filled because we have got to make the savings. So our challenge is now, I suppose, whatever has happened historically the challenges potentially could get worse for a lot of groups, because there is just less money, less jobs, less access to services and I think it is going to be much more challenging to keep some of those issues on the agenda so it is not seen that we are disproportioning impacting on one community group over another. (Interview 7).

A more sympathetic response was provided by another Leeds City Council representative who noted that the engagement and understanding of service providers needed to be stronger in identifying particular needs of ethnically marked communites:

> So it is about looking very sensitively at the lived experience of people from BME backgrounds in our city, the people who provide services and actually getting them to understand to perspectives of people who are experiencing that particular service. For example, Job Centre Plus may think they are providing the most ethnically diverse service, but actually if they have missed some key points about the way people wish to access or the way people wish to be spoken with. For example, for some of them it wouldn't be appropriate to be in a closed space with a man. But if you don't know that and you don't see why women aren't coming in to access your service you come to the conclusion that you don't want to and the women come to the conclusion that the service isn't for them. But actually by coming together and having dialogue some of those things we have shifted very easily and very simply, but there is a limit to what we can do. And we have to pick the biggest issues that will have the biggest impact on the life and livelihood of BME communities in the city, and even then there are massive issues that require much more time than we can give them but we try and give what we can strategically. (Interview 12).

There is a focus here on dialogue as breaking down the barriers of access for Muslims and providers, this is not to dismiss dialogue as being important, however, actual mechanisms such as training service providers, or developing outreach support to Muslim communities was not offered as a solution, and towards the end it appears that the issue of access was not a big issue with a big impact on the livelihood of BME communities. In contrast the next respondent expresses the positive side of mechanisms in place providing youth with more access, yet there is also an awareness of the impact racism has:

> I think we have a really good service around children and young people across a lot of agencies and I include the voluntary and the community sector in that. So I think there are some really good opportunities to have a voice and I think there are good opportunities for young people to be involved in the activities of citizenship in the city. I feel really proud that in our youth parliament elections the turnout was far greater than the elections we had for councillors and actually when you look at the group of NYP's in youth council they really do represent a city like Leicester, it is a really good mix in the diversity. But again, I think that you can't ignore the fact that for some groups of young people there is a double disadvantage and it is the disadvantage that goes with access to services that comes with race or religion and that still exists I think. So there are still levels of under-performance, for example, that I think makes it more difficult for some of our kids and I wouldn't deny that. (Interview 11).

Access for Muslims then, in the current climate of austerity is clearly limited, this is not to deny that there are schemes in place trying to bridge the gap between BME communities and service providers (we will explore these in the next section in further detail as examples of good practice). Although there are good initiatives in place the actual access for Muslims engaging with these providers appears poor, thus support mechanisms enabling and encouraging Muslims to enter the workplace are weak.

Throughout this section we have seen the impact of the weakening of anti-racist discourses and provided examples of various case studies surrounding the Royal Mail and the wearing of the veil to identify how the very language of racism itself is changing. As a consequence Muslims are facing more barriers into entering employment due to the 'othering' combined with the lack of access and training which we have identified as extremely weak. Once in the job market, however, the level of protection is inadequate, that is if Muslims are discriminated against their power and agency to exercise their rights remains extremely limited for a number of reasons. Firstly, Muslims are not given the privilege of protection under the Race Relations Act. Secondly the closure of BME organisations means access for help and advice is restricted. Thirdly the establishment of the Single Equality Act, means that the very idea of institutional racism is made marginal, thus racism and discrimination becomes transformed into a human rights issues. Fourthly, the training for employers on diversity and BME practices is poor, thus racism in the workplace can be easily be excused as misunderstanding or ignorance. Combined these factors all demonstrate the hegemony

of the post-racial and the way in which racism has slipped from the wider political and public discourse. We have demonstrated throughout our findings the ways in which Muslims in the workplace have been implicated within this landscape.

5. The production of integration and multicultural societies

We have mapped out a discourse throughout this report exploring the way in which particular ideas of the Muslim 'other' have been fixed as well as the impact of the political and social climate in developing a vulnerable situation for Muslims. Finally we pointed to the various controversies and problems Muslims encounter in the workplace. For this part of the report we want to focus on the mechanisms in place to enable changes in terms of integration of the excluded in creating multicultural coexistence as examples of good practices. We will examine the various policies and frameworks of different bodies in achieving good practices for Muslims in the workplace and also explore potential weakenesses and limitations of such mechanisms.

In Leicester there are a number of initiatives in place to improve access to employement for Muslims. These include initiatives by Job Centre Plus that involve taking employers to community centres and places of worship 'with the aim of working with communities and faith leaders in showcasing opportunities in employment' (Open Society Institute, 2010: 75). Moreover, as a Leicester based respondent pointed out with the development of Highcross shopping centre, employers from John Lewis came to Highfields, a predominantly Muslim area, where they put on a roadshow for the community offering help and advice to the community, this proved highly successful and is a notable example illustrating the positive outcome of the partnership with Leicester city strategy and the Highcross shopping centre (Open Society Institute, 2010: 75). Other examples include the New Deal Traineeship funded by the Council targeted at young unemployed people. Individuals are refered to this scheme by Job Centres and offered support, advice and help with CVs, as well as personal development and mentoring schemes (Open Society Institute, 2010: 75).

Leicester City Council and local employers from major bodies including Asda and De Montfort University, have also signed up to the Job Service Partnership Guarantee Scheme, which focuses upon disadvantaged groups including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, 'the scheme provides intensive one to one advice, guidance and support to individuals who lack skills or confidence in accessing employment' (Open Society Institute, 2010: 75). Finally the Refugee and Asylum Seekers Advice Project aims to develop and improve initiatives in providing greater access to employment for migrants as well as understanding the needs of refugees by helping with applications,

CVs, support with language/communtion barriers, help with legal documents, referrals and developing inter-faith dialogue (Open Society Institute, 2010: 76).

In Leeds there are similar schemes in place such as 'New Start' involving Jobcentre Plus and the Council as well as various advisors and consultants in helping refuges and new migrants to find employment.[15] In addition to this Screen Yorkshire highlighted the work of the Foundation Placement Scheme which aims to address barriers for BME communities in the Media sector, trainees were able to visit ITV, BBC and independent Media companies, this resulted with a direct impact on employment opportunities for BME communities in broadcast Media.[16] Other schemes include Urban biz, which offers support for self employment recruiting workers with additional language skills, Realtime Training which offers training, skills and vocational qualifications for those who are long-term unemployed, RETAS (Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service), which provides in-house training programmes and networks of support as well as practical guidance for refugees entering employment, Leeds Reach which provides a support package through schools/local communities and works with those in work already, and The Madrasah Project, which supports Muslim supplementary schools to address attainment issues and introduces enterprise skills.[17] These are clear examples of good practices in integrating Muslims into the workplace, providing skills and advice as well as training and preparation for employment.

However, as we have seen from our interview findings there still remains a gap in Muslims accessing employment as expressed by our respondents. There is clearly more to take in to account for example as pointed out in the previous section diversity training in the workplace is particularly weak, so it would be important to make such training compulsory for employers and staff in developing dialogue and understanding of different cultures and ethnic groups, this should be institutionalised across all employment bodies from the private to the public and the third sector. In Leeds City Council, they have in place the Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008-2011 which aims to promote equality and diversity and in relation to work highlights how it will 'make sure the council's staff reflect the diverse communities of the city'[18] in addition to this Leeds City Council state that 'close work will take place with the equality and diversity training provider to develop and customise training where appropriate.'[19] This is certainly a step in the right direction in tackling the problem of weak diversity training.

[15] See work and worklessness, Issues affecting Leeds BME communities, 2010, Leeds City Council.
[16] See work and worklessness, Issues affecting Leeds BME communities, 2010, Leeds City Council.
[17] See work and worklessness, Issues affecting Leeds BME communities, 2010, Leeds City Council.
[18] Equality and Diversity Annual Report, 2009-2010, Leeds City Council, pp 14.
[19] Equality and Diversity Annual Report, 2009-2010, Leeds City Council, pp 14.

Legal protection for Muslims in the workplace as victims of institutional racism need more consideration and support. In the context of the post-racial, such discrimination has been unproblematically transformed into ignorance, and with the collapse of single body representative organisations the access to protection and advice is weakened dramatically. This reflects a key manifestion of the post-racial horizon in that racism has been dissolved and the stuggle for racial justice is simply another stuggle along with gender rights, disability rights and so on. The key problem with racism and institutional racism postitioned as marginal in discourses, means a language of ignorance is able to flourish as such the power to exercise legal recourse is limited further especially with the closure of BME organisations as institutions of support.

The perception and construction of Muslims as 'problematic', in terms of appearence, dress, practices and cultural differences is another clear barrier for Muslims accessing the employment sphere, again this reflects a wider discourse on the Muslim 'problem'. As such, mediation bodies need to do more in terms of subverting these myths and stereotypes. The Muslims in Leicester study suggested a way to overcome these barriers was to develop more inter-faith dialogue which is proving successful. Community organisations, policy makers, council representatives and faith organisations have collectively come together to discuss sensitive matters and tensions between communities, liasing with each other to promote dialogue, discuss local issues and develop networks throughout the city. By establishing this collective relationship between a range of organisations and agencies there is a stronger mechanism in place to manage problems when they arise (Open Society Institute, 2010: 110-112). As we saw in previous sections the policy documents on cohesion and integration are problematic particularly in Leeds. The hegemonic construct of Muslims as threatening intergration needs to be challenged. The framing of Muslims as 'extremists' and 'self-segregating' is dangerous and as we have seen throughout the report this carries major implications for Muslims accessing the workplace.

The prospects for Muslims in the workplace, look rather bleak. However, the examples of good practice in both Leicester and Leeds at least illustrate that mediation bodies have particular strategies in place to try and provide better access for Muslims entering employment. However, as we have also seen the hegemony of the post-racial tends to undermine such efforts through a framework in which racism remains marginal. This poses a number of problems for Muslims thus the overall discourse of (anti) racism and (in)tolerance needs to be challenged and critiqued as our report has argued throughout.

Conclusion

> The articulation of the post-racial hinders the development of strategies to eradicate racism, but it also, points to the new context in which the semantics of tolerance takes place. The challenge is to re-think the categories of racism and their deployment in the post-racial context. (Sayyid 2010: 9).

This report has attempted to map out a discourse exploring Muslims in the workplace. In relation to our case studies examining Leeds and Leicester we have seen how the findings tend to overlap in places. We drew upon our data to illustrate the barriers Muslims are facing in the job sphere by focusing on four key areas including 'othering', the vulnerability of the situation, problems and controvosies and good practices. Here we examined how Muslims have been constructed in largely negative terms, and excluded and discriminated against in employment, alongside this we also pointed to the wider political context in negating issues of institutional racism in favour for a language of ignorance and/or misunderstanding. We have identified a number of weakenesses in the various mediation bodies that participated within the research as well as highlighting the more positive steps they are taking. The overall landscape however is rather worrying with the growing dismissal of racism and weak diversity training, coupled with the mainstreaming of inequalities, the level of protection for Muslims in the workplace is limited. With cuts to BME organisations support is also increasingly threatenened.

Discrimination against Muslims particularly in the current global climate is well documented. What we have attempted to illustrate is the way in which practices in the employment sector are reflecting the wider discourse on Muslims as 'problematic' 'self-segregating' 'dangerous' etc. Thandi argues that:

> …Much of the evidence on the existence of racial discrimination is qualitative, gathered from personal experiences of the minorities, employment tribunal decisions and public opinion polls. This indicates that racial discrimination and harassment takes many different forms and has a negative influence on both the ability and motive to participate fully in the labour market. Thus, this still remains an important explanation for the persistence of the disadvantage for BrAsians in the labour market despite the fact that anti-discrimination policies have been operating for over thirty years. (Thandi 2006: 223).

This is significant as it stresses the importance of racial discrimination as a key explanation in access and participation within the workplace. Throughout this report we have tried to illustate that it is these very debates surrounding institutional racism and discrimination which must be paid close attention in understanding the position of Muslims in the employment sector. However, within the post-racial context we have identified that the very meaning of racism appears to have little purchase, Sayyid argues,

> …By focusing on racism as something to be found in the mind of racists, it makes it difficult to understand a world in which there could be racism without self-ascribed racists. By connecting the existence of racism to racists (whether through delusion, occultation, or ignorance), the solution to racism is individual reform rather than social transformation. This liberal perspective on racism tends to reject the idea that that racism has any structural effects. (Sayyid 2010: 5).

As such when racism occurs at an institutional level through particular exclusionary practices the language of racism is rarely drawn upon which seems to signal both the marginalisation and limits of the anti-racism/discrimination discourse.

Appendix

Case Studies - A Profile of Muslim Employment: Leeds and Leicester

A Profile of Muslims in the Leeds Labour Market

Demographics

A report entitled 'Census 2001: Analysis of data relating to Faith Communities' by the Neighbourhoods and Housing Strategy Team February (2006), Leeds City Council,[20] stated that there are just over 715,000 people living in Leeds, of which:

- 492,656 (68.9%) stated Christian as their religion
- 21,394 (3%) stated Muslim as their religion
- 8,267 (1.2%) stated Jewish as their religion
- 7,586 (1.1%) stated Sikh as their religion
- 4,184 (0.6%) stated Hindu as their religion
- 1,588 (0.2%) stated Buddhist as their religion
- 58,060 (8%) did not state a religion
- 120,139 (16.8%) stated 'no religion'

55% of the city's Muslim community is concentrated in four wards; Gipton and Harehills; City and Hunslet; Hyde Park & Woodhouse and Chapel Allerton.

Muslims and Employment in Leeds

The report found the following in relation to Muslims and employment figures:[21]

Muslims have the lowest proportion of economically active people at just 46%, compared to a city average of 66%, the economic activity rate for Muslim women is even lower at just 27%.

The community also has the lowest rate of full time employment at just 39% and the highest unemployment rate (15%).

The Muslim community has the highest proportion of people in the socio-economic category 'never worked'.

Muslims have the highest rates of overcrowding in households, and the highest proportions of households without central heating.

[20] See, The Neighbourhoods and Housing Strategy Team, February (2006), Leeds City Council: 'Census 2001: Analysis of data relating to Faith Communities'.

[21] See, The Neighbourhoods and Housing Strategy Team, February (2006), Leeds City Council: 'Census 2001: Analysis of data relating to Faith Communities'.

The Muslim community has the lowest economic activity rate of any faith community in the city, and amongst women the rate is less than half the average for the city.

Across the city 61% of the economically active population are employed in full-time jobs, the Muslim community has the lowest rate of full time employment at 39%.

At the time of the Census 5% of the economically active population were unemployed, rates across faith communities range from 3% in the Jewish community to 15% in the Muslim community (nearly three times the city average).

The Hindu and Jewish communities have the highest proportions of people employed as 'managers and senior officials' (25% and 23% respectively), a pattern that is also evident in the gender analysis, whereas at 12% the Muslim community has the lowest proportion of people employed in this capacity.

Amongst females the Muslim community has the highest proportion of women working in education.

Across the city 3% of people aged 16-74 have never worked, however in the Muslim community the rate is significantly higher at 23%, and among Muslim women it is just over 40% (almost ten times the city average).

N.B. 'Economically active population' is a Census description and refers to those people aged 16-74 who are in work or who are unemployed but actively seeking work.

Similarly another report produced by the Leeds City Council on Equality and Diversity, stated that within the Bangladeshi community in Leeds:[22]

Islam heavily influences the Bangladeshi community; the religious beliefs of this group have an enormous impact upon cultural values and identity. Islam has also influenced the behaviour of Muslim women with respect to education training and employment.

One of the important aspects of this group is the reliance upon collective organisation both at family and community levels for career and educational advice.

The main barriers to education and training are based on gender (female), language (migrants and older generations) and age (inappropriate or inaccurate advice from elders).

In the Pakistani community in Leeds the following was reported:

Issues were raised over institutional and indirect discrimination, the lack of representation of members of the Pakistani community at senior levels and culturally insensitive practices amongst local employers.

[22] See: www.leeds.gov.uk

Muslim Youth and Employment in Leeds

The 'Census 2001: Analysis of data relating to Faith Communities' report found the following concerning Muslim youth within the labour market in Leeds:[23]

Muslim are among the least educated communities in terms of formal qualifications.

Across the city 59% of 16-24 year olds are deemed to be economically active but in the Buddhist, Hindu Jewish and Muslim communities the rates are all below 40%.

The Equality and Diversity Report also found the following:[24]

There is a strong commitment to further and higher education amongst younger (Pakistani Muslim) people, but without a corresponding success in the jobs market.

Barriers to the job market amongst young people in this group are determined primarily not by lack of qualifications, but lack of experience or training.

A Profile of Muslims in the Leicester Labour Market

Demographics

Leicester has a large and diverse ethnic minority population. Based on the census (2001) information, Leicester City Council estimates that 60% of Leicester's population is ethnically white and 40% have an ethnic minority background. The 2001 Census showed the difference as 64% to 36%.25

Amongst the ethnic minority people of Leicester, 30%+ have an Asian background. The Asian population is predominantly Indian from either East Africa, particularly Uganda or Kenya, or from Gujarat in India.26

Leicester is unique amongst English cities in that its predominant ethnic minority community is of Indian origin. In terms of faith, approximately 75% of this community are Hindu, and 25% Muslim.27

The main wards in which the Muslim community in Leicester are concentrated include: Evington (41.2%), Spinney Hills (38.2%) and Stoneygate (14.7).28

According to the 2001 Census,1 Leicester's population was 279,921, of which just over 30,000 (11 per cent) were Muslims, making them the third-largest faith group in Leicester after Christians and Hindus.29

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[23] See, The Neighbourhoods and Housing Strategy Team, February (2006), Leeds City Council: 'Census 2001: Analysis of data relating to Faith Communities'.
[24] See: www.leeds.gov.uk
[25] See Report, 'The Diversity of Leicester: A Demographic Profile' (2008), Leicester City Council.
[26] See Report, 'The Diversity of Leicester: A Demographic Profile' (2008), Leicester City Council.
[27] See Report, 'The Diversity of Leicester: A Demographic Profile' (2008), Leicester City Council.
[28] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation.*
[29] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation.*

In 2003, Leicester, which is predicted to become the country's first 'plural city' with no overall ethnic majority, was awarded Beacon status for community cohesion. The city has instituted many positive, effective practices in support of its multicultural ethos. All the Asian religious communities – Hindu, Sikh and Muslims – have a significant presence, and individuals from these communities play important roles in the economic and political life of the city.30

In 2001 over half the Muslim population in Leicester (18,000) was of Indian ethnic origin (mainly Gujarati). At the time of the 2001 Census the number of Muslims of black African background was small, at only 1,517. Since then the city has seen an increasing and significant Somali presence, estimated by the city council to be in the region of 6,000–10,000. There are also new arrivals of people of Turkish, Kurdish and Afghan backgrounds. Allowing for growth and adding in the new arrivals, the current Muslim population of Leicester has probably exceeded 40,000.[31]

Ethnic Composition: Census 2001[32]

	Leicester	Percent	England & Wales
White: British	169456	60.54%	87.49%
White: Irish	3602	1.29%	1.23%
White: Other White	5681	2.03%	2.59%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	2841	1.01%	0.46%
Mixed: White and Black African	539	0.19%	0.15%
Mixed: White and Asian	1908	0.68%	0.36%
Mixed: Other Mixed	1218	0.44%	0.30%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	72033	25.73%	1.99%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	4276	1.53%	1.37%
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	1926	0.69%	0.54%
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	5516	1.97%	0.46%
Black or Black British: Caribbean	4610	1.65%	1.08%
Black or Black British: African	3432	1.23%	0.92%
Black or Black British: Other Black	553	0.20%	0.18%
Chinese	1426	0.51%	0.44%
Other Ethnic Groups	904	0.32%	0.42%

Leicester is fortunate in that it can make some comparisons over time, due the existence of the Survey of Leicester that took place in 1983. This gave the following percentages:[33]

- Hindu 14%

[30] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation.*
[31] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation.*
[32] See http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/council-and-democracy/city-statistics/demographic-and-cultural/
[33] See http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/council-and-democracy/city-statistics/demographic-and-cultural/

- Muslim 4.3%
- Sikh 3.8%.

The Diversity of Leicester report (2008) stated that in the city:

> There are approximately 240 faith groups across 14 different faiths. There are 123 places of Christian worship, 29 mosques, 22 Hindu temples, 7 Sikh Gurdwaras, 2 Jewish synagogues and one Jain temple. Over recent years the Muslim population has significantly increased. It is estimated that about 80% - 90% of Muslim school pupils attend madrassas after school.[34]

Muslims and Employment in Leicester

According to NOMIS (Official Labour Market Statistics, ONS), in 2008 the unemployment rate for Leicester was estimated to be 11.4 per cent, the highest of all local authorities outside London (where Tower Hamlets had 11.7 per cent unemployment). Economic inactivity levels in Leicester (male 18 per cent, female 34 per cent) are also higher than the UK average (17 per cent for men, 26 per cent for women).[35]

The overall employment rate in Leicester in 2004 was 66.4 per cent, 8.4 per cent lower than the rate for England, which was 74.9 per cent. In the previous year (2003).

Leicester's employment rate by ethnicity varied considerably, with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis at 42.4 per cent, black 60.3 per cent, white 76.3 per cent and Indian 68.5 per cent.[36]

The overall employment rate in Leicester in 2004 was 66.4%. This was just lower than the East Midlands region average and 8.4% lower than for England at 74.9%.[37]

The employment rate for ethnic minorities in Leicester is 62.6% and is lower than that for the white population.[38]

Employment rates of Muslims are low and economic inactivity high, especially among Muslim women, who often stay at home to look after the family.[39]

According to the 2001 Census, 50 per cent of Muslims in the UK are below the age of 25. This demographic profile has significant implications for the future of the labour market.[40]

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[34] See Report, 'The Diversity of Leicester: A Demographic Profile' (2008), Leicester City Council.
[35] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation.*
[36] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation.*
[37] See Report, 'The Diversity of Leicester: A Demographic Profile' (2008), Leicester City Council.
[38] See Report, 'The Diversity of Leicester: A Demographic Profile' (2008), Leicester City Council.
[39] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation.*
[40] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation.*

The OSI survey explored the climate for Muslims in the labour market over the last five years and their experiences. When asked 'To what extent do employers respect religious customs', it was found that Muslims and non-Muslims shared similar views on the extent to which employers respect religious diversity. The majority of both groups said employers did show the right degree of respect for religious customs; 21 per cent of Muslims and 17 per cent of non-Muslims felt that there was too little respect for religious customs and very few (1 per cent of Muslims, 2 per cent of non-Muslims) felt that employers respected religious customs more than they should.[41]

In Leicester, 21% of employed Pakistani and Bangladeshi women work in process, plant and machine operative occupations, compared with 7% of White British women.[42]

Among those in employment, Leicester's large population of Indian women is much more strongly concentrated in the manufacturing sector than the city's White female population. Within this sector, 88% of Indian women, compared with 62% of White women, were in the lower level and lowest paid jobs, while only 4% - compared with 18% of White women - were in the best paid jobs.[43]

Bangladeshi and Pakistani women are far less likely to be employed. Only 9% of Bangladeshi women and 7% of Pakistani women have full-time jobs, compared with 30% of all women in Leicester.[44]

There is also evidence that women from ethnic minority groups can face very difficult problems when they wish to enter the labour market. In Leicester's Stoneygate ward, for example, 22% of economically active Bangladeshi women were unemployed and actively seeking work, compared with just 7.5% of all economically active women in that ward.[45]

Muslim Youth and Employment in Leicester

With 50 per cent of the UK's Muslim population below the age of 25, according to the 2001 Census, and factoring in the picture that has emerged from research on Muslims constituting a high proportion of the pupil numbers of state schools in Leicester, young

[41] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation*.
[42] See Bernadette Stiell and Ning Tang, 'Ethnic Minority Women and Access to the Labour Market in Leicester'.
[43] See Bernadette Stiell and Ning Tang, 'Ethnic Minority Women and Access to the Labour Market in Leicester'.
[44] See Bernadette Stiell and Ning Tang, 'Ethnic Minority Women and Access to the Labour Market in Leicester'.
[45] See Bernadette Stiell and Ning Tang (2008) 'Ethnic Minority Women and Access to the Labour Market in Leicester'.

people of Muslim background could be a significant factor for the future of the labour market.[46]

The project director of the Leicester Asian Youth Association, Mohammed Nasim, said that although the trend was that Muslims were studying subjects like law, sciences and information technology there is also a growing recognition among Muslim youth that there are gaps in employment where Muslims are few in number, such as Media studies.[47]

[46] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation.*
[47] See Report 'Muslims in Leicester' (2010), *Open Society Foundation.*

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